Article

Stereotypes in a Multilingual Film: A Case Study on Issues of Social Injustice

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Abstract: Films serve to (re-)create a 'world' within the mind of the audience. Additionally, they introduce or reinforce stereotypes portrayed as a reality of the modern world through multiplexity and the strategic use of foreign languages, dialects, and non-native language use, among others. Various concepts of stereotypes can be explored in fiction feature films, especially as film characters are often based on different kinds of stereotypes. Audiovisual texts tend to operate as cultural constructs that reflect and convey certain ideologies within an industry that holds the power to marginalize or belittle voices. Multilingual films highlight the contrasts among and within cultures; hence, they can further exacerbate the marginalization and stereotyping of different cultures and nations, ultimately having damaging effects on society's perception of different stereotypes, such as race and gender groups, which is shown with the examples from a multilingual film. This article analyzes the marginalization and stereotypes in a Hollywoodian multilingual film through film analysis and critical theory. By doing so, this study aims to provide insight into the stereotypes that have been depicted, covering various clichés and stereotypes, including cultural, gender, political, and religious stereotypes. Furthermore, it seeks to dissect the societal consequences that arise from detrimental portrayals of stereotyping in a purposeful selection of an American multilingual film.

1. Introduction

The mind-boggling amount of media consumption influences and shapes how audiences perceive the world (Glynn and Jeong 2003; Glynn 2016). As human beings, we naturally evaluate everything we encounter, trying to gain insight and direction from our evaluations of other people (Jackson 2019). Stereotypes in the media have a cumulative effect on society (Remmers 2014). Stereotypes portray one aspect of people, usually based on their sex, race, religion, profession, or age, among others. With constant usage, many stereotypes can foster negative attitudes. Biased media portrayals cannot always be dismissed as mere entertainment. Stereotypes are cognitive constructions that serve the receiver's knowledge, attitudes, and expectations about other groups (Peffley et al. 1997). Multilingual films more accurately represent stereotypes due to the pernicious effects of stereotyping arising from disparities in the treatment of stories involving whites and people of color, gender, and ethnicity. This article examines the relationship between mass media and social constructions of race, ethnicity, and gender in multilingual films.

The present study aims to investigate the stereotypes in a multilingual film. To that end, content with the potential to be considered a stereotype is identified, as well as how that content can inculcate negative connotations towards different members of society. Based on the results found in our case study, in visual mode, different stereotypes are categorized into four main thematic groups: cultural, gender, religious, and political. It is also found that these stereotypes are purposefully created in multilingual films for power relations, ideological, and political reasons. This stereotyping seems to serve as an effective

way for mass media to purposely stereotype the exploited race to keep it down and satisfied and maintain its power and supremacy in an unfair world.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Multilingualism in and out of Films

Over time, societies face multilingual situations due to immigration, technological development, tourism, international commerce, and even war. Subsequently, multilingualism is recognized as a new way of communication by Díaz-Cintas (2011). Hence, much of the world's population uses two or more languages daily. Multilingualism, as a sign of the times (Delabastita and Grutman 2005), is rapidly rising due to increased ease in migration, social/workforce mobility, the importance of mastery of a lingua franca for political, cultural, social, and economic reasons, and "media globalization" (Mamula and Patti 2016, p. 1). In this view, this social, cultural, linguistic, and individual phenomenon, which is fast becoming one of the main issues of modern societies, should be known and investigated. Multilingualism is a mirror of society but simultaneously impacts society. In other words, the ever-increased complicated realities of the new world and perpetual and radical shifts that our societies are living through have led to tangled changes in current multilingualism; therefore, today, multilingualism can be considered a reality, and complexity is the main feature of contemporary multilingualism as a reflection of current societies (De Zarobe and De Zarobe 2015). Hence, filmmakers are increasingly eager to make multilingual films (MLFs) mirror a more genuine and real-life society (Díaz-Cintas 2011). Before embarking on a detailed discussion, it is essential to clarify what we mean by "heterolingual" or MLF. These films depict ethnic diversity, multicultural situations, and intercultural encounters as their storylines are often related to immigration, tourism, war, and the multicultural aspect of current society (Berger and Komori 2010; Wahl 2005). In most cases, each film comprises at least two languages or dialects, with a range of varieties in itself (Delabastita and Grutman 2005).

Similarly, distributors should be mindful of asymmetric power relations by assigning more importance to one particular language, culture, society, race, or ethnicity and pushing them into inferior positions (Moraza and Jose 2000). This can be particularly daunting in the case of minority languages, cultures, societies, races, ethnicities, and gender, where multiplexity could promote inequality by silencing such categories. Nevertheless, what matters is the impact of MLFs on audiences or the perception of audiences from MLFs.

2.2. Stereotypes

Stereotyping is attaching a label to a race, ethnicity, gender, role, or anything else. Walter Lippmann presented the term "stereotype" as a "distorted picture or image" (Lippmann 2008) that is culturally driven. According to him, stereotypes are formed due to social, political, and economic motivations, and they juxtapose the illusory and unreal world with the real world, which can become quite pervasive and resistant to change (Lippmann 2008). Wilson and Gutiérrez (1995) opine that a stereotype is an oversimplified and conventional idea or concept that induces special meaning among the members of a group. In other words, these are cognitive patterns that convey information, attitudes, and outlooks about individuals based on their societal membership. These general ideas and representations or clichéd depictions of similar people that have been engraved in mind through different media types, as well as through social relationships and prevailing thought due to their abundant use, are considered stereotypes. People can build suppositions according to what they have heard or seen (Berry 2009). By consuming media like films, audiences attract and rely on the indirect information conveyed by media because of their insufficient information or interaction with the subject being displayed (Pressler 2019). Berry (2009) believes that almost everyone in society carries stereotypes grouping people into categories, namely race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, and occupation. In this way, typical features of a group are emphasized and exaggerated to inculcate cultural messages that become naturalized via media exposure (Bogle 1989). Stereotypes have been utilized as

an effective instrument in the media to identify a group of people and to fasten specific values and characteristics to them according to their appearance or participation as a group member. In other words, through stereotypes, audiences can determine a character's expected value system and behavior based on their appearance, possessions, etc., and compare them to their own value system. Stereotypes can influence societal perceptions of others, such as their behavior, beliefs, and roles. These stereotypes and clichés are assigned to different groups to establish differences among people, which can result in prejudices and carry negative meanings. It can constitute a barrier to comprehending the true nature of others without any prejudice and misunderstanding, which is particularly prominent in a multicultural society. This barrier can pose challenges to human interaction or communication.

Why are there stereotypes? Charles Hurst et al. (2016) opine that the main reason is the deficiency of individual acquaintance with other racial or ethnic groups. It is worth mentioning that stereotypes are used to justify the disparity between one group and others. They are mostly inaccurate and oversimplified beliefs that one group has of another's lifestyle. Societal circumstances have influenced and changed some stereotypes over time. Stereotypes play a role in conveying messages by modifying the message through socially cultivated ideas or mispresenting minorities. For example, the difference in character portrayal between black and white villains when engaging in the same immorality is visibly apparent, which provokes socially established attitudes that refer to black people as rough and untrustworthy, making the story about race instead of morals, even if unconsciously grasped by audiences in an immoral way that is not necessarily true.

There are different types of stereotypes. Regarding gender stereotypes, these clichés can lead us to subscribe to the view that women are "communal by nature" (Kumar et al. 2022, p. 31), which means that they are warm and sensitive to others, while men are "agentic by nature" (Kumar et al. 2022, p. 31), representing their independence, confidence, and aggression towards others (Koenig 2018). This categorization of gender is contingent upon the circumstances of the comparisons (Oakes et al. 1994). However, according to the roles and expectations of genders in recent years, gender stereotypes have changed significantly, indicating a trend toward more equality between men and women. In other words, recent data show a reduction in stereotypical gender attributes, such as male–work and female–home, implying a departure from the traditional separation and distinction of men's and women's societal roles (Bhatia and Bhatia 2021), and more women are entering science and engineering and taking on leadership roles compared to the past (Charlesworth et al. 2021). The reception and affirmation of gender stereotypes into people's schema, particularly among audiences, are greatly influenced by their experiences, including those shaped by the media (Ward et al. 2005).

The other types of stereotypes are racial and ethnic stereotypes. Race describes physical characteristics, while ethnicity refers to cultural recognition. Race is derived from what we inherit, whereas ethnicity follows what we learn. Racial stereotypes are established beliefs that refer to all members of the same race as having the same characteristics, which are mostly negative (Jewell 1993). Beyond specific effects on particular groups, especially in the media industry, racial clichés are displayed as entertainment, which can distort audiences' understanding and trigger categorizing people according to their race and ethnicity (Yuen 2019). The media can have a detrimental effect on people's understanding of people of color and racial stereotypes, which can worsen xenophobia. Nonverbal features of people of color, such as their physical appearance and customs depicted in popular media, affect racial biases. Due to the lack of connection between racial groups, people rely on what is displayed in the media to formulate ideas about others outside of their own race or ethnicity.

Many scholars have investigated MLFs from different angles, including their multimodality (Sanz Ortega 2011, 2015), the functions of multilingualism (Beseghi 2020; De Bonis 2014; Dore 2019; Magazzù 2019; Martínez-Sierra et al. 2010; O'Sullivan 2011; Sana Mansoor et al. 2016; Sanz Ortega 2011, 2015), translation in MLFs (Cronin 2009;

Meylaerts and Serban 2014; Raffi 2019; Zabalbeascoa and Corrius 2012; Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer 2014), or from an aesthetic aspect (Şerban 2012). However, stereotypes that are issues of social injustice are not investigated in MLFs, and this is the primary concern of this article.

3. Method

This article is the result of the first phase of an extended project about the reception of multilingual films. Since the amount of data was very large, only the examples taken from one film (*Babel*) are mentioned to clarify and explain the issue more clearly. Since audiovisual products are multimodal in essence, different semiotic modes are involved in conveying the intended meaning (Gunther and van Leeuwen 1996; Halliday 1994). The primary goal of this exploratory study is to determine how certain filmmakers encode their intended worldviews and stereotypes based on their ideologies and convictions through the media. In turn, audiences decode this set of information based on their ideologies, aims, and intentions. The interactive cooperation of the verbal, auditory, and visual channels (Mayoral et al. 1988) encodes the intended meaning. These verbal and non-verbal elements enhance comprehension, particularly in MLFs, which portray complexities for many functions (Chaume 2020; Khoshsaligheh et al. 2022; Taylor 2020).

To recognize MLFs, both non-verbal and verbal (linguistic) codes need to be investigated (Wahl 2008). Since the data obtained through the two auditory and visual channels were extensive, this article only deals with non-verbal components or visual items. This article seeks to provide a description of stereotypes by presenting visual codes related to different types of stereotypes in the film *Babel*.

Zabalbeascoa (1997), Perego (2009), and Sanz Ortega (2011) state that, in audiovisual products, non-verbal components are essential in adding the viewer's understanding by enhancing meaning. Many stereotypical items can be depicted in films through non-verbal signs rendered through the complexity of the audiovisual products multiplied in MLFs by depicting and contrasting more cultures and societies. Multiplexity plays different roles in the film industry, particularly in polyglot genres (Dwyer 2005; Wahl 2005, 2008). This article is a cognitive and cultural approach to film studies. In the first stage of this project, the researchers investigate signs and stereotypes from a multilingual film to examine their reception in different languages. The article's corpus comprises one MLF (*Babel*), which is introduced in Table 1. This film is selected mainly due to its multiplicity (multilingual, multicultural, multi-country, multi-identity, multi-religion, multi-society). Showing countries, customs, and the physical appearance of people, from their position and role in the film to their clothes, can effectively create stereotypes.

Table 1. The descriptive information corpus of the study.

Film Title	Country	Run Time	Year	Directors	Languages
Babel	United States, Mexico, Morocco, Japan	2:20	2006	A. G. Iñárritu	English, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, Berber languages, French, Russian

The research aims to identify different kinds of stereotypes in multilingual audiovisual text and show how these constructions are encoded, which can inculcate new ideas and beliefs in audiences, hurting people based on their cultural background, gender, race, and religion. In this context, the researchers specify the stereotypes presented in an MLF and investigate how they can influence the audience's assumptions through multiplicity. More precisely, the study is an attempt to bring the audience of MLFs into the spotlight by answering the following questions:

1. How does this multilingual film (*Babel*) reinforce stereotypical cliches?
2. What kinds of stereotypes are introduced in the selected multilingual film?

3.   How have the fictitious portrayals in the selected multilingual film been germane to social injustice and under-representation?

4. Results

The concept of translation in this article is a broader concept; it encompasses communication between characters in different languages and shooting in different countries, resulting in multilingual situations where translation occurs throughout the film. The director decides how to translate the dialogue according to his own discretion, using an interpreter in the role of one of the characters or as subtitles wherever necessary for the audience's understanding. Some parts of the film may intentionally remain untranslated to achieve the desired function, such as conflict, confusion, etc. (Beseghi 2020; Bleichenbacher 2008; Chiaro and De Bonis 2020; De Bonis 2014; Delabastita and Grutman 2015; Kiran 2020; Martínez-Sierra et al. 2010; O'Sullivan 2011; Sanz Ortega 2011; Şerban 2012; Wahl 2005). Stereotypes are generalized images and preconceived ideas about people within a society, which are assigned characteristics and roles determined by their gender, race, and ethnicity. Repeating these stereotypes reinforces and triggers preconceptions about minority groups, leading to repercussions and categorization of individuals. It is essential to note that not all stereotypes and clichés are globally recognized; some may be specific to a language or country. For example, English speakers may not understand the stereotypes made in other languages and countries in the same way. The primary aim of this study is, first, to identify different types of stereotypes in MLFs, and, secondly, to determine how the multiplicities trigger the stereotypes in MLFs. An MLF, *Babel*, is analyzed for various stereotypes mentioned above. The gathered data are explained and classified according to the countries displayed in the film. Furthermore, the different types of stereotypes and clichés shown in MLF are introduced and classified in the Discussion part (Section 6).

4.1. Non-Verbal Stereotypes in Babel

Babel (2006) portrays interwoven stories, including location-based actions and characters from Morocco, Japan, Mexico, and the United States. This film draws the audience in, challenging their assumptions while weaving together four disparate stories. By showing several countries and cultures, the film creates more contradictions and contrasts, prompting researchers to compare all the stereotypical components between different cultures, just as the film does.

4.1.1. Moroccan Stereotypes

Among the four stories, the scenes shot in Morocco display the most uncivilized context compared to the others. The story of Morocco is about a shepherd's family living far from the village, facing difficult living conditions. When an American woman, Susan, traveling with her husband, Richard, on vacation, gets shot by Yusef, a Moroccan boy, the Americans rush to judge her wounding as a terrorist act. They could not find medical help, which appears unreachable. Finally, the American helicopter arrives for her medication.

Western media tend to vilify Muslims through the story set in Morocco, which is not a new phenomenon in the Hollywood film industry. This has been regarded as Islamophobia or incendiary racism (Amin-Khan 2012) that refers to religious stereotyping. Accordingly, by showing Moroccan poverty and intensifying negative representations of third-world countries, Hollywood films opt to indoctrinate particular beliefs of Western imperialism, such as their tendency toward crime and deviance. This also asserts the American stereotypes as being affluent and progressive socially, which represent social clichés. There are scenes in the village that display many examples of ethnic and racial stereotypes. Other tourists feel afraid because they assume that the people in the village might hurt them; they think the people in the village are dangerous and might take them hostage for terror, which was quickly concluded from the beginning as a terrorist attack.

Regarding gender stereotypes, Moroccan women in this film are often depicted as being silent and in the background, dirty, unsexy, and witches. Moroccan women, like slaves, are rarely afforded a voice and are mostly silent, never expressing their opinion about anything. In contrast, Susan's skin looks soft and beautiful, while the Moroccan women are depicted as dirty with rough skin. It should be noted that Moroccan women are rarely put in the front and are mostly in the background. In most of the scenes, it can be easily seen that Moroccan women are excluded from men's conversations, seen only in a blurry background shot. For example, in the scene when the father punishes his child for shooting the American tourist and spying on his sister as she undresses, the mother stands with her back against the wall, silent, with her hands crossed over her chest. This stereotypical characteristic of Moroccan or Arab women being silent is omnipresent in the film, which is an example of role and behavior stereotypes. The Moroccan wife does not eat food with her family and takes care of house chores, whereas the American woman, Susan, eats food with her husband, Richard. This situation represents their equality and having the same rights. In contrast, in all the scenes referring to Moroccan women, their inferiority status is clearly visible, indicating the outdated status of third-world countries like Morocco with an emphasis on being advanced, up-to-date, and having equal rights for men and women. Concisely, Moroccan women, as opposed to Susan, are displayed in an unflattering manner.

Examples of cultural stereotypes are also found in the story of Morocco. The mother and the daughters always stick together; wherever the mother goes, her daughters follow her to learn the tasks, unlike the Japanese girls, who are modern and independent and just seek happiness, which is entirely different from Moroccan girls. This difference highlights the varying views and understanding of women in *Babel* that indicate Orientalist and Occidentalist discourse.

When Susan and Richard order a meal, she cleans her hands and worries about her diet, asking the waiter, "What do you have that does not have fat in it?" The waiter tells her, "Everything is delicious". The waiter's response suggests that he is not familiar with the concept of diet, which is important to American women. We can conclude that the example of Susan compared to other women, namely Moroccan and Mexican women, sheds light on divergent views and understandings of women in *Babel* that promote Orientalist discourse. Instances such as disinfecting hands, throwing away ice due to water safety concerns, and using a knife and fork to eat, while the eating culture in Morocco is completely different and vice versa, with family members except for the mother of the family eating from a tray with their hands, all contribute to an inferior view of Moroccan society.

4.1.2. Mexico

The Mexican nanny, Amelia, is forced to take Richard and Susan's children with her to her son's wedding in Mexico. On the way back to the United States, the border guards become suspicious because she does not have a letter of consent from Susan and Richard to take the children to Mexico. They flee from the police and get lost in the desert. Eventually, the United States border officer finds her, arrests her, and deports her from the United States, where she had been working illegally. Similar to the scenes in Morocco, Mexico is filmed in poor rural areas where people beg or hawk, and the food is depicted with flies and insects, which is not necessarily true because not everywhere in Mexico or Morocco is so crowded, dirty, and underdeveloped. If the director truly wanted to display reality, they should have shown both developed and undeveloped areas. These examples contribute to social stereotypes. The film also embodies these stereotypical portrayals in its characters. For instance, Susan and Richard's son, Mike, repeats his mom's claim that "Mexico is really dangerous", thus instilling this idea in the audience. In terms of race and ethnicity stereotypes, there is a scene where a chicken is killed and brutally decapitated in front of the children. While this may be a normal act for Mexican children, everyone behaves normally, but it is seen as terrible and scary for American children.

Furthermore, at Amelia's son's wedding party, a gunshot is fired, reflecting their customs, but it ends in fear for Richard and Susan's children. Amelia's nephew, Santiago, jeopardizes the children's safety by driving drunk, evading and ducking the border patrol agent, subsequently leaving them in the middle of nowhere at night, demonstrating his thoughtlessness and lack of consideration. According to *Babel*, misery and thoughtlessness are associated with third-world countries like Mexico and Morocco.

The Mexican nanny is portrayed as an undocumented woman who works illegally in the United States and is willing to risk the lives of young children to attend a party. In the case of Amelia, once again, we can see that the female body is used as a tool for communication when, in the middle of the party, she responds positively to a man's request for sex. This theme recurs throughout the film in all four stories. In the Mexican context, no religious stereotypes were identified by the researchers. Regarding political stereotypes, Amelia, the Mexican woman, does not have the right to obtain a lawyer, and even the officer refuses to answer her question about the children's health. The top-down view of the border officers toward Amelia and her nephew is clearly evident. From the beginning, the border police feel uncertain and suspicious of Mexicans.

4.1.3. Japan

It seems that the unrelated story of Chieko, a deaf–mute teenage girl who is diffident and unhappy due to her disability in Tokyo, explores the troubles and loneliness of a young girl. She seeks attention from men by displaying her body in different situations and seducing them, such as during a dental appointment or while being investigated by a detective about a hunting trip in Morocco. She cannot verbalize her thoughts. The differences in the standards of living in Japan, Mexico, and Morocco are quite evident, indicating social stereotypes. High-rise buildings, clothing, freedom of relationships, and entertainment are some of the most apparent differences and contradictions that are prominently displayed in the same film. The fact that Chieko's mother committed suicide highlights a social problem in Japan, which has become a social stereotype, and one of the problems that Japanese society is struggling with is the high number of suicides in this culture despite the high standard of living, indicating that psychological issues exist within the culture and people commit suicide.

Another example is the difference in the lifestyle of teenagers and young people in Japanese and Moroccan cultures. Two Moroccan teenagers are depicted as being forced to graze goats and have no other activities. Their pastimes are portrayed as shooting and killing jackals. In Japanese culture, girls play volleyball while their parents watch and spend time with them; however, in the Moroccan lifestyle, this is meaningless and undefined; in other words, the opposite is true, and children should help their families; this stark contrast demonstrates opposite cultural stereotypes between the two cultures of Japan and Morocco. Furthermore, young people in Japan go to restaurants and nightclubs, while, in Moroccan society and culture, children are expected to assist their families in life matters and are not allowed to disobey (as observed when the mother scolds the two boys for coming home early from shepherding). The absence of such portrayals in Japanese society and culture indicates that adolescents are self-centered and preoccupied with their own personal affairs and concerns.

In relation to gender stereotypes, the Japanese girl, Chieko, is depicted as an obsessed-with-sex character seeking love and attention from men. This portrayal highlights female vulnerability and the quest to satisfy her sexual desires (evidenced by her actions to catch the eye of the men, such as discarding her panties and exposing herself to a boy and his friends, as well as attempting to entice a police officer by appearing nude), although her deafness evokes a sense of pity and sympathy from the viewers. For these young women, such attempts do not establish a connection and only result in more profound pain from discovery or rejection.

In the case of clothing (religious stereotypes), we can see that Japanese girls are shown wearing short dresses and even being naked, while, in Morocco, women wear chadors, representing the Islamic culture and religious stereotype that women in such countries cover their heads and bodies. Another religious and cultural conflict that is shown in the film is the issue of freedom of clothing in Japan, where the Japanese girl is seen naked even in front of her father and the detective without provoking any sexual reaction from them. However, in Moroccan culture, the younger brother enjoys seeing his sister's body while changing clothes and even engages in masturbation. The portrayal of such images of Moroccan culture carries a negative connotation for them on a global scale.

5. Discussion

Stereotypes are typically negative today. These cognitive constructs are often distorted and manipulated concepts that do not exist in reality. They can cause people to be judged based on their appearance rather than their thoughts or ideas. The media contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes about different groups of people. However, why do they continue to do so? People in positions of power, such as media moguls, often promote specific images of others for their own gain. This research aims to find answers to the above-mentioned research questions.

Diversity may be a buzzword in multilingual films, which primarily focus on immigration, tourism, and war. Consequently, different contexts, cultures, and societies are depicted in the same film, leading to an increased display of contrasts and contradictions, as observed in the film *Babel* (2006). Based on Marxist criticism, hidden messages in films shape our consciousness (Marx and Fromm 1964). This implies that audiences unconsciously compare different elements, decode the created stereotypes that are encoded by filmmakers, and form individual conclusions based on their backgrounds, ideologies, and attitudes.

While the cognitive nature of stereotypes encompasses the attitudes and descriptions that people hold about different groups (e.g., gender), the assessment and judgment that pursue these implicit or explicit attitudes can involve negative or positive reactions towards members of a specific group. For example, by portraying Moroccan and American women, highlighting their physical appearances and roles in their families, the audiences perceive the intentionally crafted stereotypes that the directors created and compare them. Consequently, positive attitudes toward American women and negative beliefs towards them are reinforced. However, this is not an accurate representation as filmmakers often magnify a small minority of such types of women and attempt to generalize them. In other words, the displayed image of Moroccan women represents only a small number of Moroccan women and does not apply to all of them. Nevertheless, unconsciously, an image of all Moroccan women is formed in the viewer's mind. The repetition of these stereotypes in the film industry reinforces the underlying assumptions at their core.

Different types of stereotypes that are intensified through conflicting images portrayed in multilingual films are listed in Table 2. Since there is no comprehensive model or classification for analyzing the non-verbal level of films, particularly MLFs, and no research has been conducted in this area, the researchers sought to provide a comprehensive classification of stereotypes in MLFs. The resulting classification is presented in Table 2. In order to identify all kinds of stereotypes at the non-verbal level, all scenes were examined individually, and then all the obtained stereotypes were sorted into four main categories: cultural, political, gender, and religious stereotypes. One of the limitations of studying stereotypes is the subjective approach that researchers often adopt, leading to potentially biased and unilateral decisions. Nonetheless, as none of the researchers belong to either of the countries depicted, the prejudices and biases are minimal. As shown in Table 2, the two classifications of stereotypes include subcategories; the first group consists of racial and ethnic stereotypes, social stereotypes, and custom stereotypes. It is noteworthy to mention that, since many of these categories are interconnected abstract concepts that overlap with each other, it is impossible to separate each stereotype and place them into independent categories in certain examples.

To exemplify the situation, many gender stereotypes can be considered social or religious stereotypes, particularly when gender stereotypes are related to appearance. For instance, the discrepancy in clothing between Japanese and Moroccan women can be attributed to the dominant gender stereotypes in Morocco as an Islamic country, where women are convinced to cover their heads and bodies, while, in Japan, there are no restrictions. Over time, these religious stereotypes permeate other aspects of the country, such as society and culture, and are accepted as social and/or cultural stereotypes. The second category refers to gender stereotypes, including roles, behaviors, appearances, and instances of sexual abuse. The subcategory of appearance is broad and covers clothing choices and physical attributes. Many cases within this subcategory are influenced by a person's race and ethnic background, such as skin color (white/black) and facial expressions (Asian people). The third and fourth categories consist of political and religious stereotypes that have no subcategories.

Table 2. Categories of non-verbal stereotypes in the visual mode of multilingual films.

MAIN CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
CULTURAL	Racial and Ethnic
	Social
	Custom
GENDER	Role and Behavior
	Appearance
	Sexual Abuse
POLITICAL	
RELIGIOUS	

To better understand the categorization, an example for each category or subcategory is presented, which can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Example of non-verbal stereotypes in *Babel* (2006).

COUNTRY	MAIN CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
MOROCCO	**Culture**	Shooting as a hobby
		Morocco is poor and uncivilized.
		All family members eat food from the same plate with their hands.
	Gender	Women are passive/Mothers are housewives.
		Women should wear a chador or scarf.
		Sexual desires are forbidden for teenagers.
	Politics	Morocco is under pressure because the US is the dominant power.
	Religion	Muslims are terrorists.
MEXICO	**Main Categories**	**Sub-Categories**
	Culture	Mexicans are illegal immigrants.
		Mexico is dangerous and dirty.
		Strange customs at the wedding, like shooting
	Gender	Women are weak, sensitive, and emotional.
		Mexican females are not fit or beautiful.
		Female vulnerability to sex
	Politics	The US, as a dominant power, deports Mexicans
	Religion	-------------

Table 3. *Cont.*

COUNTRY	MAIN CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
	Main Categories	**Sub-Categories**
		Loneliness, self-centered, and outside of family life
	Culture	Japan is modern and advanced
		Japanese adolescents are drug users and drink too much alcohol.
JAPAN		Freedom of relationship
	Gender	Freedom of clothing
		Female vulnerability to sex
	Politics	Have a good relationship with the US
	Religion	------------

As a potent tool in disseminating information to global audiences, the mass media hold responsibility for mass communication. Media are a powerful tool to persuade audiences and inculcate beliefs or propagate false beliefs while presenting assumptions as facts. As the media govern the general public, this puts the media on a pedestal, and they occupy a prominent position. Media often exploit various stereotypes and clichés to support their statements and reinforce dominant ideologies, often to suppress minority groups. This can induce biases and unequal and discriminatory treatment, particularly against marginalized groups, based on the media's portrayal rather than reality. Partisan views and discrimination against certain people ruin or even tarnish their reputations and can negatively impact the perception of individuals, even though they have no control over it. It is crucial to critically consider the stereotypes and clichés we attribute before passing judgments as they can lead to misconceptions and misunderstandings that are often untrue about others. Notwithstanding, people may use these expressions even when they do not hold such assumptions.

In essence, as this film belongs to the mainstream Hollywood industry, we have witnessed the repetition of the negatively charged stereotypes regarding Moroccan and Mexican cultures, a common occurrence in almost all Hollywood films. It is important to note that not all these stereotypes accurately reflect reality or how they are displayed in films. Taking a realistic perspective reveals the power dynamics at play through the media. It would be unfair not to acknowledge the role of Western-production imperialism in several scenes of *Babel*.

Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are interconnected (Alexander 1976). In other words, most stereotypes are prejudiced, which may result in discrimination against minority groups by the majority. Through biases and discrimination, minority groups often suffer from their inferior status and the degradation of minority groups' identities. Such unfair treatment of minorities creates a complex web of stereotyping that is challenging to escape (Osman et al. 2022; Seidl 2009). Although fluctuating and modifying social–economic conditions can lead to changing stereotypes over a long period, thanks to the disinclination of clichés to alter, many of them have remained unchanged and persist. For instance, although social and economic conditions have evolved for Asians, stereotypes concerning them have remained unchanged.

The results of this study have practical implications for both audiences, urging them to watch multilingual films with more awareness of their subconscious impact on different stereotypes, and filmmakers, encouraging them to make films with greater consciousness. At the same time, we believe that looking at polyglot genres in the light of reception studies in other languages can pave the way for combating prejudices, discrimination, and inequality in the pursuit of a more equitable world. Moreover, further research should be undertaken to examine different types of stereotypes in multilingual films diachronically to see if they have changed. Future studies could also investigate the portrayal of the same stereotypes rendered in different languages or compare the original versions with their

translated (dubbed) versions. Finally, now that these stereotypes have been brought to light, it is recommended that further comparison occur among film industries, such as Hollywood films and European films, to find out whether they create the same stereotypes or different stereotypes are created according to different perspectives.

6. Conclusions

Media, as a means to subjugate minority populations, perpetuate false and deviant stereotypes. Over time, exposure to these stereotypes through television causes individuals to perceive and internalize them despite their falsified nature. This research represents the initial phase of an extended project focusing on the reception of MLFs. The current study unveils different types of stereotypes depicted in an MLF (*Babel*) and examines their reinforcements within this genre, as well as explores their contribution to global social injustice. Furthermore, due to the diverse contexts depicted in MLFs, audiences unconsciously make comparisons between stereotypes more frequently than in monolingual films. The findings of the present study suggest four main categories of stereotypes, namely culture, gender, politics, and religion, along with potential subcategories applicable to audiovisual products. Unfortunately, such stereotypes persist in today's real world, negatively affecting various minority ethnic groups, including Asians, Africans, and South Americans. By establishing a connection between negative stereotype portrayals in a multilingual film and its societal consequences, this study reveals how fictitious portrayals could have damaging effects once taken outside fiction.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the selection of specific multilingual films for analysis could introduce bias. Different films may present different types and levels of stereotypes, and focusing on a limited number of films may fail to capture the full range of stereotypes within the genre. Additionally, the interpretation of stereotypes can be subjective. Finally, it is recommended that further research be conducted to investigate the motivations of directors. Furthermore, conducting mixed-methods research using interviews and questionnaires among diverse audiences from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds would allow for a more comprehensive exploration of their attitudes. In that regard, the application of sociolinguistic concepts in reception to study the viewers' attitudes towards the use of multilingualism in depth is suggested.

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