Multilingualism in subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing

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Presentation outline

- Multilingualism
- Multilingualism in film
- Types of target audience
- Subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH)
- Strategies for rendering multilingualism in SDH
- Reception study on different SDH strategies
Multilingualism

- A person’s ability to use several languages
- The co-existence of different language communities in one geographical area

EU, New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism
Growing presence of multilingualism in film

- A growing interest by filmmakers in themes of migration, mobility and intercultural communication (O’Sullivan 2011: 122)

- International co-productions financed by international bodies (EU Media Programme)

- Multilingual diegetic settings
  - A wish for characters to speak the language of the diegesis, to behave in a plausible way
  - Code-switching
Multilingualism in film

Meir Sternberg (1981) – a model of linguistic representation

- Vehicular matching
- Selective reproduction
- Linguistic homogenisation

Images of film posters:
- Inglourious Basterds
- Czas Honoru
- Cleopatra
Linguistic homogenisation

- Dismisses linguistic verisimilitude as irrelevant
- Hides “the diversity of human life behind the mask of a universal language” (Wahl 2005: 2)
- “Hollywood’s audacity in linguistically appropriating and anglicising the world’s historical and literary heritage is well-documented” (Díaz Cintas 2011)
Selective reproduction

- The presence of foreign languages is minimised and used as “the brushstrokes of exoticism” (Díaz Cintas 2011)

- ‘Post-carding’
  - “where the American tourist on one occasion says Bonjour to the French boy at the reception of his hotel” (Wahl 2005)
Vehicular matching

- “Languages are used in the way they would be used in reality. They define geographical or political borders” (Wahl 2005)
- “An attempt at instilling veracity in the stories” (Díaz Cintas 2011)
- Language as a marker of authenticity, diversity, identity
- Allows the audience to immerse into ‘the foreign’
Multilingualism in film

- Employment of at least one **foreign** language in a film
- What is ‘foreign’?
  - Neither the language of the **primary target audience**
  - Nor the language of the **secondary target audience**
Types of audience

- **Primary target audience**
  - Original viewers in the home country as envisaged by film creators
  - Hollywood productions: English-speaking
  - Hearing

- **Secondary target audience**
  - Viewers abroad
  - Hearing

- **Tertiary target audience (?)**
  - Hearing-impaired audience watching foreign imported films with subtitles

(O’Sullivan 2011)
SDH target audience

- Two main groups of viewers with hearing impairments
  - d/Deaf
  - hard of hearing

- Degree of hearing loss
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe
  - Profound

- Onset of hearing loss
  - Pre-lingual
  - Perilingual
  - Post-lingual
SDH vs. regular subtitling

- Dialogue
- Speaker identification
  - Labels
  - Colours
  - Speaker-dependent placement
- Description of sounds
  - Diegetic
    - Music
    - Foreign language
  - Non-diegetic
    - Mood music
Typical description of foreign language in SDH

*Katyń*, dir. Andrzej Wajda

*Marie Antoinette*, dir. Sofia Coppola

*The Interpreter*, dir. Sydney Pollack
Typical description of foreign accent in SDH

SCOTTISH ACCENT: I felt the hairs on my legs stand up to attention.

MAN ON TV: (FRENCH ACCENT) Although each of the world’s countries
Typical description of foreign language in SDH

Bitwa warszawska 1920 r.,
dir. Jerzy Hoffman
Pre- vs. post-subtitling

- **Pre-subtitling**
  - Envisaged by film creators at the time of film production
  - Mostly utterances considered incomprehensible to the primary target audience
  - Films with pre-subtitles have no ‘original’ unsubtitled version
  - No pre-subtitling: foreign utterances are to remain indeterminate for the audience

- **Post-subtitling**
  - Translation for the secondary target audience
  - When exporting a film to another language market

O’Sullivan (2011)
Is foreign language translated for the hearing audience?

translated (pre-subtitling)

translate

untranslated (no pre-subtitling)

don’t translate

How to signal the presence of foreign language to the hearing-impaired audience in SDH?
SDH strategies

1. **Vehicular Matching**
   - Bonjour.

2. **Translation + Explicit Attribution**
   - [PO FRANCUSKU] Dzień dobry.

3. **Translation + Colour-Coding**
   - Dzień dobry.

4. **Explicit Attribution**
   - [PO FRANCUSKU]

5. **Linguistic Homogenisation**
   - Dzień dobry.
When a film was pre-subtitled for the primary target audience

- **Colour coding**
  - Providing the hearing-impaired viewers with a translation marked in a different colour

- **Linguistic homogenisation**
  - Providing the hearing-impaired audience with a translation, but not signalling that a foreign language is spoken

- **Explicit attribution + translation**
  - Indicating to the audience that a foreign language is spoken and translating it
When a film was **not** pre-subtitled for the primary target audience

- **Vehicular matching**
  - Transcribing whatever was said in the foreign language into subtitles

- **Explicit attribution**
  - Indicating to the audience that a foreign language is spoken, without translating it
THE STUDY
Study procedure

- Online survey
- Addressed to deaf & hard of hearing Poles
- Three sets of questions
  - Personal information (age, degree of hearing loss)
  - 5 pairs of clips with different SDH strategies
  - 2 general questions on overall preferences
Online survey

4. Jaki jest Twój stopień ubytku słuchu:
   - Lekki (21 do 40 dB)
   - Umiarkowany (41 do 70 dB)
   - Znaczny (71 do 90 dB)
   - Ciężki (ponad 90 dB)
   - Nie dotyczy

5. Jak oceniaś swoją znajomość poniższych języków obcych? Proszę zaznaczyć w skali od 1 do 5, gdzie oznacza 1 – „nie znam wcale”, 5 – „posługuję się płynnie”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Język</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>francuski</td>
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<td>włoski</td>
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<td>niemiecki</td>
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Wstecz  Dalej
### Participants

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<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (41 – 70 dB)</td>
<td>&lt;12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>60+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe (71 – 90 dB)</td>
<td>&lt;12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>60+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td>&lt;12</td>
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<td>18-24</td>
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<td>40-59</td>
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<td>60+</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18-24</td>
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<td>23.0%</td>
<td>25-39</td>
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## Knowledge of foreign languages

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<th>Language</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (fluent)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>122</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Inglourious Basterds**

- **dir.** Quentin Tarantino, 2009
- Set in Nazi-occupied France during World War II
- Jewish U.S. guerilla soldiers (*Basterds*) led by Lt. Aldo Raine plan to kill Nazi leaders

- SS Colonel Hans Landa (‘The Jew Hunter’)
- Four languages are spoken: English, French, German and Italian
- Primary English-speaking audience was provided with pre-subtitles to all non-English dialogue
Scene 1. Inglourious Basterds

1.1 Linguistic homogenisation

1.2 Explicit attribution + translation
Scene 2. Inglourious Basterds

2.2 Translation + explicit attribution of language

2.2 Translation + explicit attribution of language and accent
Life is beautiful

- dir. Roberto Benigni, 1997
- Jewish Italian Guido and his son Giosuè in a concentration camp during World War II. To protect his son, Guido pretends it is all just a game.
- Major language of the film: Italian
- Scenes featuring Nazis: German
Scene 3. Life is beautiful

3.1 Explicit attribution

3.2 Vehicular matching
Scene 3. *Life is beautiful*

3.1 Explicit attribution

3.2 Vehicular matching
2 Days in Paris

- dir. Julie Delpy, 2007
- a French-American couple, Marion and Jack, living in New York, on their two-day trip to Paris, home of Marion’s parents
- Jack does not speak fluent French and Marion’s parents do not speak much English
- Film written in English and French (with English subtitles)
Scene 4. 2 days in Paris

4.1 Translation + explicit attribution

[Ojciec po francusku] Anna, daj talerz.

4.2 Translation + colour-coding

Anna, daj talerz.
Little Princess

- dir. Alfonso Cuarón, 1995
- a story of Sara Crewe, whose mother had died and whose father enlists to fight in WWI
- Sara is sent to a boarding school for girls in New York where she meets a severe headmistress, Miss Minchin
- Main language: English
- French exchange: one-off
Scene 5. Little Princess

5.1 Translation
+ colour-coding
+ vehicular matching

5.2 Explicit attribution
RESULTS
## Scene 1. *Inglourious Basterds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1. Linguistic homogenisation</th>
<th>1.2. Explicit attribution + translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ja wiem dużo o panu i pana rodzinie,</td>
<td>[płynnie po angielsku] Ja wiem dużo o panu i pana rodzinie,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very familiar with you and your family</td>
<td>[fluently in English] I’m very familiar with you and your family</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Scene 1. Inglourious Basterds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Which version do you prefer?</th>
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<td>Translation</td>
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<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 2. <em>Inglourious Basterds</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1. Explicit attribution of language + translation</th>
<th>2.2. Explicit attribution of language and accent + translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
# Scene 2. Inglourious Basterds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Translation + explicit attribution of language</th>
<th>Translation + explicit attribution of language and accent</th>
<th>I don’t mind</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (41 - 70 dB)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>23.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Scene 3. *Life is Beautiful*

#### 3.1. Vehicular matching

Alles herhörn, Ich sage das nur einmal.

#### 3.2. Explicit attribution

([loud in German])
Scene 3. Life is Beautiful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Which version do you prefer?</th>
<th>Vehicular matching</th>
<th>Explicit attribution</th>
<th>I don’t mind</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>33.3%</td>
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<td>36.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
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</table>
# Scene 4. 2 Days in Paris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.1. Explicit attribution + translation</th>
<th>4.2. Colour-coding in blue + translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Father in French] Anna, pass me the plate.</td>
<td>Anna, pass me the plate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Scene 4. 2 Days in Paris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Which version do you prefer?</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translation + colour-coding</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Translation + explicit attribution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t mind</td>
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<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
<td>%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (41 - 70 dB)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Scene 5. Little Princess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1. Colour-coding in yellow + vehicular matching</th>
<th>5.2. Explicit attribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[płynnie po francusku] Monsieur, je regrette.</td>
<td>[mówi płynnie po francusku]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[fluently in French] Monsieur, je regrette.</td>
<td>[speaks fluently in French]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Scene 5. Little Princess

Which version do you prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Vehicular matching</th>
<th>Vehicular matching + colour-coding</th>
<th>Explicit attribution</th>
<th>I don’t mind</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate (41 - 70 dB)</strong></td>
<td>Count 11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 33.3%</td>
<td><strong>36.4%</strong></td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</strong></td>
<td>Count 11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 33.3%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profound (over 90 dB)</strong></td>
<td>Count 24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 34.8%</td>
<td><strong>34.8%</strong></td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Count 46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% <strong>34.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.1%</strong></td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 1
If in the version for hearing viewers, foreign language dialogue is not translated, then in my opinion the SDH version should:

- Not contain a translation, but an indication that characters speak a foreign language, e.g. [in French]
- Give an exact transcription of the foreign language dialogue, e.g. Monsieur, je regrete.
- Translate the foreign language dialogue and indicate what language is spoken, e.g. [in French] Excuse me, sir.
- Do not indicate the foreign language at all.
- I don’t mind.
If in the version for hearing viewers, foreign language dialogue is *not* translated, then in my opinion the SDH version should use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicular matching</th>
<th>Translation + explicit attribution</th>
<th>Explicit attribution</th>
<th>Linguistic homogenisation</th>
<th>I don’t mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of hearing loss</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (41 - 70 dB)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General questions (2)

Question 2

If in the version for hearing audience, the foreign language dialogue *is* translated, then in my opinion the SDH version should:

- Translate the foreign language dialogue and colour-code it.
- Translate it and indicate in brackets that a foreign language is spoken, e.g. `[in French]`.
- Translate it and indicate in capital letters that a foreign language is spoken, e.g. **IN FRENCH**.
- Do not indicate that a foreign language is spoken at all.
- I don’t mind.
If in the version for hearing viewers, foreign language dialogue is translated, then in my opinion the SDH version should use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Translation + colour coding</th>
<th>Translation + explicit attribution in capital letters</th>
<th>Translation + explicit attribution in square brackets</th>
<th>Linguistic homogenisation</th>
<th>I don’t mind</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (41 - 70 dB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 15.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (71 - 90 dB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 15.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound (over 90 dB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 20.3%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 17.8%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Deaf and hard of hearing participants preferred to have MORE rather than LESS information on foreign dialogue in multilingual films:

– in Scene 1: they opted for TRANSLATION + EXPLICIT ATTRIBUTION as opposed to LINGUISTIC HOMOGENISATION

– in Scene 2: they were in favour of explicitating the information both about the language and the accent as opposed to language only

– in Scene 3 and 5: they preferred VEHICULAR MATCHING than EXPLICIT ATTRIBUTION

– in Scene 4: they selected TRANSLATION AND COLOUR-CODING as the best option
Discussion

- Differences among the hearing-impaired
  - Severe and profound hearing loss: vehicular matching and translation + explicit attribution
  - Moderate hearing loss: I don’t mind

- The strategy of linguistic homogenisation was preferred by participants with low proficiency in foreign languages

- The strategy of vehicular matching was preferred by participants with profound hearing loss
  - Although they don’t know foreign languages themselves, they thought it would be beneficial for those who do
**Colour-coding**

- Better than explicit attribution as it allows the subtitler to save space
  - [Ojciec po francusku]
    Anna, daj talerz.
  - Anna, daj talerz.

- Usually used in SDH for the purposes of character identification
Vehicular matching

- Prevents the reduction of multilingual linguistic landscape to homogenised monolingual discourse in subtitles
- Allows deaf and hard of hearing viewers to become immersed in the multilingual landscape of the film by *seeing* what the other viewers can *hear*
- Closest strategy to put viewers with hearing impairments on an equal footing with the hearing → experiencing the foreign language even without comprehension
Problems with vehicular matching

- More demanding for the subtitler
  - Research-wise
  - Technology-wise (other alphabets?)
- More cognitively demanding for the viewers
- Languages with no written alphabet?
- Non-existent languages?
Verbatim account of WWII Lvov dialect

Son pidozry, szczę Żydowce chowajtc się w twoich kanałach.

Poldyk, no ja nie jestem żadnym miglanc. Ty mi tutaj nie strugej funia.

W ciemności,
dir. A. Holland
Non-existent language

The Interpreter, dir. S. Pollack
Unknown language

(Converse in native language)

Amistad, dir. S. Spielberg
Conclusions

- Current SDH practices do not adequately reflect the presence of multiple languages on screen
  - SDH usually flattens multilingual landscape to monolingual discourse
  - Most subtitles for hearing impaired do not allow the audience to immerse into the foreign

- Recommendation: introduce more varied SDH strategies to better reflect the nature of multilingual films for the deaf and the hard of hearing
  - Vehicular matching
  - Colour-coding
References


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