

Meet Guillaume Lecomte, through whom Outlander speaks French! 1/2

Interview with Guillaume Lecomte

Thursday evening, Place de la Bastille ... We have an appointment with Guillaume Lecomte the series French consultant. We had heard his name when we met Diana Gabaldon last year. A PhD student at the University of Glasgow, he is responsible for the French dialogues in the series and has played a key role in "Les Chaussettes de L'Archiduchesse.", the famous tongue twister He is also a victim of the Nougat gate .

After a year of exchanging tweets, we had the chance to meet "in real life"!



On the set, Guillaume is right next to the King (a little in the back). Photo Starz to Outlander Community

How did you get this job?

Completely by accident! In January 2015, the production secretary sent an email to several universities to find someone who could translate the dialogues and coach the players. The French department of Glasgow University, where I work, transferred it to me and I immediately sent my resume.

After an interview with producer and long months of waiting it was done!

The production wanted me to make the actors bilingual in 3 weeks and I of course said it was possible! Anything is possible when you want the job. My first mission was to fully translate scenarios of the first 7 episodes (1 st release) in 3 weeks. The cast of Fergus was underway and the parents of the young actor did not speak English. Then I translated the dialogues in French 18 th and started working with the actors.

Have you been in contact with Diana Gabaldon?

A little by email. She gave me the references she used and I read a little what she had written but then i worked with scripts and my personal research.

Are you trained as French as a Foreign language teacher?

Not at all! I have studied modern literature at the Sorbonne , and I studied a lot of 18th Century literature .

Were you aware of the opening credits in French? To be honest we had trouble understanding ...

I do not know when they made the decision to sing in French but with the production team in Scotland we said in May "ah it would be great if it was sung in French." So they asked me to translate the song and I quickly made a first draft to show how it sounded. Then I translated it as best possible with the rhythm of music and it worked well.

A lady from the production was to submit a recording and our translation, but there was no return. We heard nothing more until the credits were discovered.

We can tell that it is an American singer ...

Yes it sounds very typical French.. for Americans... When the credits of season 2 was posted on Facebook, there was immediately thousands of Francophones answers saying they did not understand; and tagging me ... I had not heard it before.

And about day to day work ? Was there a classroom like we saw with Adhamh?

No, it was done much more in the moment. Before filming began I met most actors / actresses and we had some pronunciation sessions. We began working directly on scripts , even if they were drafts. Afterwards everyone had significantly less free time. Most of the time, I sent a recording in advance with my voice saying their lines in different ways: neutral and different ways to play them. 2-3 recordings per line and then I saw the actors during the week, when we had a moment they were trying to rehearse.

When there was a scene where there was no French, I was still on set to work between takes. But most of the work was really about 2-3 days just before the shooting. They often worked at

home. When they arrived they at least had a good basis and they all worked on their recordings. If they had a problem they called me and we worked more.

But it's true that most of the time because of daily changes in the script, it was much the same day in their trailers and on the set. Sometimes we arrived two hours early to rehearse, but mostly it was adapting the program for the day. It was intense.

Do they understand what they are saying?

No, well ... Claire, sorry Cait, understands of course and Tobias also. Let's say all actors understand their lines and others' lines, if only for flow issues when shooting: They need to know when to start talking.

Yes in season 1 we feel that Cait and Tobias have a good level .

Tobias was really impressive! He has only a few lines. I sent him the recordings 2-3 weeks in advance and when he arrived he said "I'm not quite good enough "it was perfect, My work day was over (laughs)

Was he the best pupil?

I'd not say that, because he had finally few lines in French as compared to others. He had only 2-3 lines, but he did it so well that in terms of quality it was absolutely perfect. The others did not have much time. It was exhausting for them sometimes because they had so much to do that working three lines in French was difficult, especially if they were stuck on a word.

Especially if they do not understand?

Yeah. Then, you still have to know that we worked all together on the translation each time. I would first write a correct translation in all aspects (syntax, grammar, history, etc.) and then reworked what they wanted to express through the text. So sometimes they asked me to change certain words because they were stuck, so I offered them alternatives. Sometimes they changed the tenor of the sentence and I adapted the vocabulary and we worked like that. So they understood what they were saying, because I explained.

Did it stay with them?

Well you will see, you speak with them (laughs)

When I (Severine) saw Sam in February, he would not speak French, but it was 8am ... Nevertheless he spotted the mistake made by his coach ...

I think Sam did not feel confident speaking French. He was very afraid to speak French and that it would not sound well. But given where he started, I think it sounds good and he worked a lot. It was very hard. It really was close to his heart. I think it is with him that I worked most on translations, on changes in terms of pronunciation. He took the time. When we were meeting he was focused, he tried hard. He was a super good student!

In Monaco, he recited us "the socks of the Archduchess", the famous French tongue twister. How long did it take? One hears in the video he takes a deep breath and dives in!
Ah yes the test ... Yes there were tweets before that!

Yes it was us! And we had sent a small book with French tongue twisters (note: birthday gift last year we sent to Sam from the French fans)

The book, we worked on it! And what I was doing was often phonetic translation of what to say. But the phonetic translation is super difficult in the sense that there are plenty of phonemes that do not exist between French and English languages. And so you had to invent something. A mix of real phonetic alphabet and the alphabet à la Guillaume, or à la Sam because it came mainly from him. In fact we had worked on a sheet both with a pronunciation for each letter in French and words corresponding sounds in English. He assembled the sounds and learned it before adding intonation and his character over.

The socks made quite an impression on us! It was great and as it came from the book we had been sent him as a joke, it really moved us!

Yes he came in and he said "well I received this book from fans, what is most characteristic / symbolic? " So I said it is certainly the "socks" and he; "oh but that's the longest!" (laughs)

Especially as it was not in the book! It's just the title, but in the book itself I had to write it in!

Exactly! Yes we worked on that, it was nice, I think it was great to have send it.

And here is the famous video [the French tongue twister in Monte Carlo](#)

We found the book online, we thought it could be useful

He had worked on others, he really worked hard and i have the feeling he had fun doing it. Cait also played a lot with the language and its sounds, she made a lot of little jokes and was constantly trying to keep conversing with me in French.

Yes it shows! From 1st episode it was amazing ! Cait least we knew she was speaking French, we had already heard, so we expected it but when Sam started talking I said to the others "Even the accent is good and perfectly understandable ! "

Because when we saw him in Monte-Carlo and then in February we felt that he was not trying, he did not dare.

No he was very self-conscious about it. Really, when we started he said "I have to do it but how to honor that, I don't speak a word!"

Tell him that the French think it's great!

Oh great!

Very often he came in, saying "I can not do it" and finally it was good. We worked on the acting and phrasing and after that it was good. Quite honestly, and perhaps surprisingly, for him there was no need to do many takes.

And with the other actors? we heard Frances de la Tour talks beautifully!

Yes, she was educated at the Lycée français in London.

Then no merit

That's why she has such a academic French .

So it fits well with the character

Yes it was perfect! So when I met her and she told me "it's really horrible when I talk," and she started out her lines naturally, it's beautiful, so pretty! And for the needs of the character she changed her accent because when she speaks her own French ,it is even more melodious. I do not know what was the discussion with the production to add a little accent, I think it is because in the books she was raised in Austria. I think her background has something to do with Prussia and that's why it needed a little tweak.

And you worked with the French?

Yes we worked 18th century vocabulary . Usually they trusted me and asked every time before making a change.

And with the theater they are used to the 18th century speech pattern?

Yes exactly. I worked with them but it was not the heavy lifting. The one with which I have worked a lot is Lionel (Lingelser, King Louis XV) because for him it is English that was a challenge.

Yes we saw an interview with him and Stanley and the contrast between the two was obvious .

If you look at this interview, there 2-3 times when, in fact, he looks ahead next to the camera and actually he was looking at me. The marketing manager had asked me to be present as support. So I was there and he looked at me and I sent "miming help." He is adorable. When he was on the set it was a party, everyone loved him, he was super excited. And he was really anxious because this is his first big role on TV and more over in English. So Carol-Ann (language coach) worked a lot with him.

And the others? It must be awesome.

When the producers said "it's Dominique Pinon" It was a shock because he's an actor that I love and I never thought I'd meet.

I did not know Stanley, but he is younger and even though his father is famous, I had not made the connection at first. It is almost better known in Scotland because he made a film (Not Another Happy Ending). Lionel is not known, Claire (Sermonne) either. And suddenly, Dominique Pinon, and there ... Oh, my God ... I finally worked very little with him. He would just come in, he is such a professional he can improvise on the spot. Everyone was amazed. We had long conversations, and he is a very special man , one of a kind from what little I saw, a bit like his characters.

Do the French actors enhanced their French accent in English?

Very much so. And we worked a little bit on that. But he (Dominique Pinon) he does naturally, his English is perfect. When he arrived at the "read through" when we all get together and the actors read their lines, to make sure that it works well in the timing, the rhythm of pronunciation, etc., he just went through it and he played his role. Everyone was amazed!

I guess all the actors ...

Yes and no. Frances de la Tour is well known in the UK, she a great lady. Everyone said "it is incredible that it is her." About Dominique, the French actors, yes, but others not so much ... The reactions were not instantaneous. I remember having talked about it with everyone, and all the players had a vague idea but nothing more because he has not done a lot abroad, and even among the French films he has made there are many who are very particular. And he is often secondary role.

Yes exactly

So the City of Lost Children, Amelie, people were there, "yes", but that's ... that Jeunet's films, he was in Alien 4. It's a face we recognize, but not automatically the name. I think it was the producers who were most happy. And me.

And French fans! We had great discussions about who was going to play Mother Hildegard. We reviewed all the known French actresses of a certain age .. There was a huge speculation: If they take Dominique Pinon so ...

So how did it go? He came for 1 to 2 days?

He never stayed more than 3 or 4 days. He was filming was 2 or 3 scenes and then he was off again on another film. But he and Stanley were back and forth constantly.

We could see Stanley, posting on Instagram "here he is, there he films" So we saw the back and forth

I have not worked too much with him because he really wanted to do his thing and so he asked me to do 2 or 3 changes of vocabulary but it was more a matter of "Could I say that rather than that ... ?" and it was mostly to make small references to the fact that he is a time traveler too and so sometimes he would include small anachronisms.

The problem with this and we spoke a lot about it, is that it seemed a super good idea on paper, but as there is no real reference to this in the series script ... is it for later?

Yes .. ok ...

**In Volume 7. So it's a character we will not see for a long time in the books ... and we'll never see directly ... But Count Saint Germain is super important in the story
And then there's the whole "Legend", of the true historical person ...**

It is true that it could be interesting but on a 5 episodes span it is a secondary story difficult to develop only with anachronisms. There were scenes that were more or less written with small references here and there, such as with Master Raymond, but they have almost all been edited out. There remains a ... you'll see ... So you know every time you see him on screen it comes back ... but there are people who do not know.

For Raymond it remains A small reference, and Saint Germain, too, and it is not as obvious. It's more a question of interpretation with St. Germain. it will do something and you have to say "ah maybe it is mmmh .. "so it's ... it's subtle.

It's good to know

This is in episode 7

There will be lots of things in episode 7

Yes 6 and 7 ... So many things will happen ...

This is episode 3 coming out? I have not watched

We love Suzette ...

Suzette Ah! Adrienne is a gem.

We'll meet her on 13/05

Here or ...

In fact we'll travel to Scotland with Lysiane from 13 to 16 of May

Precisely for the Peak Challenge and 15 will be climbing Ben Lomond. If you want to come with us ...; A few people from UK will come along

And so, we had a few conversations with Amanda and Adrienne

Adrienne and Amanda, as well as other actors, we made all background voices, the "loop group".We really laughed. Did'nt you hear anything weird yet?

(interrogative pause)

I will tell you good stuff later on!

To be continued in a few days ...