

# Operating between Cultures and Languages: Multilingual Films in Foreign Language Classes

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**Abstract:** Our societies have undergone two major changes during the last decades: firstly, the continuous rise of cultural and linguistic diversity, due to the global economy, migration and universal mobility, and secondly, the steady expansion and gathering impetus of the new communication media (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2012). In consequence, multilingualism, acquired or learned, has shaped our living together and pertains to our learners in the classroom. Similarly, polyglot movies, literatures and other cultural productions have become symbolic expressions for worldwide cross-cultural movements for all age groups. Both the multilingualism and the multi-/transculturalism inherent in the texts and images constitute a rich cultural resource for the Foreign Language (FL) classroom. This article argues that the creative potential of transnational film, to be found in its multilingualism *and* transculturalism, should be used as a complementary field of teaching film *beyond* the traditional and curriculum-bound (English only) English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Germany and therefore supports multicultural, multilingual and multimodal learning. The article uses examples from Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), Gonzalez Iñárritu's *Babel* (2012) and Wim Wenders' documentary *Pina* (2011).

**Key words:** FL/EFL classroom, multicultural learning, multilingual learning, multimodal learning, cross-lingual and cross-cultural film education, global education



## 1 Topic relevance and fundamentals

Our societies have undergone two major changes during the last few decades: firstly, the great increase of cultural and linguistic diversity due to the global economy, migration and universal mobility and, secondly, the steady expansion and growing influence of the new communication media (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In consequence of the first change, the phenomena of multilingualism, acquired or learned, have shaped the way we live together and affected our literatures as well as our language learners. Similarly, multilingualism has had a profound impact on film, and polyglot movies have become emblematic of media globalization and worldwide cross-cultural movements of all age groups.

Polyglot movies are culturally significant and widespread these days, in movie theatres or on television. Compilations of them can be found at various well-known internet sources as well. The German website [www.moviepilot.de](http://www.moviepilot.de) (2018), for example, lists 108 polyglot movie productions. Wikipedia.org (2016) provides links to many pages with multilingual film titles. One of these is *Babel* (2012), Gonzalez Iñarritu's famous episodic film which tells four culturally interrelated stories in five languages: English, Japanese, Arab, Spanish, and Japanese sign language. Another is Quentin Tarantino's Academy Award nominated movie *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) in which Tarantino places "a great deal of dramatic importance on languages" (Abend-David, 2014, p. 29). Furthermore, Wim Wenders' *Pina* (2011), a documentary about Pina Bausch, a German dancer and modern dance choreographer and teacher (1940–2009) who became famous for her unusual but also dazzling cross-cultural performances, may be read as a multilingual art production. Unlike *Babel* or *Inglourious Basterds*, Wenders places his emphasis in *Pina* more on the loss of language, on "less-lingualism" (Gramling, 2016, p. 49) in order to promote an "ethos of indifference toward contemporary categories of social and linguistic distinction" (Gramling, 2016, p. 39). Although these films appear disparate in terms of their concepts of multilingualism, they all are rich resources for the Foreign Language (FL) classroom as they address language diversity, language exchange and confrontation, or the idea of language repression and loss. I will argue in my paper that the creative potential of transnational films and their various conceptions of multilingualism and transculturalism offer a complementary and additional approach to supporting multicultural, multilingual, and multimodal learning *beyond* the traditional and curriculum-bound FL classroom in Germany.

### 1.1 Multilingualism as a linguistic resource for the FL classroom

The idea of seeing language(s) and (multi-)language competence as a form of *capital* and as a social *means of production* is closely linked with Pierre Bourdieu (Bohn & Hahn, 2007, pp. 289–291; Roche, 2013, p. 180) and may open further cultural resources for socialized individuals. In the same way, multilingualism and multilingual education have become important issues in German schools during the last decade. Gnutzmann goes so far as to describe multilingual competence as a new and holistic competence for the German classroom in general (2004, p. 45). However, the manifold results from theoretical and empirical research have not yet contributed satisfactorily to the implementation of a cross-curricular and widely accepted (multi-)language pedagogy. The doubtlessly rich multilingual resources of learners in German schools, who have either a German or another linguistic and cultural background (e.g. refugee children), are far from having been exhausted. Prestigious and politically favored (foreign) languages like English, French, or Spanish dominate schools' curricula and are usually learned separately from one another. Native or heritage languages of immigrant children still mostly lie dormant. The educational goal, however, should not be to build up a mere "additive multilingualism", but rather strive for a form of "integrated multilingualism" as a result of continuous cross-language education from the very beginning (cp. Hallet & Königs,

2010, p. 303), which is also declared in the Common European Framework (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

After all, in order to develop approaches to teaching multilingual films in the FL classroom in Germany, one should like to follow a positive line of argument and see the L2<sup>2</sup> or *lingua franca* English as a *bridge* that provides the basis for language comparisons, reflection and awareness (cognitive competence). Thus, the EFL classroom can support the development of general and cross-curricular communicative and discursive skills in L2/L3 (i.e. discursive-communicative competence) as well as intercultural learning and communication (intercultural competence). Furthermore, multilingual education challenges should also be met by multi-language sense- and meaning-making processes that exist on a non-linguistic, semiotic level.

## 1.2 Multiculturalism as a resource for the FL classroom

Concepts of multilingualism, logically, demand a wide as well as deep understanding of culture(s). As the famous Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie eloquently emphasized: “Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories” (2009, n.p.). Accordingly, we should understand modern screened narratives as meaningful symbolic systems that carry and negotiate thoughts, values and activities due to social and cultural hybridization processes (Nünning & Nünning, 2003, p. 6; Kramsch, 2011, pp. 354–367). As early as 1994, Porter and Samovar listed a set of criteria of teaching literature that paved the way for a multiculturally-oriented FL classroom. These principles are: (a) culture is always learned; (b) culture is transferable and flexibly attached (locally and globally); (c) culture is dynamic; (d) culture is selective; (e) all facets of culture are intertwined; and (f) culture is ethnocentric, on the one hand, but complex and hybrid on the other hand as well (Porter & Samovar, 1994, p. 12, as cited in Roche, 2013, p. 217). Because of the fact that the methodologies of teaching literature and film in terms of cultural and intercultural objectives are relatively similar, these criteria are germane to the teaching of language(s) with multilingual films as well. Due to the ongoing *social turn* and to very diverse cultural hybridization processes of individual language learners, intercultural learning increasingly turns out to be an “interactive, negotiated process between free-standing individuals. Culture becomes [...] a *verb*”<sup>3</sup> (Kramsch & Zhang, 2018, p. 9) rather than only an *object*.

As a result, I would also argue from a cultural perspective that plurilingual films should have their place in the modern FL classroom, in which traditional and local target language topics should be complemented by more complex, cross-curricular and global topics. Thus, for example, the role of native Indians in the U.S. in the EFL classroom could be compared to that of Chicanos/as, a group of Mexican-Americans living in the United States as well (Roche, 2013, p. 207; Clalüna, Fischer & Hirschfeld, 2007, pp. 38–45). Apart from this, also stories of people in transcultural trouble spots, e.g. big European refugee camps, or simply funny/tragic globetrotter stories that could happen anywhere could enrich local target topics in the English, Spanish, or French FL classroom. The learners can thus discover further common cultural or individual contact zones and transcultural phenomena (Blell & Doff, 2014).

<sup>1</sup> Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence (CEFR, ch. 1.3).

<sup>2</sup> L2 = second language, i.e. the first foreign language, L3 = third language, and so on.

<sup>3</sup> Culture becoming a “verb” was already famously proposed by Street and Thompson in 1993 (pp. 23–43).

### 1.3 Transnational films

Although they seem to be mainly an aesthetic result of and a reaction to internationalization and globalization processes, multilingual film productions as artistic manifestations are by no means new phenomena. Back in the history of the film industry, between 1929–1935, Hollywood, for example, had already produced 104 so-called “multiple-language version films” which were produced for the international market several times with the same setting and costumes, but in various languages, mostly Spanish, French, or German. However, this international movie transfer went into decline after 1931 due to the development of dubbing and subtitling techniques. In turn, the output data of multilingual films increased again from the 1950s, worldwide. Many multiple language versions have been released since then, many more in Bollywood than in Hollywood, and include minority or indigenous languages. The Bollywood production *Zanjeer* (2013), for example, was shot in Hindi and Telugu and *dubbed* in Tamil and Malayalam. Bleichenbacher argues in connection with this that “multilingualism is a distinctive feature of many contemporary movies produced outside the Hollywood mainstream” (2008, p. 21). Hollywood gave up its English-only screening tradition relatively late, for example with *Inglourious Basterds* (2009).

For about 20 years, more and more multilingual films have been put on the international market, labelled as *transnational* films or *global films*. In terms of content and aesthetics, these labels indicate growing political, economic and social globalization and interconnection processes. Common enough, these productions are often born of directors who have a transcultural biography. Examples include Alejandro González Iñárritu and Wim Wenders, and/or actors and actresses who have grown up multilingually; for example, Christoph Waltz of *Inglourious Basterds* speaks German, English, French and Italian.<sup>4</sup> The applied language-mix in its stricter and wider sense (vernacular multilingualism and semiotic multilingualism)<sup>5</sup> symbolically transcends borders and demonstrates disregard for certain rules: social, aesthetic, linguistic, ethical and cultural (Knauth, 2002, p. 2). Among other topics, these movies predominantly tell border-crossing stories, thematizing questions of cultural hybridity, migration, war or language(s) itself/themselves.

Bleichenbacher determines three functions of multilingualism on screen (2008, pp. 26–40), Gramling highlights seven types (2016, pp. 37–56).<sup>6</sup> Four of these can be observed in the film examples chosen for the current paper. Two further functions, concerning *semiodiversity* and *less-lingualism* are added from my own research.

- (1) *A cinematic multilingualism to make the narrative(s) more authentic*: other languages make the unknown geographical setting look/sound real, modify or change narrative mood or cause tension or chaos (cp. Abecassis, 2010, p. 119).
- (2) *A cinematic multilingualism to support socio-critical ways of expression*: the unfamiliar or strange language of a character may increase irony, comedy, or grotesquerie; it may help to build up distance or to subvert (linguistic) ideological portrayals.
- (3) *A cinematic multilingualism that becomes an aesthetic means to contrast characters with each other*: multilingual characters (e.g. globetrotter, *cosmopolitan*, foreigner, tourist, immigrant or border-crosser), often staged as antagonists, usually create narrative suspense and contrast and, with it, support the dichotomy of

<sup>4</sup> Gramling calls this aspect ‘artisanal multilingualism’ (2016, p. 44).

<sup>5</sup> Vernacular multilingualism refers here to the various languages spoken (everyday language specific to a social group or region included), whereas semiotic multilingualism indicates a wider area of communication that seeks to understand all meaning-making processes like visual or acoustic images, gestures, mimics etc.

<sup>6</sup> Bleichenbacher coined the functions 1–3. Gramling differentiates between (1) artisanal multilingualism, (2) cofinance glossodiversity, (3) coordinated-market multilingualism, (4) free-market multilingualism, (5) semiodiversity, (6) allegorical multilingualism and (7) less-lingualism (2016, pp. 44–50).

*good and evil*. Persons are often thus stigmatized and disregarded (Abecassis, 2010, p. 118).

- (4) *A cinematic multilingualism that becomes a meaningful device for postcolonial and transcultural narratives*: border/culture-crossing narratives almost naturally yield “border disorder” (Marciniak & Bennett, 2016, p. 7), i.e. *contradictory* dialogues (or polylogues) of languages and codes, with diverse cultural practices and encounters. Multilingualism generates “a dialogue of social forces [...] fused into an indissoluble concrete unity that is contradictory, multi-speaked and heterogeneous” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 365).
- (5) *A cinematic multilingualism/‘semiodiversity’ that centers on the complex diversity of meanings*: Apart from language, mainly non-linguistic sign-systems such as movement, special effects or bodily capacity express different ‘tongues’, very often ambiguously and equivocally staged (e.g. in *Pina*).
- (6) *A cinematic less-lingualism to aesthetically celebrate the co-existence of languages and cultures*: Thus, for example Wenders’ documentary *Pina* utilizes only a few voiceovers and testimonies, although nine languages are spoken.

Finally, most important and useful for the FL classroom are doubtlessly films in which two or more languages are code-switched, i.e. speakers change back and forth between two or more languages. Knauth’s definition, although created for multilingual literature, depicts this genre as “the symbolic expression of cross-cultural movement or *Weltverkehr* [...] [which] refers to the more or less extended mix of two or more languages in the same text, entailing a cross-cultural or experimental effect” (Knauth, 2002, pp. 1–2). Consequently, the focus of the discussion here will be, on the one hand, on the pedagogical implications of mixing two or more languages in film for the FL classroom and, on the other hand, on polyglottism in a wider semiotic sense including other meaning-making processes such as aspects of narration or film techniques. Both aspects can be found in what has been coined *transnational cinema*, a strand devoted to issues of immigration, transnational encounters, cosmopolitanism, terrorism, war, race or racism.

In the following, three examples will be looked at.

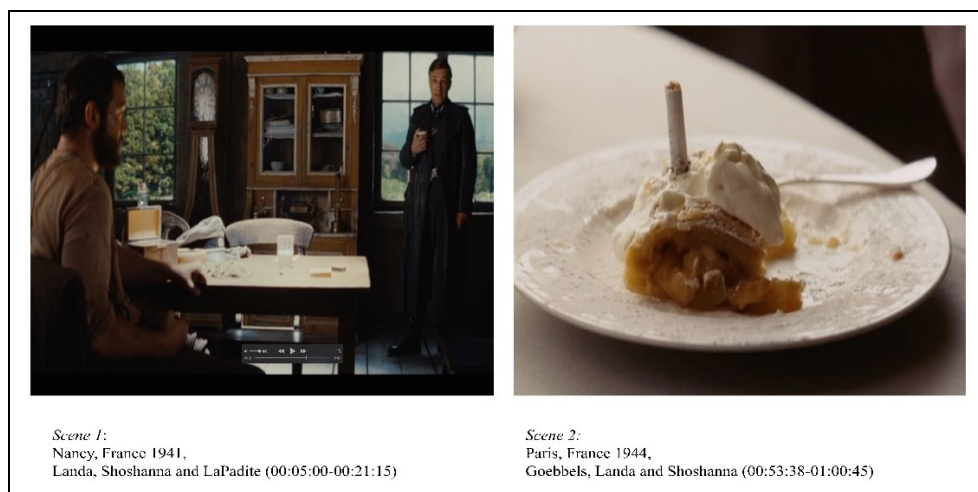
### 1.3.1 *Inglourious Basterds* (2009)

*Inglourious Basterds* is set in World War II between 1941 and 1944 and tells the story of two attempts to assassinate the leadership of Nazi Germany, including Adolf Hitler. Shoshanna Dreyfuss, a Jewish woman, belongs to one of these resistance groups. She is the only survivor of an attack carried out by *SS-Standartenführer* (officer) Hans Landa, who instructs his men to kill her Jewish family in the countryside near French Nancy in 1941. She flees to Paris and meets Landa again in 1944 in Paris where she has opened a movie theatre that should show a Nazi propaganda film.

Already in the first scene, in which Landa orders to shoot the whole family, he (mis-) uses his multilingualism for political power purposes, he switches from French to English/German and, by doing so, reverses the L1/L2-conditions for the dialogue partners. Repschläger substantiates the communication situation when he says:

“The Standartenführer who used his L2 (French) and seemingly took over the weaker role by letting LaPadite [the Jewish family’s father; G.B.] answer in his L1, later in scene forces his *opponent* to change the linguistic (power) circumstances. Consequently, Landa uses his L1 because he seems to expect that the hidden Jews underneath the floor can only understand French.” (Repschläger, 2018, p. 4)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Moritz Repschläger, one of my teacher training students, wrote an exam paper on the movie (Repschläger, 2018).



*Illustration 1: Inglourious Basterds, screenshots (2009)*

The same happens in Paris, in 1944.

“From the beginning, language is implemented as a power instrument putting Shoshanna in a vulnerable position. (*scene 2*) The monolingual character of Goebbels makes no attempt to speak French, instead, all his utterances are translated by his mistress. The linguistic power structures are increasingly underlined when Landa appears. He, Goebbels and Zoller start talking in English/German about the reasons why the SS-Colonel needs to talk in private with Shoshanna. Again, English/German *wins* over French. When sitting alone at the table with Shoshanna, now speaking his fluent French (English/German subtitles), Landa orders *Strudel* for both of them. The use of the loan-word *Strudel* and the intercultural reference of ordering a typical dessert of the German and Austrian cuisine has the effect of a confrontation with present national, cultural and linguistic power structures. German/Austrian cultural assets are forced upon Shoshanna manifesting her weak position.” (Repschläger, 2018, p. 6)

Interestingly, the two scenes are interconnected with devices like a glass of milk, a cigarette and a pipe, the same music and flashbacks.

### 1.3.2 *Babel* (2006)

The episodic film *Babel* (2006) tells stories along geographical borders and, with that, stories along cultural and language borders.<sup>8</sup> In one story, the Americans, Susan and Richard, who travel to Morocco to renew their strained relationship, speak mostly English. So does their Mexican nanny Amelia, who crosses the Mexican-American border without papers, while taking care of their children. She is apprehended and ultimately deported at the border. Meanwhile, in another story, two Moroccan boys, Yussef and Ahmed, speaking Arabic and playing with a rifle, shoot at a tourist bus and injure Susan. The boys are punished by the local police, who seem to be supported by American authorities (cf. Marciniak & Bennett, 2016, p. 6).

“*Babel* shows us an unequal world in which, for some, border crossing is a matter of travel to an ‘exotic’ location, while for others, it is an experience of abjection. While the American children, blond, blue-eyed, fragile, and innocent, are ultimately ‘rescued’, there is no such outcome for the Moroccan children.” (Marciniak & Bennett, 2016, p. 6)

In *Babel*, viewers become aware of cultural, political and geographical borders in our globalized world, but at the same time they also experience that global communication can be doomed to failure and aggravate the conflict. Interestingly enough, sometimes the

<sup>8</sup> For detailed plot information, e.g. Moviepilot can provide an informative overview about the film (<https://www.moviepilot.de/movies/babel-film>).

hardcoded subtitling (subtitles being *burnt* into the movie print, not to be deleted) is very selective. Dialogues/chunks that carry meaning are left out (cp. 1<sup>st</sup> example in illustration 2) or meaning is added via hardcoded subtitling (cp. 2<sup>nd</sup> example in illustration 2).

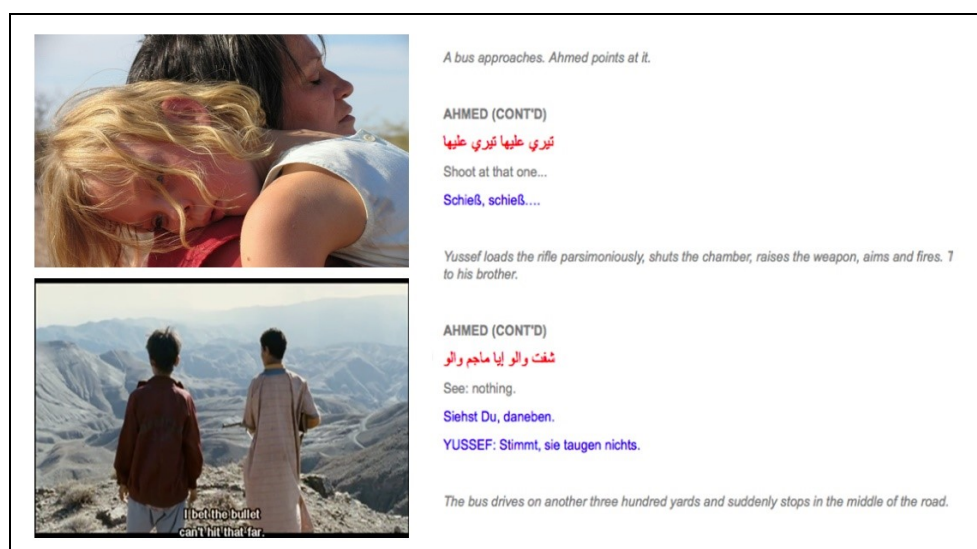


Illustration 2: The Moroccan boys and Amelia in the US (screenshots from *Babel*)

### 1.3.3 *Pina* (2011)






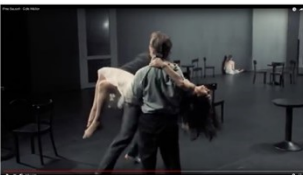




Multilingualism takes on a different form in Wenders' movie. His dramatic emphasis in *Pina* (2011) is on the loss of (linguistic) knowledge, on *less-lingualism*. At the same time, he celebrates a (semiotic) language use and cross-cultural communication through diverse dance forms and styles that merge with and contradict each other expressively, which Pina Bausch herself described in an interview as the only "real language" (Bausch, as cited in Stegmann, 2008, p. 3). Wenders thus transcends linguistic distinctions. With the international actors in Bausch's epic Tanztheater Wuppertal, diverse linguistic language(s) are present, but remain unstaged. Similarly, Wenders scarcely employs language. He minimizes language use to filmed intertitles or multilingual interview snippets. The original aesthetic and poetical power of the screen, however, is linked to an intensely expressionist and metaphorical language of dance and narrative body language at the same time. This unconventionally associative and expressive dancing of the actors also impressively mirrors the absence of clear and chronological narration. Wenders stages only very short and scenic episodes in *Pina*, for example about gender clashes, the relationships between men and women, and love and death. These often take place in front of local authentic settings in and around Wuppertal (the *Schwebbahn*, a coal mining area near Bottrop with a stage fully covered with peat, and others). Altogether, a *global* language (semiodiversity) metaphorically meets *local* stories and settings in *Pina*, "facilitat(ing) a decentred, tolerant, questioning and open form of narration and dance" (Bausch, as cited in Stegmann, 2008, p. 9).

From a pedagogical and FL learning perspective, *Pina* appears first of all as an immense illustrated dictionary in nine languages: German, French, English, Spanish, Croatian, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Korean. Not only are some of the topical dance moves transferred to intertitles (depending on the language of subtitling) – especially in the official trailer –, but many scenes also exhibit (*global*) gestures and movements that almost invite the viewer to play with words in his/her mother tongue or in a chosen foreign language. Astonishingly, all dancers have gone through this learning process as well, albeit in the reverse direction (from word to movement).

“Meeting Pina was like finding a language finally. Before, I didn’t know how to talk and she suddenly gave me a way to express myself with vocabulary. When I began, I was pretty shy, I still am. But after many months of rehearsing she called me and said: ‘You just have to get crazier.’ And that was the only comment in almost 20 years.” (Pina, 2011: 00:14:15–00:14:51)

The following table presents examples from film and trailer revealing vocab in various languages, linguistically and non-linguistically. (Languages used here are German, English, Italian, Spanish, French, and Russian.)

Table 1: Performed language in Pina

<p><b>Pina: Official Trailer</b>  <i>Love (Trailer 0:37) Liebe, amore, amor, amour, любовь.</i></p> 	<p><b>Pina: Film</b>  <i>Darf ich bitten? (Pina, Kontakthof: 00:48:41) May I (have the pleasure)? Posso invitarti a questo ballo? ¿Me concede el próximo baile? Puis-je me permettre? Могу я вас пригласить на следующий танец?</i></p> 
<p><b>Freedom (0:45) Freiheit, libertà, libertat, liberté, свобода etc.</b></p> 	<p><b>Kalbfleisch (Pina: 00:49:18) veal, carne di vitello, (carne de) ternera, (viande de) veau, телятина</b></p> 
<p><b>Violence (Trailer 0:25) Gewalt, violenza, violència, pouvoir, насилие.</b></p> 	<p><b>Hilfe. (Pina, Café Müller) help, aiuto, ayuda, aide, помощь.</b></p> 
<p><b>Joy (Trailer 0:56) Freude, piacere, alegría, joie, радость.</b></p> 	<p><b>Das erste Mal (Pina: 01:17: 42) The first time. La prima. La primera vez. La première fois. (B) первый раз.</b></p> 
<p><b>Strength (Trailer 1:11) Kraft, forza, fuerza, force, сила)</b></p> 	<p><b>Frühling, Sommer, Herbst und Winter (Pina 01:32:04) spring/ summer/ autumn/ winter; primavera / estate/ autunno/ inverno; primavera/ verano/ otoño/ invierno; printemps/ été/ automne/ hiver; весна/ лето/ осень/ зима)</b></p> 



The whole movie is composed of different topical episodes, such as *Café Müller*, *Contact Zone* (ballroom dance), *Season's March*, and *Full Moon*. In *Café Müller*, a relatively dark room, with two swing doors and only a few chairs and tables, is seen. In the café there is a woman waiting in the back, a second woman constantly falling (probably being blind or sleepwalking), a man loosely hugging her and another man picking her up until he becomes exhausted, and a red-haired girl in a coat, who is entering.

“(T)he second man interferes and tries to dictate another pattern of relationship. The couple is not able to keep the new position, the woman falls and they repeat the movement infinitely, in a sexual rhythm. [...] After, the red-haired girl in a heavy coat tries to call their attention, and after some effort, kisses the man. The man comes back to his partner and repeats the same pattern. The red-haired girl gives her coat to Pina and everybody leaves. The coat unifies the two personas, the sleepwalking and the woman among the couple.” (Bellusci, 2014, p. 5)

*Café Müller* tells a story about difficulty in communicating, linguistically and non-linguistically. It is about loneliness and alienation, and the search for self-fulfillment which is not attained in the end. The setting as well as the dancing protagonists underpin this reading. On the one hand, “[t]he chairs”, as Servos indicates, “are sufficiently blocking the stage to prevent the dancers from any expansive movements which could lead into group formations” (Servos, 1984, n.p.). Moreover, “the chairs, simultaneously symbols and surrogates for absent persons [...] describe the emptiness and the impossibility of contact. They are obstacles literally standing in the dancer’s way” (Servos, 1984, n.p.). On the other hand, the dancers repeat their body movements in an endless loop within which they redefine themselves from moment to moment as human beings searching for and questioning the roles they are playing in life, as social persons and individuals, as men and women, as being dominant and/or oppressed, etc. “Within dance theater’s symbolic explorations, these dichotomies become dynamic modes of relationship, constantly exchanging, questioning, and transforming aesthetic, psychic, and social roles” (Fernandes, 1995, n.p.). The protagonist’s story is told with gestures, facial expressions and body movement only, opening a wide space for interpretation.

## 2 Aims, literacies and a cross-subject curriculum of teaching foreign languages with transnational films

### 2.1 Aims and literacies

Unquestionably, Transnational Cinema is a phenomenon that has not only attracted film and media studies, but has also drawn pedagogical attention to these complex fields. This attention is due in part to the fact that Transnational Cinema has brought about a challenge between traditional mainstream cinema, on the one hand, and postcolonial/exile cinema on the other hand, provoking many different affirmative and subversive readings.

“By its artisanal and collective mode of production, its subversions of the conventions of storytelling and spectator positioning, its critical juxtaposition of different worlds, languages and cultures, and its aesthetics of imperfection and smallness, it critiques the dominant cinema.” (Naficy, as cited in Ezra & Rowden, 2006, p. 21)

At the same time, already established intercultural and transcultural learning approaches to language(s), culture(s) and film, which promote understanding from a transient and even fleeting perspective rather than notions of fixed or static culture practices, have opened up new topics and more globalized issues for negotiation. In the following, some concepts are shortly introduced that support the aim to reappraise transnational multilingual films as a complementary field for the FL classroom.

In her book *The Multilingual Subject* (2009), Claire Kramersch reframed her third-place concept, which was seen as too static for modern educational frames nowadays. She developed it into a concept of symbolic competence – a dynamic, flexible and locally contingent competence that enables language users to perceive, negotiate and manipulate symbolic systems (i.e. also in the sense of semiotic resources inherent to individual learners). Relating to this, Kramersch differentiates three aspects of symbolic systems (2011, pp. 354–367): symbolic representation, symbolic action, and the symbolic power as to perceive and manage conversational inequality. *Operating between languages and cultures*: linguistically, visually, or kinesthetically – the core target of her conceptional ideas – convincingly mirrors the goal of the North American Modern Language Association Report of the AdHoc Committee to develop “translingual and transcultural competence” (2007, p. 237).<sup>9</sup>

*Michael Byram*, a well known British scholar and acknowledged for his Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997, 2011), equated in 2011 Kramersch’s symbolic competence with his perspective on *savoir s’engager*, i.e. to develop the ability to evaluate and reflect critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, products in one’s own culture and in other cultures (critical cultural awareness).<sup>10</sup>

*The New London Group (NLG)*: Scholars like Cope and Kalantzis (2000) or Lankshear and Knobel (2006) introduced a concept of multiple literacies that overlaps with Kramersch’s and Byram’s ideas. Their concept pioneers diverse ways of reading the world in different contexts and different modes. Although language (in linguistic terms) represents the most central mode through which human communication and meaning-making is mostly conducted (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), the new media have paved the way for new languages, new modes of meaning-making and communication with new powers of expression. A multiliteracy pedagogy, as Cope and Kalantzis have coined and developed since the 1990s, shall empower all learners to pursue meaning-making processes that arise in more than only one “meaning form”, like image, text, speech (oral and written), object, space, body, gesture and sound, including representational processes of “reframing” (synesthesia), as well (cp. Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, pp. 171–205; Becker & Blell, 2018, pp. 129–143).

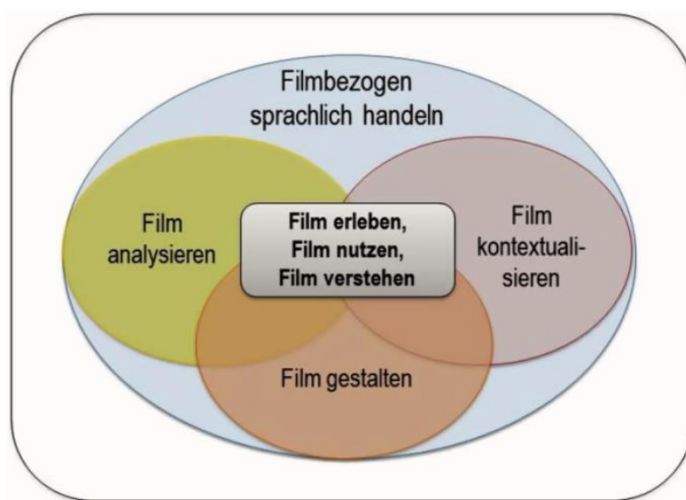
*Wolfgang Hallet*, a German scholar in FL Teaching, adapts the multiple literacy concept of the NLG to his understanding of film literacy. Due to its extreme multimodal composition – language(es), image, drama, narration, sound and music – film and thus also film literacy, Hallet argues, is comparatively predestined to make use of various literacies/competences in order to be grasped and attained (cp. Hallet, 2016, p. 190).

*Gabriele Blell, Andreas Grünewald, Matthis Kepser & Carola Surkamp* (2016, pp. 11–61) have introduced a cross-lingual and cross-cultural film education model, including four language subjects, German (as L1), English, French and Spanish (as L2, L3) that processes the aforementioned positions and provides space for multilingual and multicultural learning with film. Since it has been proven for the inter-/transcultural FL classroom over time that nationality is progressively losing its influence on cultural (and linguistic) representations and that, therefore, both teaching about culture(s) and teaching FL with film have to move beyond the binary notion of the self/the other (i.e. German as L1 – English as L2), the cross-subject perspective of the model can prepare useful ground for multilingual film teaching as well.

<sup>9</sup> The CEFR touches this goal as well, but does not state it clearly. From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve “mastery” of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the “ideal native speaker” as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence (Council of Europe, 2001, ch. 1.3).

<sup>10</sup> Although Byram’s model partly lacks the modern understanding of culture(s) as fluid systems of acquired and shared meanings over the course of generations, his perspective is still essential for the FL classroom today.

## 2.2 The cross-lingual and cross-cultural film education model



*Illustration 3: Areas of film competence in language education (Blell et al., 2016, p. 22)<sup>11</sup>*

The cross-subject model is certainly inspired by the concepts above mentioning intercultural/transcultural and translingual competence as well as elements of multiliteracy pedagogy with situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. The cross-subject model takes four competence areas relevant for teaching FL with film into consideration:

Competence field 1: Reading, listening, speaking, writing and mediating (interacting linguistically) with film. These competences are fundamental for the FL classroom and, therefore, also essential for a model of film education attached to FL school subjects. In terms of multilingual competence, learners should understand multilingual films by both listening and reading, should critically reflect on selected multilingual discourse phenomena in the film or mediate/translate between the languages.

Competence field 2: Analyzing film – understanding and interpreting film as a fictitious narrative. Here, learners should, e.g., recognize, name and interpret cinematic techniques or research, analyze, and evaluate the reception of a film.

Competence field 3: Contextualizing film – reading and understanding film as a cultural product. In contrast to close reading, learners shall be enabled to reflect on film, to identify and discuss intertextual and intermedial references.

Competence field 4: Creating film – creating cinematic pre-texts (synopsis, posters or storyboards) or shooting a short film/scene.

Aspects of multilingual learning are primarily in the foreground of Competence field 1 (Interacting linguistically with film) and 3 (Contextualizing film).<sup>12</sup>

The tasks and activities used with *Inglourious Basterds*, *Babel* and *Pina* outlined below (cp. section 3) are, for the most part, embedded in this model.

<sup>11</sup> In diagram (translated): Interacting linguistically with film (Competence field 1/top), Analyzing film (Competence field 2/left), Contextualizing film (Competence field 3/ right), Creating film (Competence field 4/bottom), Experiencing film, Using film, Understanding film (middle).

<sup>12</sup> A detailed description of the model can be found in Blell et al. (2016).

### 3 Teaching methodology using examples from *Inglourious Basterds*, *Babel*, and *Pina*

In the following, several pedagogical activities used with the films are introduced. These take three basic approaches and are generally based on the aims and literacies discussed in section 2.

Firstly, a synthesis of closed and open learning tasks is central for the teaching methodology, i.e. a “fair balance between teacher-fronted instructivism and student-centered constructivism, between guidance and autonomy” (Thaler, 2014, p. 193). Closed “exercises should be supplemented by open tasks, cognitive and analytical approaches by productive and creativeness” (Thaler, 2014, p. 193). Film analysis tasks can best be combined with contextualizing tasks and production activities. I also strive to focus on receptive (viewing/listening/reading) and productive language skills (speaking/writing and creating).

Secondly, I give precedence to real-world tasks in this balanced approach. That is, the focus of a task should mainly be on meaningful and appropriate communicative interaction, problem-solving should be in the foreground. “Learners employ their linguistic and cognitive resources to retrieve and exchange information or to discuss opinions in order to achieve an outcome that is not primarily of a linguistic nature” (Grimm, Meyer & Volkman, 2015, p. 69; Ellis, 2012, p. 198).

Finally, I have started to experiment with a strategy called *Learning via Subtitling* (Sokol, 2007). It is based on the didactic domain of Audio-Visual Translation (AVT), which has become increasingly popular in Spain and Greece – countries that do not synchronize their films – during the last two decades. Interestingly, this didactic approach may be adapted to language learning purposes: 1. Presentation, Task and Motivation; 2. Viewing and Global Comprehension; 3. Analysis and Research; 4. Synthesis: Timing and Mediation; 5. Editing and Reflection (cp. Borghetti, 2011; McLoughlin & Lertola, 2011). Subtitling programs like the *Lingual Media Player* or *LeVis*<sup>13</sup> may be used in order to authenticate audio-visual translation processes.

#### 3.1 *Inglourious Basterds*

For *Inglourious Basterds*, I developed tasks to help students analyze and discuss how aspects of political hierarchy can be investigated on the basis of linguistic, narrative and filmic dimensions. Questions of language imperialism are thus also touched upon. Since “*Inglourious Basterds* presents a complexity of multilingual audiovisual texts” (Abend-David, 2014, p. 29) and thematizes World War II, it has great potential for Content and Language Integrated Learning-Teaching with the caveat that the film mingles historical facts with a fictional plot and students should be made aware of this. Students can, for example, analyze the multilingual game that Landa is playing with LaPadite in the Nancy scene, 1941, and how the instrumentalization of objects (milk, pipe, cigarette, strudel) also serves as a reinforcer of dominance. In the Paris scene, 1944, the students can focus on the monolingual acting of Goebbels and on how the German conversation between Landa, Goebbels, and Zoller is presented in the subtitles and the implied linguistic power exerted upon Landa. Actual historical conditions (Germany against allied nations) can form the foundation for a scene analysis (cf. Repschläger, 2018, p. 13f.).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Lingual Media Player* (<http://lingualmediaplayer.com/en/>); *LeVis* (<http://levis.cti.gr/>), or *ClipFlair* (<http://clipflair.net>).

<sup>14</sup> Moritz Repschläger developed and tested the tasks in the EFL classroom (cf. Repschläger, 2018). The appendix gives a more detailed overview of the tasks.

- Task I: Learning via Subtitling in order to decode the power of dialogue management as aesthetic means (dialogue vs. score/sound vs. image vs. subtitles); working with the film script to analyze multilingual code-switching (<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Inglourious-Basterds.html>).
- Task II: Analyzing the film's dramaturgy (scene 1 is staged as a 5-act tragedy) and recurring devices such as circulation objects (glass of milk or cigarette) or various camera perspectives to discuss suspense.
- Task III: Split-Viewing in two groups of scene 1 and 2 (cp. section 1.3.1) in order to work on similarities and differences (task-based jigsaw puzzle). Posters to be presented and discussed at the end. Writing an inner monologue of, for example, Shoshanna and LaPadite in their L1 (or the learners' L1) in order to reflect on the linguistic humiliation (cp. Repschläger, 2018).

### 3.2 *Babel*

In *Babel*, stories are told along geographical borders and, hence, along cultural and language borders. In 2011, together with my master's students (teacher trainees), I designed the *Babel Filmschool*, a platform for students as well as for EFL teachers. Students developed tasks and teacher notes for working on plot and characters, the role of the circulating object in the film (the rifle), the episodic film as a genre, the music in *Babel*, diversity education and film analysis. Although it is not a professional platform, it has been used by many FL teachers in Lower Saxony, since *Babel* has been topic for the German *Abitur* examination.<sup>15</sup>

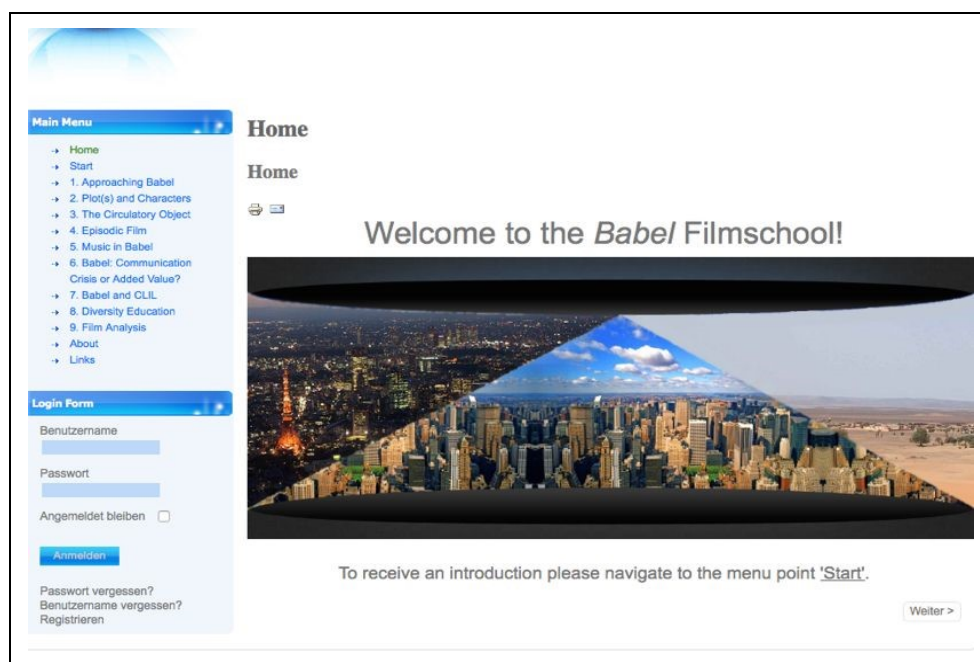


Illustration 4: *Babel Filmschool* (<http://www.babel-filmschool.de>)<sup>16</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> task scenario in the *Filmschool*, the two Moroccan boys playing around with the rifle, circles around the asymmetrical communication in *Babel*. Students are asked to analyze its value as a challenge or risk for global communication. Possible tasks for FL learners (in German 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> grade) are:

<sup>15</sup> The *Abitur* is a comprehensive exam at the end of secondary school for university bound students.

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the whole platform does not exist any longer. The 6<sup>th</sup> task scenario, however, was part of the platform's tasks.


- (1) Watch the scene without sound and summarize it in your L1.
- (2) Group work: Act out the dialogue between the boys. Prepare a scene script in your L1.
- (3) With subtitling: Examine the dialogue. Modify it if necessary. Compare your acted version (cp. task 2) with other groups.
- (4) Study and analyze the film script and pay attention to the subtitling results.
- (5) Rewrite the scene in one FL only. Interpret the effect.
- (6) Act out the scene a last time, only make use of mimics and gestures. Interpret the result.

The last task clearly opens additional meaning-making processes, namely on the level of semiotic, more precisely of non-linguistic meaning-making processes as, e.g., gestures, facial expression, and body movement (symbolic or semio-diversity). Actually, this task is a starting point for further tasks focusing on Chieko, a rebellious, deaf Japanese teenage girl in the Japanese-Moroccan plot, who is traumatized by her mother's suicide. This task brings in the first non-linguistic element (cp. semio-diversity in section 2). This wider approach then recognizes the study of all significant signs and symbols in film as part of our communication. Here, I see a strong connection to Claire Kramsch's *symbolic competence*, and to The New London Group's *synaesthetic literacy* as well.

This approach to *Babel* may also include how the different parent-child relationships in the film may not only be investigated linguistically (English, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese sign language), but also visually, for example by comparing images showing children and parents in different cultures.

*Todos los cuentos se tratan de padres y niños...*

- a) Identifica los cuatro cuentos diferentes.
- b) Discuta la relación entre los padres y niños. / Discuta cada relación "padre-niño/a".
- c) Qué tienen en común? Cuales son las diferencias entre ellos? Cómo están interrelacionados?
- d) Comenta las fotos de la película acerca de la relación entre padres y niños/-as.
- e) Hasta qué punto contribuye la declaración del director: "dedicated to my children, the brightest lights in my darkness" a la película entera? Discuta esta declaración con tu grupo y apunta tus pensamientos.



*Illustration 5: Semiotic multilingualism in Babel*

### 3.3 Pina

As it has been made apparent in the short analysis in section 1.3, it should be fun for a mixed (multicultural and multilingual) learning group to search for as many gestures, mimics or body language that can easily be transferred to (linguistic) language as possible. The various outcomes of this research may then be compared within the group in order to detect familiar expressions among the learners' linguistic repertoires (L1, L2, or L3). Techniques of inter-comprehension have proven helpful for this, as looking for language group vocabulary (e.g. the Roman languages French, Spanish or Italian), language equivalents (or associations), sound equivalents, syntactic structures, morphosyntactic

elements or internationalisms. Such mainly vocab-learning centered exercises may not only develop receptive skills of understanding, but also promote a basic vocabulary in a couple of languages. The technically adroit language teacher may even fall back on free annotation tools on the internet such as *ANVIL* (Kipp, 2012), the *Video Image Annotation Tool* or the *Free HubSpot CRM* to annotate *YouTube* videos (mainly Competence field 1).

Moreover, a narrative analysis of the film (interpreting story/plot, setting, characters or mood) may easily lend itself to analyzing selected scenes such as the *Café Müller* episode on an advanced language level. Multicultural perspectives within a class may not only highlight different interpretational readings but also help to characterize the film as a polysemous text void of a single meaning. Since the production comes across as a silent movie mainly, apart from its film music, it might be an attractive task to write a filmic pre-text: a little story, a synopsis, a screenplay or a one-act play based on the movie after viewing the movie or even one episode. This can be done in the learners' L1, in their common L2 or in a multilingual version.<sup>17</sup> Although the product of this type of activity often lacks literary quality (which is of course also not intended here), the creation of stories or scripts can help to understand this difficult film. Moreover, the mediation-task may scaffold learners to discuss differences between film and script, between various cultural interpretations and between multilingual text productions as a result of discussions in multilingual/-cultural learning groups (mainly Competence fields 1 and 4). The following task may initiate the writing process.

\*\*\*\*\* Call for (Screen-)Plays\*\*\*\*\*

Wim Wenders, a German film director, created with his dance film *Pina* (2011) a cinematic memorial to honor Pina Bausch (1940–2009), ballet director of the Tanztheater Wuppertal and an outstanding dance teacher and choreographer.

In order to appreciate her creative activity, which has always circled around questions of (non-linguistic) language(s) and (mis-)communication, KINO.de and kinolorber.com have launched the joint *Young Talent Award 2019*. This year, language learners (advanced, B1/2) are invited to draw up an original screenplay for the *Café Müller* episode in Wim Wenders' *Pina*. In this case, a one-act play *Café Müller* should be written, but with actors who act and speak.

- Your team may choose the production language independently; well-founded multilingual texts are highly welcome.
- The screenplay should be the collaborative product of the producer, the director, the set designer and the actors who all contribute to the text.
- Distribute the roles in advance in order to balance each learner's working load.
- Before you watch the movie episode *Café Müller*, go to en.wikipedia.org, and read the short introduction to the film/episode and its content in order to get helpful additional input.
- Watch the episode in your team as many times as necessary. A viewing grid with separate columns for different categories (e.g. characters, places, activities, discourse etc.) may be helpful to negotiate a basic structure on which your text can be produced.
- The attached sample screenplay page may guide your creative writing process (<https://www.writersstore.com/how-to-write-a-screenplay-a-guide-to-scriptwriting>).

<sup>17</sup> The team profile may be essential here to agree on a working language.

## 4 Summary

Although I have explored multilingualism in film as a predominantly audible and readable phenomenon manifested through polyglot dialogues, or through monolingual subtitles, I have also focused attention on semiotic multilingualism beyond the script.

Summing up the foregoing explanations, I would like to put forward the following three theses for applying multilingual transnational films in the FL classroom.

*Multilingual transnational films can foster the development of multilingual literacies.* To fully understand multilingual scenes, learners need to develop inter-comprehension strategies (e.g. listening in English & Spanish) and acquire the ability to code-switch. Based on images and dialogue, they should be enabled to include facial expressions and gestures when they analyze and interpret dialogues. They should learn to reflect on language consciously: When do characters code-switch? Why do characters code-switch? This can be fostered through scaffolding classroom talk or scenarios multilingually, which may even be directed by learners with a migration background. All learners (especially those with linguistic backgrounds other than German) should be consistently encouraged to make use of their L1 or other acquired languages other than English (L2 or L3) to negotiate meaning.

*Multilingual transnational films can foster the development of specific film-aesthetic literacies.* The further development of genre knowledge numbers among these. Moreover, learners must be enabled to detect blendings or cross-overs of different film genres (e.g. fiction and fact in *Inglourious Basterds*), and to interpret the function of applied multilingual elements, for instance, irony, mysterious atmosphere, characterization of the protagonist. (Whose words are those? Whose discourse is it? Whose interests are being served in the text?) Learners should be enabled to make use of semiotic elements (colors, music, instruments, setting) or film techniques to work out the purposes of mixing languages.

*Multilingual transnational films can foster the development of transcultural and global literacies and create "border literacies".* This learning domain is, comparatively, the most recent area in teaching FL with film in Germany. However, researchers like Byram, Kramsch or Hallet have paved the way for inter-/transcultural learning. In order to achieve this objective, learners have to build up suitable cultural and inter-/transcultural knowledge (e.g. knowledge about contact zones) on the one hand and skills of discovery and interpretation on the other (e.g. perspective coordination, change of perspective, explanation, mediation). In multilingual film discourse, however, the range of knowledge to be acquired needs to be rounded out by global knowledge of social groups and their products and practices beyond the self/the other, and by knowledge of asymmetrical and disputed global cultural processes. It is also necessary to build up *border literacies*, an ability to interpret cultural processes in which the insider/outsider status is replaced by a constant blurring of the boundaries and by recognizing multiplicities or identity and group affiliation. Advanced learners should be able to evaluate critically and flexibly based on manifold perspectives and perspective changes (Blell & Doff, 2014).

In this article, I examined several conceptions of multilingualism and transculturalism in three transnational and polyglot movies, *Inglourious Basterds*, *Babel*, and *Pina*, and showed that they all are rich resources for the FL classroom as they address language/culture diversity, language/culture exchange, and the idea of language repression and loss.

Based on didactic approaches such as task-based learning, multiple-literacy pedagogy, and cross-subject film education as well as global education and transcultural learning, I discussed examples for the FL classroom that may support multicultural, multilingual and multimodal learning, i.e. learning *beyond* the traditional and curriculum/subject-bound FL. The three theses should be further explored in order to develop (receptive and productive) multilingual literacies, inter-/transcultural dialogue and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity in the FL classroom.



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## Appendix

### *Inglourious Basterds*. Quentin Tarantino (2009). Tasks

#### Task 1<sup>18</sup>:

#### *Audio-Visual Translation, Subtitling and Multilingualism*

1. In an interview, Christoph Waltz describes his role of Hans Landa. He explains: "I am definitely not staging him as a pervert. A big part of the joy I had with this role was that I refused any type of judgement regarding my character. I precisely do *not* say: Nazi, villain, criminal – the film does so itself." (Seeßlen, 2009, p. 39) (This quote can be put up on the smart board.)

Think Pair Share: How do you predict the character of Hans Landa to appear? What could Waltz mean with the statement that "the film does so itself"? Take notes. Get together with a partner and discuss your findings.

2. Watch the short clip from scene 1 (0:07:38–0:10:30) carefully without any subtitles. Pay particular attention to the behavior and utterances of Hans Landa, how is his character depicted? Describe. Compare your findings with your previously made assumptions.

3. Write down the utterances, gestures and facial expressions that are most relevant and meaningful for his character depiction. Think about ways to translate the supposedly polite forms into English (or German/or your mother tongue), what effects do they have on you and the protagonists?

4. Translate (subtitle) this scene in English (or German/or your mother tongue) (Use AVT software if available or write down the dialogue). Make use of the polite phrases you wrote down and translated.

5. Critically reflect on your translation. Act out the translated dialogue. Is a different effect gained now? Which problems did occur to you (limited subtitle space, specific expressions, etc.)?

*Alternative task:* Act out the dialogue another time, do not speak this time, but try to communicate with gestures and facial expressions. Reflect critically on your performance again.

(Seeßlen, G. (2009). *Quentin Tarantino gegen die Nazis. Alles über Inglourious Basterds*. Berlin: Bertz)

<sup>18</sup> Tasks were designed by Moritz Repschläger (2018).

## Task 2:

*Dramaturgy, Filmtechniques and Multilingualism*

1. Watch the first minutes (until 02:24) of the interview with Christoph Waltz on YouTube (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af0-9HBn5xM>>). Summarize his key statements.
2. Divide the second part of scene 1 (0:14:45–0:21:15) into five parts (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, dénouement/resolution). Explain your choices with regards to cinematic and (multi)linguistic aspects. Where do you see the “point of attack” (Eder, 2007, p. 85)? Compare your results with another peer.
3. How is the “point of attack” cinematically implemented in a multilingual form? Also, pay attention to the subtitles. Describe how they change within the different audio versions of the film (English/German). Interpret your findings.

(Eder, J. (2007). *Dramaturgie des populären Films. Drehbuchpraxis und Filmtheorie*. Berlin: Lit)

## Task 3:

*Jigsaw-Puzzle and Multilingualism*

Task sequence: The group is split in two sub-groups; each one gets assigned one of the two scenes.

1. Watch the first/second scene carefully. Pay particular attention to the plot, multilingualism and the used props. Be prepared to share your information with a peer group that has not seen the clip; become an expert.
2. Get together in groups of four (two of each expert/scene group). Present your findings to the members of the other group. Which similarities and connections can you make out between both scenes, how are they intertwined? Take notes.
3. Get back together in your “jigsaw group”. Compare your findings. Together, design a scene collage visualizing the interdependence between the scenes.
4. Present your poster to the class. Elaborate on your thoughts.

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