

Camilla Badstübner-Kizik, Adam Mickiewicz  
University in Poznań

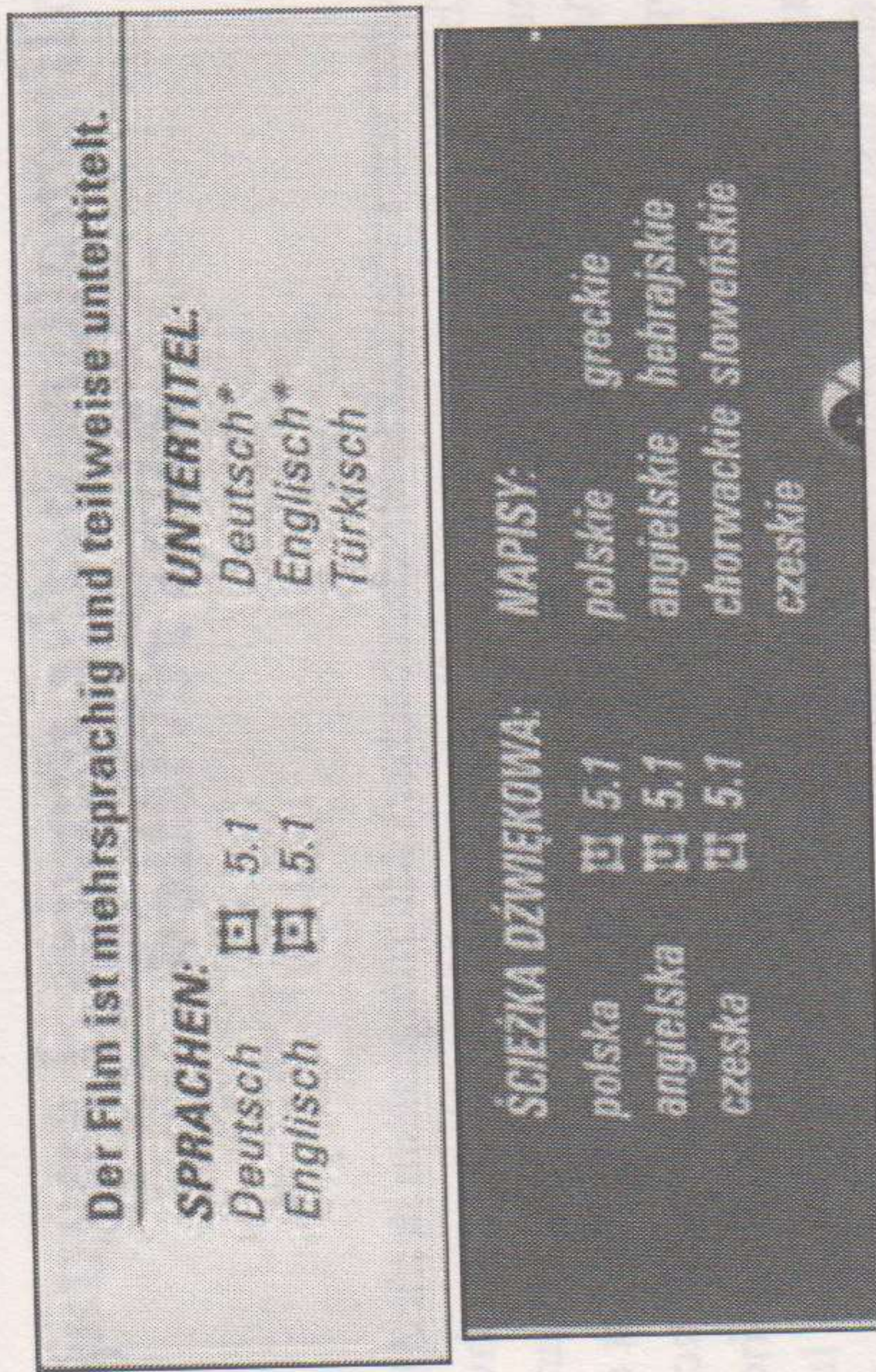
## Multilingualism in the movies. Languages in films revisited

**Abstract:** Several years after Lukas Bleichenbacher's *Multilingualism in the Movies* (2008a, 2008b) and Chris Wahl's studies on *Polyglot film* (2003, 2005, 2008), it is worthwhile reviewing the international movie production to highlight the associated chances and pitfalls for the field of AVT. While Bleichenbacher's and Wahl's findings are important as such, they can also be applied to other language settings, including multiple and constructed language variants, and thereby broaden the understanding of multilingualism. At the same time, their significance can be further enhanced by the application of advances in translation theory. This paper discusses selected cases of multilingualism in movie productions and the solutions offered by different modes of AVT. It then draws conclusions for AVT education, including attention to the development of students' media literacy and language awareness.

### 1. Introduction

Information panels such as the following (Fig. 1) are indicative of developments in the international movie production over the past decade. They point straight to the heart of the linguistic, media, economic and cultural interrelationships that govern the production, marketing and reception of movies in a globalized world – including the linguistically diversified travelling of films out of their primary linguistic spheres and the differing modes of reception closely related to this. How, otherwise, could we account for the 'warning' addressed to German speaking consumers, that "the film is multilingual and has some subtitles", a feature obviously less important for Polish viewers.

Figure 1. Information about the presence of multiple languages and different modes of translation available on DVD (Inglorious Basterds, Quentin Tarantino, USA 2009, DVD cases on sale in Germany and Poland<sup>1</sup>)



This, however, would not automatically mean that a Polish speaking audience is better accustomed to and prepared for watching multilingual movies; to me it rather reveals a certain kind of helplessness or arbitrariness concerning the marketing of multilingual movies. Anyway, observations like these can raise strikingly fundamental questions on the field of AVT, some of which might seem to be slightly underestimated and remain secondary against the backdrop of the predominant search for ever-new technical solutions.

At the interface of subtitling, voice-over and dubbing, in the context of global and European film production, between the dominant film language of English and the so-called 'minor' film languages (such as German, Polish, French or Russian), in an era marked by the erosion of traditional audiovisual forms of reception and the appearance of new, increasingly mobile and interactive variants and translational services, it can only benefit the next generation of film translators to compare different translations of one and the same movie, to examine individual cases, and to draw their own conclusions. Not least of all, in addition to gaining more exposure to films and a highly diversified audio-visual culture in general, they also thereby expand their translational and linguistic repertoires. For these

1 The 'English' audio track advertised on both cases refer to the original version (which is in fact multilingual), the Polish audio track means voice-over, the Czech track refers to a dubbed version. The \* on the German DVD case indicates the fact, that English and German are both diegetically present in the movie and therefore subtitled in the other language respectively – a promise not entirely kept (see below).

reasons, the incorporation of different modes of translation including different source and target languages, as well as the in depth discussion of multiple case studies into training programs for audiovisual translators is highly advisable. In this light, the language constellation of English – Polish – German, as it is exploited in AVT courses at the Institute for Applied Linguistics in Poznań (AMU), has proven to be very fruitful: English being the predominant language of movie productions consumed by Polish audience, Polish being the target language of the translation adepts and German playing an important role as a neighbouring language including several countries with a dynamic movie production (some of which are distributed on the Polish movie market) and offering access to different audiovisual reception habits and traditions (e.g. the predominant role of dubbing). On the basis of three recent Academy Award winning productions of German, Polish and American origin<sup>2</sup>, with each of the three languages as source language and the other respective two as target languages, it can be made obvious, that this constellation includes seven translational directions<sup>3</sup>, which are all readily accessible both technically and linguistically, and which therefore offer fertile ground for examination, discussion, comparison, supplementation, improvement or in some cases entirely new translation. This applies not only to the special challenges of each film (e.g. proper names, specific cultural references, humour, word play, dialects) but also to its para-texts, in particular its differing posters, titles and taglines. In other words, comparative and trans-linguistic approaches open up a wide range of interesting educational opportunities, last but not least in the field of AVT.<sup>4</sup> However, the growing numbers of multilingual films<sup>5</sup> produced over recent years pose a special type of challenge, and it seems to be an additional

2 Cf. *Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Germany 2006, Academy Award 2007, source language: German); *Ida* (Paweł Pawlikowski, Poland/Denmark/France/UK 2013, Academy Award 2015, source languages: Polish, Latin, French); *The Revenant* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, USA 2015, Academy Award 2016, source languages: English, Pawnee, French).

3 This includes subtitles (German, Polish; English / German / Polish SDH), dubbing (German) and voice-over (Polish) available with the DVD versions of all three films distributed in Poland and Germany.

4 Film posters, understood as multimodal compositions combining text, symbol, sign and picture, provide ample opportunities for comparative linguistic analysis and discussion. For quick access to posters on cross-national and cross-lingual level see imdb or MoviePosterDB.

5 Berger & Komori (2010: 8, 4) point to the coexistence of 'plurilingualism' and 'multilingualism', the first referring to "an individual's ability to use several languages", the latter to the "multilingual nature of a given society". Bearing in mind the 'multilingual

predicament, that the understanding of audiovisual multilingualism is obviously under development itself.

## 2. Reviewing Bleichenbacher's and Wahl's approaches to multilingual films

The Swiss linguist Lukas Bleichenbacher and the German film scholar Chris Wahl are among the few writers in German-speaking countries who almost simultaneously have examined the (co)existence of several languages in movies. Bleichenbacher developed a taxonomy for cinematic multilingualism (2008a, 2008b), distinguishing various strategies of replacement and presence of languages in movies based on the work of Czech translation scholar Petr Mareš (2000a, 2000b). At one end of his scale the almost entire elimination of other languages is to be found, at the other their almost full presence, whereby a clear-cut distinction not always seems possible (cf. Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Bleichenbacher's taxonomy of multilingualism in cinematic texts based on the works of Petr Mareš (2008b: 181, cf. 2008a: 24).

Strategy Treatment of other languages	Most distant from depicted re- ality		Closest to depicted reality	
	Elimination Neither used nor mentioned	Signalization Named by the narrator or by characters	Evocation Evoked by means of L2 interference phenomena	Presence Used
Audience's awareness of other language(s)	Depends on ability to process extralinguistic hints	Through metalinguistic comments	Depends on correct interpretation of interference phenomena	Full
Audience's comprehension of content	Full	Full	Full, provided the audience is unwilling to listen to "non-native" <sup>2</sup>	None, unless the other language is somehow translated

nature of the movie productions' discussed here, I decided to respect the term used by Bleichenbacher.

This has been convincingly combined with different narrative functions the use of multiple languages in a movie may serve (cf. Bleichenbacher 2008a: 26–33). Bleichenbacher distinguishes between three "major functional categories: realism, social criticism, and humor" (2008a: 26), pointing at contrasting and stereotyping<sup>6</sup> (iconization, fractal recursivity, erasure) as the main linguistic (and partly 'linguicist'<sup>7</sup>) strategies adopted in multilingual movies (cf. 2008a: 30–38). Recalled here in greatly reduced form, his findings on the basis of 28 language contact movies produced in Hollywood between 1984 and 2003 prove that all three replacing strategies – elimination, signalization, evocation – are frequently used, whereby they can be distinguished with regard to their obtrusiveness and aptitude to misinterpretation of the cinematic reality (cf. Bleichenbacher 2008a: 219). Furthermore, the choice of languages as well as the actual realisation of a movie character's spoken language are clearly linked to narrative functions, and first of all serve as a means of characterization. Chris Wahl, in turn, focuses on movies fully presenting diverse languages, and highlights their potential closeness to an authentic 'cultural aura': here the "functions of verbal language [...] go far beyond the mediation of content" (2008: 339) – "the languages are a symbol for the relationships between the diverse characters" (2008: 347). Cinematic multilingualism, for Wahl, is an element of cinematic realism in so far as it brings the complexity of human communication to the fore and thereby relativizes the unlimited power of not only the camera's eye but also every type of movie translation. Especially noteworthy is the fact that nuanced representation of comprehension often plays a prominent role in these movies, it acquires a 'symbolic, mythical value'. This may be sometimes achieved at the cost of the viewer's distraction from the illusion, as Wahl points out (my translation, cf. 2003: 263<sup>8</sup>), co-opting thus a decided reception-oriented approach: multilingual performance is an essential media-specific (cinematic) issue – and so is their translation.

- 6 Wahl describes this as follows: "The foreign dialogue serves primarily as a marker of Otherness" (2008: 336).
- 7 By 'linguicism' Bleichenbacher refers to strategies of "linguistic racism" (2008: 17f.).
- 8 Cf. the German original: "[...] Der polyglotte Film ist also insofern ein Element des filmischen Realismus, als er die Komplexität menschlicher Kommunikation in den Vordergrund rückt und damit die unbegrenzte Macht sowohl des Kameraauges als auch des Synchronons relativiert. Dieser verknüpft Bilder und Sprache mit einer derartigen Eindringlichkeit, die die in vielen Filmen zugunsten einer perfekten erzählerischen Illusion dargestellte, völlig unglaubwürdige kulturelle und sprachliche Verständigung über jegliche Grenzen leicht konsumierbar macht, während im polyglotten Film ein differenzierteres Darstellen von Verständigung, auf Kosten einer leichten Ablenkung der Illusion, möglich wird" (Wahl 2003: 263).

It seems to be worthwhile to establish a closer link between Wahl's and Bleichenbacher's findings, to discuss them against the backdrop of other language-settings and a broadened understanding of multilingualism, as well as to take a closer look on the comprehensibility strategies which would be able to meet the intended functions of cinematic multilingualism (functional approach). That would mean to draw special attention to the depicted situation of language contact (e.g. situations of translating/interpreting, language learning, wordplays, miscommunication, lack of understanding) and to deliberately introduce the use of linguistic varieties, different levels of language competence, historic and constructed languages into the discussion. It would also mean to add the issue of language comprehensibility to more than one of the involved cinematic levels (the plot, the primary target audience, secondary audiences a.m.) and clearly involve the fields of movie distribution and reception (in different modes of AVT). As it is my intention to highlight some of these issues, I will discuss selected multilingual movies against the backdrop of Bleichenbacher's and Wahl's findings showing their relevance as well as their development capacity.<sup>9</sup>

The purest form of production-(and distribution-)-related multilingualism, which must be clearly distinguished from diegetic multilingualism and is obviously not rooted in the story told, we can spot in films which tell their story in one language and its characters speak that language although this does not make logical sense from a diegetic standpoint. The setting of the stories is at best made visible (for example through landmarks) or audible (for example through names). A significant example among many is *Hugo* (Martin Scorsese, USA 2011) which focuses on the French film pioneer Georges Méliès (1861–1938). The entire action takes place in Paris in 1930 with throwbacks to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, all protagonists being French but speaking English. So, in fact, *Hugo* depicts an endolingual and monolingual communicative situation (cf. Bleichenbacher 2008a: 12).<sup>10</sup> The 'American narration' of *Swing Kids* (Thomas Carter, USA 1993), a story of German teenagers involved in a music-based opposition against enforced conformity in Hamburg in 1939, is not less surprising. Though it cannot pass unnoticed here that *Swing* is of American origin and the German opposition movement back in the 1930s involved a strong adherence to British and American role models, the choice of English as the

9 All movies cited in this paper were discussed in depth with Polish students of Applied Linguistics at Poznań University (AMU) in a master class on AVT in 2015/16. Movie data are given in accordance with imdb.

10 The realisation of this 'French' story in English may be somehow justified by the fact, that the movie is based on American writer Brian Selznick's story *The invention of Hugo Cabret* (2011).

language of narration is certainly to be reflected against the background of movie production and marketing. This must raise questions about the reasons for taking up specific plots in a particular time (and addressing specific target audiences), about casting the roles with specific actors or, last not least, about global marketing aspirations – all issues prospective film translators should be aware of.<sup>11</sup> However, movies like *Hugo* or *Swing Kids* replace the language that would be natural for the action and setting (French and German, respectively) with English, and therefore are examples of the replacement strategy of elimination, at the same time offering arguments for other labelling (evocation, cf. Bleichenbacher 2008a: 66). For Bleichenbacher "[e]limination is characterized by the [in my understanding; almost, CBK] complete absence of any linguistic hints as to the nature of the language(s) replaced. Instead, the viewers may be offered relevant extralinguistic information, which enables them to become aware of the replacement" (2008a: 57). This information, however, can include linguistic reference to where the action is taking place, in verbal or written form. To illustrate this, Bleichenbacher (cf. 2008b: 183f.) cites a scene from Miloš Forman's English speaking *Amadeus* (USA/France 1984) in which the formulation "here in Vienna" identifies the place of action, as well as scenes from Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (USA 1993) or Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (France/Poland/Germany/UK 2002) in which town names appear in the film or are superimposed to keep viewers informed where the action is taking place and what languages are to be expected to be spoken. Thus Bleichenbacher argues with reference to *The Pianist*: "The viewer knows that the setting is Polish, and an educated guess is that the English spoken replaces the Polish language or, possibly, any other languages spoken in Central and Eastern Europe during the period" (2008b: 183). On the other hand, he offers no distinct explanation here why the languages diegetically involved in *The Pianist* are not treated on equal terms: Germans speak German,

11 The recent German-Polish co-production *Unser letzter Sommer* (PL: *Letnie przesilenie*, UK: *Summer Solstice*, Michał Rogalski, Germany/Poland 2015) can be read as a genuine continuation, plot-wise as well as language-wise. The young German protagonist, in consequence of his adherence to the oppositional Swing movement back home, is found to be transferred for disciplinary reasons to serve in the German Armed Forces (Deutsche Wehrmacht) in occupied Poland of 1943. There he gets entangled in a music based love triangle, which turns out to be fatal in more than one sense. Produced almost 25 years after *Swing Kids*, this movie fully (and very realistically) presents all languages diegetically involved in the plot. It can count as a clear indication of the emerging change in treating multilingualism in movie productions. Although this recent movie's international sales figures remain to be seen, the degree of linguistic realism in a movie in relation to its commercial success is nevertheless an aspect worthwhile further reflection.

Russians speak Russian, but Poles speak – English. This is very likely to be an issue of narrative relevance: information necessary to keep up with the plot is presented in the ‘lead language’ (English) and other languages serve as a kind of background noise to enrich the setting. The protagonists’ understanding of these languages (i.e. German or Russian) itself seems to be of crucial importance for the translation process here. This would mean, that we have to decide to which degree the protagonist’s (lack of) understanding foreign utterances would justify their translation (and how it actually should look like).

In addition to geographical references, other languages beyond those actually spoken in the movie can be named. Bleichenbacher follows Mareš in referring to ‘signalization’ here: “Signalization is defined as the literal naming of a language in the text, and [...] the naming of the [...] language serves additional narrative purposes” (2008a: 59). Somewhat closer to a film’s diegetic reality is the strategy of acoustically evoking other languages. Acoustic evocation generally makes use of phonology and vocabulary, in particular forms of address, names, culturally specific terms, for e.g. food or objects, or foreign-sounding accents that evoke images of the language actually meant. Bleichenbacher puts it as follows: “Evocation is defined as the use of a marked variety of [...] (the base language), characterized by interference from the replaced language” (2008a: 59). In many movies these features are artificially inserted, and also unequally distributed among the individual characters. One of their purposes is as elements of characterization. Recent examples are found in Steven Spielberg’s *War Horse* (USA/UK 2011), a quasi-anthology film about a horse in WWI, whose series of owners (British, German, French) all speak English. When German or French characters appear, they speak English with an accent typical of their language group. Changes in location and linguistic setting are suggested by means of ‘typical’ German or French names or single utterances in the other language.<sup>12</sup> Another, rather absurd case is found in the movie *Alone in Berlin* (Vinzent Peres, UK/France/Germany 2016), which is a film version of the German writer Hans Fallada’s novel entitled *Jeder stirbt für*

12 Cf. the significant post of American reviewer stefan-263-602656 on imdb, 11 January 2012: “[...] as we journey from English to french to German owners of what we are told is ‘a fabulous beast’, we are, once again, confronted by an American director who does not dare subtitle his foreigners, which is really sad. especially in this movie, in which each dialect lasts for less than 30 minutes, it would have added a sorely needed touch of realism to an otherwise already over-sweetened tale. may it be too forward to say that if you missed the too-subtle ‘grand-peré’ or ‘schnell!’ you might think all these people are English? [...]” (original spelling), <http://www.imdb.com/user/ur30450430/> (10.09.2016).

*sich allein* (1947; first published in English 2009 as *Every man dies Alone* (USA) / *Alone in Berlin* (UK)). The German characters played by Emma Thompson and Brendan Gleeson both speak English with a heavy German accent, which critics have roundly condemned and in one case called “absurd sauerkraut sound”.<sup>13</sup> It is as unrealistic as any of the strategies of evocation mentioned before.

Multilingualism can be partially present in movies (cf. Bleichenbacher 2008a: 70–82; 2008b: 189–194). There are a large number of examples of this too, including background utterances, short forms as prayers, nursery rhymes or songs, and, last but not least, the linguistic landscapes the plot is set in. Certainly, Polish readers are aware of the complex case of Captain Hans Kloss, a ‘bilingual’ Polish agent operating undercover in the German Nazi Abwehr. The highly popular television series from the 1960ies (*Stawka większa niż życie*, [More Than Life at Stake], TV Poland 1967–69, 18 episodes) as well as the sequel movie produced in 2012 (*Hans Kloss: Stawka większa niż śmierć*, [Hans Kloss: More Than Death at Stake], Patryk Vega, Poland 2012) shows the Polish intelligence agent – illogically and inconsequentially – always speaking Polish, irrespective of whether he is among Poles or Germans. German is present in the movie throughout written documents such as announcements, slogans or newspapers, it is visible in ‘characteristic’ lettering,<sup>14</sup> signs, pictures and, last but not least, in uniforms and it is, of course, partly made audible through “short code-switched words” (Bleichenbacher 2008a: 66), such as names, military ranks or interjections. The visible surface of multilingual films is obviously of much importance to maintaining the diegetic filmic illusion. As Wahl points out, “on the visual track, in contrast [to the audio track], the linguistic authenticity is always subject to much care” (2008: 337, 7). Similarly, Bleichenbacher (2008b: 189) notes that “[r]eplacing other languages in writing can be

13 Cf. thereview in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (17.02.2016) <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/berlinale-zigarrenrauch-und-sauerkraut-1.2866234-2> (10.09.2016).

14 This refers to the use of Gothic lettering in the movie which is apart from its eminent position in the movie’s title on the film poster thoroughly present, but seems somehow to be reserved for issues that are not really meant to be important and understood, such as road signs. This is an interesting case of using lettering as a means of serving the cinematic illusion through iconization (the letters meaning ‘German’). Lettering is certainly to be considered as tool of narrative relevance here: information given in Latin characters (and occasionally subtitled) is evidently of more diegetic importance than information given in Gothic, nevertheless Gothic characters seem to be indispensable to signal the presence of ‘German’ as the language necessary for maintaining the logic of the plot.

considered a very marked strategy because it results in a visual, rather than just aural, falsification of the depicted reality.<sup>15</sup>

Naturally, several replacement strategies can be used within one and the same film, and with seamless transitions. Often they lead to drastic inconsistencies and illogical situations which however tend to be accepted by both producers and viewers, if at all deliberately placed by the first and perceived by the latter. Bleichenbacher comments on their plausibility as follows: "While elimination and signalization are less obtrusive than evocation, they are also more likely to lead to misinterpretations of the depicted reality. Evocation points to the replaced language in a more obvious or even 'honest' manner, but it carries the risk of creating an association of second language use with specific and potentially unfavourable aims of characterization" (2008b: 194).

The past 8 to 10 years appear to show an increase in the full presence of multiple languages in movies. This perhaps indicates a somewhat shifting attitude towards linguistic consistency. Two recent productions will have to suffice to substantiate this: The American movie *The Immigrant* (James Gray, USA 2013), showing the whereabouts of a Polish girl arriving in America in 1921, diegetically fully justified presents passages in English and Polish, whereas the Polish production *Hiszpanka* (literally: *The Spanish Flu*, distribution title: *Influence*; Lukasz Barczyk, Poland 2015) refers to the context of the Greater Poland Uprising in 1918/19 and displays an international spiritual circle, in which Polish, German, English and French are spoken. *The Immigrant* nicely illustrates the economic constraints the actual realization of multilingualism in movies can be subjected to. The main character – played by French actress Marion Cotillard – speaks with her Polish relatives in Polish and otherwise in English, which is, of course, fully justified on the diegetic level. Nevertheless, one might reasonably ask why the character of 'Ewa Cybulska' is not played by a Polish actress, whose foreign accent in English would then be natural, some of the other 'Poles', by the way, being played by Russian actors. One possible answer may be found in Cotillard's career: the movie was released in 2013, after Cotillard had won an Academy Award as best actress in 2008 and subsequently appeared in an increasing number of English-speaking productions. This case illustrates how film producers and directors are constantly required to strike a balance between economic interests and desired cinematic illusions. It also illuminates considerations about which films might (or might not) be expected to enjoy commercial success in which language regions: Even though Cotillard's imitation of Polish has met with some acceptance, in Poland the movie passed by without greater response – again a point prospective AVT translators should be made aware of.

Fully presented and justified multilingualism is used where different language contexts intermingle, i.e. where it makes sense in the story for speakers of different languages to interact or where the plot unfolds in different language contexts or countries. Such plots often feature the following elements<sup>15</sup>:

- Migration (whether voluntary or involuntary), including historical accounts. Recent examples include *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (UK: *Almanya: Welcome to Germany*, Yasemin Şamdereli, Germany 2011) and the Austrian production *Kuma* (Umut Dag, 2012), both making migrants of Turkish origin a subject of discussion and presenting German and Turkish as equal source languages.
- Personal or professional sojourns abroad, including tourism. Good examples here would be the travel movie *Tickets* bringing together Scottish soccer fans, Albanian refugees and representatives of the Italian middle class in a train heading from Munich towards Rome (Abbas Kiarostami/Ken Loach/Ermanno Olmi; Italy/UK 2005; Italian, English, German, Albanian, Persian) or the German production *Am Ende kommen Touristen* (UK: *And along come Tourists*; Robert Thalheim, Germany 2007; German, Polish, English), showing a young German performing his civil service in the former concentration camp Auschwitz memorial.
- International, interethnic multilingual relationships and contacts, both personal and professional, especially love stories and family relationships in multiple countries, which often come in the form of culture clash movies. Examples relevant for students with Polish language background include *Hochzeitspolka* (PL: *Wesełna Polka*; Lars Jessen/Przemysław Nowakowski, Germany/Poland 2010; German, Polish, English) or *Polnische Ostern* ([*Polish Easter*], Jakob Ziemnicki, D/PL 2011; German, Polish), but, of course, there is a multitude of appropriate examples from other language and contact settings, including extra-terrestrial constellations (SF) or time travelling.
- Conflict situations (both historical and current), including war, colonialism and terrorism. This group of films covers multi-country historical and political constellations such as *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin*, showing the daily struggle of

15 See Wahl's "five polyglot film subgenres": migration film, fraternisation film, existential film, globalisation film, colonial film (2008: 340–346). Bleichenbacher refers to four "prime narrative reasons which bring the characters into contact [...] (1) migration, (2) tourism, (3) cross border crime, terrorism and their prevention, and (4) international conflicts (war, occupation, but also diplomacy)" (2008a: 44). Berger & Komori (2010) focus on polyglot films against the backdrop of "migration and transcultural narration" (title).

German women in Berlin 1945 liberated by the Red Army (UK: *A Woman in Berlin*, Max Färberböck, Germany/Poland 2008; German, Russian, Georgian); *Zwei Leben* (UK: *Two Lives*; Georg Maas, Judith Kaufmann; Germany/Norway 2012; German, Norwegian, English, Russian, Danish), featuring a Stasi informer's multiple identity; the exemplary Polish production *Róża* about the struggle for survival of a Masurian woman finding herself in post-war Poland between Poles, Germans and Russians (UK: *Rose*, Wojciech Smarzowski, Poland 2011; Polish, Russian, German) or *The Railway Man* (Jonathan Teplitzky, Australia/UK/Switzerland 2013; English, Japanese) about a British Army officer held in a Japanese labour camp during WWII.

Plot-wise justified multilingualism is furthermore likely to come up around

- Parallel actions in different locations that are directly or indirectly related. A now classic example is the anthology film *Night on Earth* (Jim Jarmusch, France/UK/Germany/USA/Japan 1991; English, French, Italian, Finnish, German). Other examples include films with globally interlinked action such as *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, France/USA/Mexico 2006; English, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, French, Russian, Berber Language, Japanese sign language) or *One Day in Europe* (Hannes Stör, Germany/Spain 2006; English, French, Russian, Hungarian, German, Spanish, Gallegan).

Of special interest are movies showing

- The life in border and multilingual regions, such as the German *Lichter* (UK: *Lights*, Hans-Christian Schmid, Germany 2006; German, Polish, Russian) focussing on the border in the region of Frankfurt (Oder) / Stubice, or the English-Spanish-speaking *Sicario* (Denis Villeneuve, USA 2015) about drug violence at the US Mexican border.

Last but not least there are

- Aspects of economic, political and cultural globalization in the context of e.g. international institutions or global developments that create a need for authentic multilingualism in movies. The Austrian *We feed the world* (Erwin Wagenhofer, 2005; French, German, Portuguese, English) making global food production the subject of discussion can serve as a welcome example – a documentary among many others that make the extension of cinematic multilingualism to non-fictional pictures worth considering.

The languages present in these pictures can be distinguished as native, second or foreign languages, there is the issue of Lingua Franca, and all are spoken on different levels as required by the plot, ranging from CEFR levels A1 to C2.

Furthermore, there often are diverse modalities between the languages and their speakers: incomprehension and limited comprehension, misunderstandings, refusals to understand, code-switching, interpreting between languages and varieties, occasional language learning processes and others.

Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (USA 2009), one of "the multilingual films of recent years" (Bréan/Cornu 2012: 4, emphasis in original), is a treasure trove for questions of this type. It is a fine example of a 'polyglot movie', belonging to the cases featuring cross-national, cross-cultural and cross-lingual conflict situations, in which multiple languages are spoken in parallel and with equal significance albeit grouped around a 'dominant language' (in this case English). It might even be called an outstanding example of the 'existential' polyglot subgenre proposed by Wahl, "because [it is] devoted to the almost philosophical meditations on the (im-)possibility of successful verbal communication" (2008: 342), or, as Bréan/Cornu put it, "for its use of multilingualism as a major narrative device" (2012: 4). In itself maybe a not so typical example of polyglot films, it is superbly suited for exercises and discussions in translation education programs – especially when different translation modes into more than one target language are involved. Tarantino has made several movies in which multilingualism naturally arises out of the plot<sup>16</sup> and multilingualism carries the action over substantial periods in *Inglourious Basterds* as well, being highly self-reflective at the same time. In addition to the plot as such, there is a focus on film as a medium, and on the role and power of speech, speakers, and their interrelationships. The plot involves several countries and languages. English, German, French and Italian are spoken; many characters manoeuvre perfectly in different language constellations and change their languages depending on the action. There are also situations in which speech is interpreted or language knowledge is feigned. Strong accents, dialects, phrasesologies, slips of the tongue, and word games also play a role, not to mention reflections on language skills, feeling for language, and questions of translation and interpreting. The action over long sequences lives from the tangle of languages: French people speak English; English and American people speak German and seem to speak Italian; Germans speak English, French and Italian; languages serve to both disguise and expose their speakers; and all the characters want to achieve their aims by means of language. A number of these characters (and their actors) reveal themselves to be supremely skilled in the process.

16 See for instance *Django Unchained* (USA 2012), where English, German, French and Italian are spoken and an important strand of the plot is based on the active knowledge of German.

### 3. Tackling multilingual films with AVT adepts

Multilingual movies as this undoubtedly pose a challenge for audiovisual translation, and have, of course, made their way into the corresponding academic research and teaching.<sup>17</sup> How do the solutions found by translators depend on the selected mode of translation (subtitling, dubbing, voice-over)? How should short code switches be marked in the translation? How can foreign accents and different levels of language mastery be conveyed? How to handle linguistic errors and language learning situations appropriately? How can a character's experience with miscommunication be made plausible to the viewer? To which extent the AVT process should introduce the position of the super-imposed viewer who knows more than the movie's protagonist (and could that contradict the director's intention)? How to judge the importance of spoken or written information in different languages if the AVT process requires setting priorities, enforced by limited space (sub-titling) or time (dubbing)? How is this to be linked with visual means of expression? What happens with elements of the linguistic landscape if they remain opaque to viewers? And what if the best possible AVT solution runs counter to the cinematic conventions and expectancies of the audience (the producer / the film distributor) – all these are authentic questions asked by students in AVT courses. Answers can be only found working together, discussing examples of best (and worst) practice over and over again. Translation appears to be relatively simple on the lower levels of Bleichenbacher's taxonomy (cf. 2008a: 173–191). However, I would argue, even here we have to consider the cinematic illusion as well. The illogic English spoken in *Hugo* could be completely replaced by German in a dubbed version – then we replace one diegetic mismatch by another, whereas the French dubbing would for its part reinforce the plot. Voice-over and subtitling in turn would add to the insufficiency of the cinematic illusion: the 'French' story would be audible in Polish with an English audio track underneath and subtitling would mean we have to push the English soundscape somehow to the back of our mind to follow the Polish subtitles explaining a French story to us. Matters become even more difficult when more than one language is involved. The movie *Mala Moskwa* ([*Little Moscow*] Waldemar Krzystek, Poland 2008) – a Polish-Russian love story set in Poland in the late 1960s, in which both languages are equally present – seems to show a rather natural solution: the Russian passages are presented with optional Polish subtitles in the original version, whereas

17 Cf. Bréan & Cornu (2012) on the June 2012 conference in Montpellier on "The Translation and Reception of Multilingual Films" with some of the proceedings published in Şerban & Meylaerts (2014).

a version for English-speaking viewers shows English subtitles for both languages. Most viewers of the original version are supposed clearly to distinguish between the two languages, but viewers of the English subtitled version cannot necessarily be expected so. When the Russian singer is switching from Russian to Polish – a diegetically very important moment as it is the very beginning of the love story – this is echoed in the sudden glancing up of the Polish officer. The English subtitles only somewhat later offer a kind of explanation for all of those who would not have distinguished between Russian and Polish in time (cf. Fig. 3).<sup>18</sup>

Figure 3. *How to miss code-switching in translation* (Mala Moskwa, 00:14:04–00:14:53, Syrena Films/TiM Film Studio)



What happens when this movie is to be dubbed into German or French – which to my knowledge has not taken place, perhaps just because of translation problems? Here one gains a broader sense of the enormous role played by language barriers and viewing conventions within European and global film distribution. And, furthermore, here one gains a sense of the close conjunction between linguistic and cinematic means of expression (e.g. shot/reverse shot, framing shot).

18 And, one may ask, why the song itself is not subtitled – although its content plays a crucial role for the unfolding plot? Cf. the review of *Zen-2-Zen* (14. July 2014) on imdb: "Someone should do a full blown remake with US production in English and maybe with just a bit of Polish to spice it up, maybe just the song." <http://www.imdb.com/user/ur2510180/> (10.09.2016).

Finally, what happens when translations are undertaken within a movie itself and one of the languages involved is the target language? Situations like this are likely to come up around *Inglourious Basterds* as many times has been stated before (e.g. Weidmann 2012). Already a short segment (00:32:28–00:33:03) can demonstrate how dubbing a sequence of English-German translation into German can have a substantial impact on its content.<sup>19</sup> Questioning a captured German soldier about his language competences turns out to be a trigger point: “English?” changes into the German “Schiss [haben]” (i.e.: be yellow) in a more or less acceptable solution based on the dictates of lip synchronicity. The Polish subtitling, by contrast, faces far fewer problems – the two languages are translated equally and literally (cf. Fig. 4).<sup>20</sup> “Dubbed versions are easy prey for criticism, while subtitled are considered loyal to the original film” (Bréan/Cornu 2012: 4) – a universal conviction that is worth proving by “considering a given film’s dubbed version for its own qualities and drawbacks” (Bréan/Cornu 2012: 4). Again, this could be a meaningful task for prospective (Polish) AVT translators, who are likely to put the reason for the existence of the dubbed versions in question.

Figure 4. *Translating acts of (English-German) translation into one of the languages involved: changing its content* (Inglourious Basterds, 00:32:28–00:33:03).

Time / Person	Original	English SDH	German Subtitles	German Dubbing	Polish Subtitles	Polish Voice-over
00:32:28 AR	Donny, bring that other one over here. Alive!	Donny, bring that other one over here. Alive!	Donny, bring mir den anderen. Lebendig!	Danny, bring mir den Kerl her. Lebendig!	Donny, przyprowadź tu tego drugiego. Żywego!	Donny, przyprowadź drugiego. Żywego!
00:32:32 DD	Get the fuck up! Batter up. You're on deck! Two hits. I hit you, you hit the ground.	Get the fuck up! Batter up. You're on deck! Two hits. I hit you, you hit the ground.	Steh auf! In Schlag-Position! Du bist dran! Zwei Schläge. Ich Kopf, du Boden.	Steh auf. Drecksau! Bring dich in Position, du bist dran! Zwei Schläge: ich Kopf, du Boden.	Wstawaj, twoja kolej do odbicia. Dwa uderzenia. Ja walnę w ciebie, a ty w trawę.	Rusz się. Twoja kolej. Ja walnę w ciebie, a ty walisz w glebę.
00:32:39 AR	English?	English?	—	Fast du Schiss?	Angielski?	Angielski?
00:32:40 PB	Nein.	(SPEAKING GERMAN)	—	Ja!	—	—
00:32:42 AR	Wicki! Ask him, if he wants to live.	ALDO: Wicki. Ask him if he wants to live.	Wicki. Frag, ob er am Leben bleiben will.	Wicki! Ich brauch dich zum Händchenhalten!	Wicki! Spytaj go, czy chce żyć.	Wicki! Zapytaj, czy chce żyć.

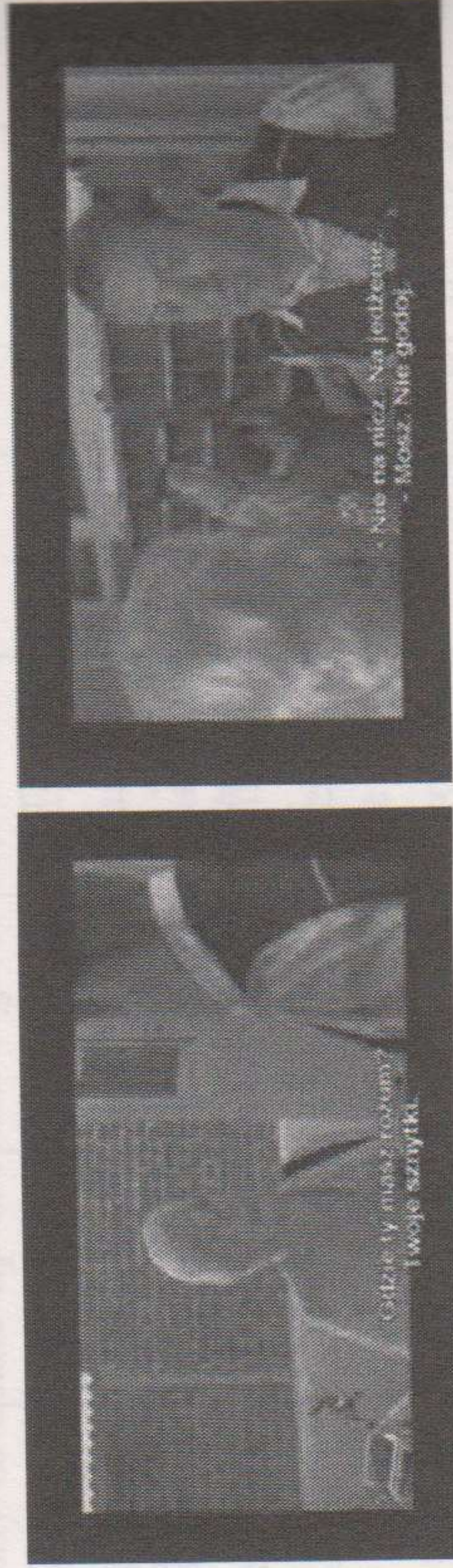
<sup>19</sup> Weidmann points at the overall disappearance of cinematic coherence on more than one level consequent to dubbing polyplot dialogues into one of the languages involved (cf. Weidmann 2012).

<sup>20</sup> For further comparison, including Czech dubbing and subtitling, cf. Badstübner-Kizik 2015.

Time / Person	Original	English SDH	German Subtitles	German Dubbing	Polish Subtitles	Polish Voice-over
00:32:49 WW	Willst du am Leben bleiben?	(BOTH SPEAKING GERMAN)	—	—	—	—
00:32:50 GB	Ja, Sir!	—	—	—	—	—
00:32:51 AR	Tell him to point out on this map the German position.	Tell him to point out on this map the German position.	Er soll uns die deutsche Stellung zeigen.	Da will sich wohl einer um das Baseballspiel drücken.	Niech wskaże na mapie pozycję Niemców.	Niech wskaże na mapie pozycję niemieckie pozycje!
00:32:52 WW	Dann zeig uns auf der Karte, wo die deutsche Stellung ist.	(SPEAKING GERMAN) ... (BASTERDS LAUGHING)	—	—	—	—
00:32:58 AR	Ask him how many Germans.	Ask him how many Germans.	Frag ihn, wie viele es sind.	Wir können ihm aber auch die Eier abschneiden.	Spytaj, ilu ich jest.	Zapytaj, ilu ich jest.
00:32:59 WW	Wieviele Deutsche?	(BOTH SPEAKING GERMAN)	—	—	—	—
00:32:59 PB	Könniten zwölf sein.	—	—	—	—	—
00:33:02 WW	Around about twelve.	Around about 12.	Ungefähr zwölf.	Er will seine Eier behalten.	Może być 12.	Dwunastu.
00:33:03 AR	What kind of artillery?	What kind of artillery?	Welche Art Waffen?	Und ich hab mich schon so gefreut.	Jak są uzbrojeni?	Jakie uzbrojenie?

Yet another situation occurs when variations of one language meet or artificial (artistic) languages enter the picture (‘artlang’). According to the underlying conception of multilingualism here, these too are to be considered as multilingual movies on a diegetic level. Two brief examples might highlight their potential for translation educational purposes: The French production *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (*Welcome to the Sticks*, Danny Boon, France 2008) brings a Parisian and a northern French dialect from the area around Lille together. The Polish subtitles and voice-over work with a mixture of Polish linguistic varieties (especially from Silesia, the Polish Gorals and Greater Poland) and stylisations of voiced and voiceless alveolar consonants (cf. Fig. 5). The German dubbing, in turn, successfully combines ‘High German’ with a very convincing and humorous fictitious dialect which carries the mixing of consonants very far.

Figure 5. Translating linguistic varieties: creating a new variety in the target language (here: Polish) (Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis, 00:30:42, 00:30:51, Pathé, Hirsh, Les Productions du Chicon, TFI Film Production/Hagi Film)



The case of Chaplin's Tomanian<sup>21</sup> in *The Great Dictator* (Charles Chaplin, USA 1940) is well known. The original version offers an English voice-over commentary to his fantastic German mocking verbal creation, it is replaced in the dubbed German version and subtitled in the Polish version. The Polish voice-over version, which is in this case the more popular one, confronts us with a double voice-over, in turn, presenting the challenge of discerning between three audio tracks at (almost) the same time: Tomanian, English and Polish.<sup>22</sup> John Carter (Andrew Stanton, USA 2012) brings together English and an artificial language from Mars, Barsoomian (also Martian or Tharkian). It appears subtitled (hardcoded) in the original version itself, so further translations have to add additional subtitles (in this case as surtitles, cf. Fig. 6).

Figure 6. Translating artificial languages: 'Surtitling' (into German) of hardcoded English subtitles (John Carter, 00:24:26, Disney/Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment)



#### 4. Conclusions

Why should prospective film translators in Poland – and elsewhere – study these and comparable segments of movies? Why should specialists in English, German or Romance studies also examine languages and language constellations that may not be a major profile and that play hardly any role in their professional work, as they are first of all expected to translate for their own film markets? As such, they translate most commonly into their own languages, and utilize primarily the established translation conventions in their regions. Yet the answers to this question are somehow obvious: just like translators of books, film translators should never hole up in 'their own' pairs of languages and their domestic translation modes. Looking at other language constellations, at other approaches to AVT and modes of audiovisual reception and at other solutions for persistent problems helps to expand their own horizons. By analysing multilingual movies and comparing the solutions to their problems found in other language regions and translation modes, the next generation of translators can develop outstanding media (film-specific) translation as well as linguistic and trans-linguistic skills and acquire important tools and decisional aids in the process. As such, working with multilingual movies at the interface of different modes of translation should be a major element of translation training. The studies of Wahl and Bleichenbacher present very welcome points of entry into this, suggesting how to supplement and expand underlying concepts of multilingualism and language contact. Moreover, they ask to be enriched by an additional dimension of AVT theories, taking into account different traditions, aspirations and expectations regarding the production, distribution and reception of movies. Granting this a place in the AVT-curriculum, important competences stand a chance to get involved:

21 On imdb this, by the way, is called "Esperanto", a linguistic label rather light-handedly given to many movies classified as SF, horror or thriller, and certainly offering interesting challenges for AVT, cf. [http://www.imdb.com/search/title?title\\_type=feature&languages=eo&sort=moviemeter,asc&ref\\_=tt\\_dt\\_dt](http://www.imdb.com/search/title?title_type=feature&languages=eo&sort=moviemeter,asc&ref_=tt_dt_dt). (10.09.2016).

22 Cf. Hynkel's famous speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4UhljpvYg&nohtml5=False> (Original version, including English voice-over), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMlIpe-suAs> (German version with dubbed voice-over), <http://www.cda.pl/video/9149392> (00:15:22–00:20:36; superimposed Polish voice-over) (10.09.2016).

- Making use of respectively fostering students' multilingual capacities will enhance students' passive and active multilingualism.
  - Collecting and commenting on data from a great variety of movies and their translations, ranging from main-stream to arthouse, are likely to increase students' film-specific competence, i.e. their awareness of how a film 'works', to what conditions its production, distribution, translation and reception are subjected.
  - Paying special attention to the language(s) spoken and written in movies as well as the language performances of movie characters (and actors) help them to sharpen their perception for the functioning and interrelation of visual and audio tracks in movies.
  - Analysing, comparing and complementing different modes of translations into different target languages will enhance their film-specific, cultural and translational competence.
  - Finally, looking for new or better solutions will stimulate their own creativity.
- This may render it necessary to touch on:
- A revision of students' understanding of multilingualism, including the position of linguistic varieties and different levels of language competence,
  - A substantiated line of argumentation on cinematic multilingualism, through verifying existing taxonomies on the base of constantly new emerging examples. An important issue here should be the clear distinction between non-diegetic and diegetic multilingualism on the levels of narration (plot), production (realisation) and distribution (translation strategies),
  - A critical in depth discussion of a wide range of real-world AVT solutions ready to be found on primary, secondary and tertiary film markets and in languages accessible to the group of AVT adepts in question.

My intention has been to draw attention to these needs and to promote further critical reflection.

## References

- Badstübner-Kizik, C. (2015). Polyglotte Filme als translatorische Herausforderung und didaktische Chance. Das Beispiel *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino 2009). In C. Badstübner-Kizik & Z. Fišer & R. Hauck (eds). *Übersetzung als Kulturvermittlung. Translatorisches Handeln. Neue Strategien. Didaktische Innovation* (221–246). Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang.
- Berger, V. & Komori, M. (eds.) (2010). *Polyglot Cinema. Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*. Wien/Berlin: LIT Verlag.

- Bleichenbacher, L. (2008a). *Multilingualism in the Movies. Hollywood Characters and Their Language Choices*. Tübingen: Francke.
- Bleichenbacher, L. (2008b). Linguistic Replacement in the Movies. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 44(2), 179–196.
- Bréan, S. & Cornu, J.-F. (2012). The Translation and Reception of Multilingual Films [revue]. *InMedia*, 2. Retrieved from <http://inmedia.revues.org/486>
- Mareš, P. (2000a). Fikce, konvence a realita: k vícejazyčnosti w umelčeských textach [Fiction, convention and reality: about multilingualism in fictional texts]. *Slovo a Slovestnost*, 61 (1), 47–53.
- Mareš, P. (2000b). Mnogojazyčná komunikacija i kinofilm [Multilingual communication and the movie]. In M. B. Ješič et al. (eds.). *Jazyk kak sredstvo transljicii kulture* (248–265). Moskva: Nauka.
- Şerban, A. & Meylaerts, R. (eds.) (2014). Multilingualism at the cinema and on stage: A translation perspective. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*, 13. Retrieved from <https://lans.ua.ac.be/index.php/LANS-TTS/issue/view/4>
- Wahl, C. (2003). *Das Sprechen der Filme. Über verbale Sprache im Spielfilm. Versionsfilme und andere Sprachübertragungsmethoden – Tonfilm und Standardisierung – Die Diskussion um den Sprechfilm – Der polyglotte Film – Nationaler Film und internationales Kino* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from <http://www-brs.uni-bochum.de/netahtml/HSS/Diss/WahlChristoph/diss.pdf>
- Wahl, C. (2005). *Das Sprechen der Spielfilme. Über die Auswirkungen von hörbaren Dialogen auf Produktion und Rezeption, Ästhetik und Internationalität der siebten Kunst*. Trier: WVT.
- Wahl, C. (2008). 'Du Deutscher, toi Français, you English: beautiful' – The polyglot film as a genre. In M. Christensen & N. Erdogan (eds.). *Shifting Landscapes. Film and Media in European Context* (334–350). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Weidmann, A.-L. (2012). À la recherche de la cohérence perdue: étude comparative de quatre doublages d'Inglourious Basterds (Quentin Tarantino, 2009). ATAA. *Le blog de l'Association des Traducteurs et Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel*. Retrieved from <http://www.ataa.fr/blog/category/retour-sur-inglourious-basterds/>