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CULTURAL CLASHES IN SCREEN TRANSLATION

Abstract: *This study explores the ways in which the intricate field of screen translation managed to blend in many sciences so perfectly due to a continuously globalized society. Intended to elucidate the unique interpretation of a culturally-bound translation, this paper also highlights certain practices that revolve around the globalization of film industry, and implicitly the globalization of languages. Nevertheless, the issues that circle around these two practices will be discussed in detail in the first part of this study, in which the distinction between subtitling and dubbing is thoroughly explained. One should find out which nations prefer their films to be dubbed and which ones to be subtitled. Furthermore, one should not neglect the contemporary belief of a global world within the fields of cinema and translation. There will also be indicated instances in which the inevitable cultural clashes occur. Only after familiarizing with the second part of the paper will the reader acknowledge that there are instances in which certain particularities related to the variety of languages cannot be avoided. One should pay close attention to a multitude of issues that may appear in the translating process. Some examples are register- and style-related while other focus on the cruxes that cannot be overlooked when discussing a particular culture.*

Key words*: subtitling, dubbing, globalization, cultural cruxes, film studies, translation studies*

Given the fact that the field of translation presents various ways in which any language should be understood, this study is intended to make the reader aware of certain important aspects linked to the idea of defining concepts related to the intricate field of film studies. Clashes between worldwide cultures seem to be a very problematic issue particularly if one were to view it from a theoretical point of view. One plausible explanation for this could be the close connection between identity and nationality. Some people clearly care about national identity and watch movies related only to their cultural boundaries. That is why subtitling seems to be one of the main barriers to the mainstream cinema audience's acceptance to foreign language films. A brief approach to screen translation seems to encompass two different fields of study: translation and interpretation because one could argue that subtitling is both spoken and written language, as it oscillates between what is heard in the movie and what is shown on the screen.

Right after the emergence of movies, the worldwide consumer society demanded a means of understanding the lines, especially if the movie was foreign. Images and soundtrack did not seem to suffice and so other methods of film understanding were necessary. That is why subtitling and dubbing appeared, but before going further into detail one finds it crucial to define these latter two terms.

On the one hand, subtitling is the method of putting on screen the translated lines. Better said, it "involves transferring the characteristics of spoken dialogue to the written mode" (Taylor 314). Nevertheless, one could argue that the spoken text must contain both social and ethnic identity facets as well as geographical and historical ones. These aspects should all be included when attempting a screen translation because there may be a risk of losing the global idea that revolves around a particular movie.

Dubbing, on the other hand, is substituting the characters' voices from the source language with other voices into the target language. Usually the target language voices try to be as similar as possible with the initial voices and, more importantly, they try to follow the characters' face movements and

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gestures. Dubbing is mostly used in countries which want to preserve their cultural identity and national principles. However, one could find it disturbing to observe language elements that do not fit with the character's gestures.

In another chain of thoughts, there are people who respect the cultures in which the movies were made. For this, they usually use subtitles if they are not familiar with the target language. Many critics, among whom Michael Cronin, Jorge Díaz Cintas, Yves Gambier and Frederic Chaume, claim that subtitling is more easily accepted than dubbing or voice-over particularly because it involves less money and, more importantly, because it allows the original soundtrack to remain on screen.

Considering the difficulties encountered by screen translators in their work, it is crucial to get acquainted with a strong theoretical background, without which one cannot hope to achieve full understanding of concepts related to certain set of terms used in any field of study. For that matter, Frederic Chaume brings to light an interesting perspective related to the field of screen translations. He rightfully considers that an audiovisual text is a construction based on several signifying codes which are simultaneously intermingled in the same film.

The first, and probably the most important, code discussed is the **linguistic** one because this type of code is shared with all texts that can be translated, not only in the audiovisual field. Other codes that are present in Chaume's article are named **paralinguistic**, as they carry out the synchronization of dialogues (17). One could realize that this type of **signifying codes** function very well in the cinema industry. The **musical code** refers to a translation that matches with the rhythm of a particular song, while the sound arrangement code makes reference to various off-screen sounds, voices or dialogues. Furthermore, the **iconographic code** represents symbols and icons in translation there are supposed to be in accordance with the moving images. To put it differently, the translator must respect coherence and continuity of both icons and the image on screen. **Photographic codes** refer to the international use of colors and the changes of lighting in different scenes. According to Chaume, the field of subtitling is very vast because the translator must use italics when the audience is doubtful about who the speaker is in a dark scene (19). The **planning code** refers to the synchronization of characters' lip movements in dubbing, because in subtitling this type of code does not exist. **Mobility codes**, however, are those signs that deal with the distance between characters. For instance, if there is a group of at least five people talking at the same time, the translator's job is to provide a subtitle for a maximum of two people from that particular group. More importantly, he/she will most likely choose to translate the speech of the characters that are closer to the camera. The last codes that Frederic Chaume discusses are the **syntactic** ones as they are part of the editing process in film studies. One could argue that in such cases it is the translator's bilingual capacity that must be questioned, in the sense that he/she must be able to surpass problems when translating a subtitle. For example, one must be efficient in replacing a word with a shorter synonym, in dealing with repetitions and, more importantly, in associating images with speeches.

In his article entitled "Audiovisual Translations in the Third Millennium" Jorge Díaz Cintas argues that audiovisual translations carry an increasingly large proportion of translation activity for two important reasons. The first deals with audiovisual products that have managed to reach a large number of people that easily receive the information via television. The second reason has to do with the quality of translated materials that are transferred to other cultures, such as documentaries, interviews, films, news, discussion programs, shows, series and cartoons (193). An interesting perspective here has to do with the globalization of different entertainment programs via television. What Cintas tries to highlight is the seriousness involved in a translation process as being the one that deals with the amount of translated text. Obviously, he also refers to cultural expectations by putting together different genres of translated materials.

Furthermore he claims that there are theorists who strongly believe that the field of audiovisual translations has to do more with the practice of adaptation than with actual translation. Cintas rejects this theory as he claims that constant adaptation points to the fact that there is a lack of interest in the professional activity of translation. He further argues that we live in a society of constant evolution, which he calls Heraclitean (194). By 'Heraclitean' Cintas implies that a society should act in conformity with the ideologies that Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, promoted; namely the strife and change as the natural

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conditions of the universe. One could say the ways of communication constantly change due to the consumerist society we live in. Because of these changes, people's expectations implicitly change and become higher as they evolve.

Nevertheless Cintas's article deals with issues in terms of terminology. To put it differently, one could say that he creates an evolution stage of audiovisual translations. He begins with the term **film translation** and continues with **audiovisual translation** which he insists that revolves only around television and video releases. Another frequently used term is **screen translation** which encompasses all products distributed via a screen such as television, cinema, computer screen, computer games, web pages, CD-ROMs. The last term he introduces is called **multimedia translation** and deals with the multitude of media and channels through which the message is transmitted (194).

Interestingly enough, in the field of audiovisual translations "habit and custom have made dubbing and subtitling the most common modes of translation" (Cintas 195). One could say that there are countries which prefer dubbing instead of subtitling and vice versa. Among these one could itemize countries like Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria as having a preference dubbing, while countries such as Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and the Scandinavian countries prefer subtitling. From a historical point of view Cintas argues that countries with high levels of illiteracy are inclined to prefer dubbing. Moreover, since subtitling is far less expensive than dubbing, economics has also played a crucial role (196). Another possibility could refer to the cultural background of those particular countries. If, for instance, one cares about his/her traditions, then obviously he/she would prefer dubbing. However, if globalization had a positive impact on an individual, he/she would opt for a subtitled movie, in this way familiarizing with both the source language and the translation into the target language.

According to Christopher Taylor dubbing managed to reach a certain level of sophistication in various countries such as Italy, Germany or France, and nowadays it is "the predominant practice in those countries, especially as regards the adaptation of English language productions" (309). One could only infer that from a technical point of view, dubbing alters the original version of the film and introduces cultural-bound aspects of a particularly target language. To put it differently, dubbing completely changes a movie. Subtitling, however, "possibly due to its lower profile on the international circuit, has received rather less attention" (Taylor 309). One plausible explanation for this could be need to conserve national and identity characteristics of certain countries. Another explanation could be challenges which a screen translator may encounter; these particularities can vary from lexical to cultural ones, depending on the source language of the film.

Cintas defines dubbing as the practice of replacing the original soundtrack with a target language that records what is reproduced in the original message, while paying attention to the synchronization of the actors' lip movements. Voice-over involves the complete or minimal volume reduction of the original soundtrack so that it could be easily heard. Interestingly enough the reading of the translation finishes a few seconds before the ending of the original speech, in this way allowing the audience to listen to the voice of the person on the screen at a normal volume once again. Subtitling involves displaying written text at the bottom of the screen, in this way allowing the source language to be heard (195).

In his work *Translation Goes to the Movies*, Michael Cronin attempts an in-depth analysis on the cultural clashes between different periods of time, by discussing translation issues and language particularities applied to a variety of film genres. He clearly explains how the intricate field of translation becomes visible in a globalized world in this way emphasizing methodological problems of both dubbing and subtitling. Even form the first pages of the book one can understand that equivalence, domestication, foreignization, invisibility and identity are just some themes that arise in translation making constant references to film studies and media globalization. He even claims that "neglecting to use cinema in translation studies is neglecting to use a highly engaging and effective medium for soliciting responses on a wide variety of topics directly related to the business of translation" (xi). In other words, the cinema is obviously interconnected with the practices of teaching and learning translation. One could say that screen translations represent a connection between the development of cultural analysis and the worldwide perception on popular culture itself. It should be noted that the language differences in translation are

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engaged with numerous companies intended to elucidate cultural-bound messages which lie in the success of cinema history. Michael Cronin further claims that: **"**The bringing together of migrants from a multitude of 'strange' lands with their different tongues and different customs to form a buoyant market of upwardly mobile customers would now function as a template for the global spread of cultural 'consumptionism' "(8).

That is probably the precise reason why dubbing together with subtitling have been used in a number of languages in different parts of the world as a response to linguistic, cultural and ideological constrains. In other words, the subtitling and dubbing practices are crucial key terms that deal with the full understanding of how cinema has been mediated in different languages and contexts.

The translational dimension to cinema audiences in a multilingual world seems to hinder cultural aspects related to globalization, in the sense that people tend to be both watchers and critics, at the same time being extremely skeptical of the idea that successful films could actually be produced in their mother-tongues. To put it differently, "English was judged to be the language of film, it was 'good, spontaneous, cool', whereas other European languages were considered unattractive or unsuitable" (idem 14). From a cultural point of view these misconceptions function on a regular basis in every day society because there are people who believe that their national identity must remain within the boundaries of that particular country, while they entertain themselves with dubbed American or, better said, Americanized films. It should be noted that language plays a crucial role in the promotion of the film, on the one hand, and in the framing of cultural differences of the film itself, on the other hand. However, in every country there are different varieties related to language that should be taken into consideration. The linguistic transactions between dialects, the intricacies of both geographical and historical knowledge are just some of the factors that contribute to a globalized film medium.

Nevertheless, living in a consumerist culture in which the emphasize continuously oscillates between the producer, the product and the consumer, one could claim that apart from benefits there are also consequences related to economic and cultural levels all over the world when it comes to promoting a certain movie. That is probably another reason why in some countries there is a higher percentage in dubbing preferences rather than subtitling.

Cronin notes that translators are mediators and that they represent "the medium by which texts from one culture and language are transmitted to another. Translation is, therefore, a subset of the larger sets of transmission and mediation" (26). Accordingly, translators merely represent the bridge between at least two cultures. By means of understanding certain practices related to a particular country, an individual creates a global perspective related to ethnic and identity issues, society status, class, and level of education. All these aspects are transmitted from the source language to the target one by a person who translates or adapts certain cultural elements from one language to another.

Another important film-related feature in Cronin's book deals with Western films having as main theme the "involuntary" silencing of Native American languages. He argues that: "The notion of the frontier is crucial for a nation that would continue to expand territorially throughout the nineteenth century, and the excitement and anxieties around the liminal zone of the frontier provide much of the narrative impetus of the Western genre" (xiv). Consequently, the globalization of the American society implies a larger range of study, apart from the spreading of genre-related concepts of the period. On the one hand, Western films repress aspects of Native American practices, while on the other they form an image of generalized savagery. The intricacy of this genre revolves around national and identity issues in order to promote the stereotype of the American hero in contrast with the primitive people that until the 1500s were the only settlers in America.

More precisely, if a film from that particular period was intended to be translated into other languages, than English was considered to be the only source language. Not until recently, Native American languages were not translated into target languages probably because of numerous prejudices and stereotypes related to the cultural practices of Native Americans. However, another plausible explanation for this would be the desire of language and culture preservation; individuals were more likely to speculate what Natives tried to say when having a conversation with American actors. They were inclined to believe that they actually understand the linguistic methods used by indigenous people. As a

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matter of fact, nothing could be more wrong. In *Reel Injun* (Diamond, Bainbridge, Hayes 2009) it is clearly depicted that no one bothered to translate the Natives' languages from Westerns. The whole documentary revolves around Native Americans' contribution to Hollywood films, but probably the most hilarious aspect related to the intricate field of translations revolves around a scene from *A Distant Trumpet* (Walsh 1964) in which Lt. Matthew Hazard is having a conversation with the Chief of a Navajo tribe. Interesting is the fact that Hazard gives the Chief instructions in English while he is answered in Navajo. The most interesting part here is that after *Reel Injun*'s release the audience is provided with a translation of the Chief's replies. The translation is as follows:

Hazard
If I do not return
General Quaint will find you.
And you will be dead
and all your people.
Chief
Just like a snake
you'll be crawling in your own ***.
Hazard
No. He is not a full. You are!
Chief
Obviously,
you can't do anything to me.
You're a snake
crawling in your own ***.

Returning to Cronin's *Translation Goes to the Movies*, one must bring to light certain aspects related to the necessity of translation in intercultural relationships, in this way being a bi-directional socially constructed process of gender and identity roles. For instance, Cronin explains that in *Dances with Wolves* (Costner 1990) translation challenges are crucial for any individual that wants to investigate the cultural realities of any foreigner. Alienation together with the process of learning a foreign language is an important theme that stands for both cultural and linguistic distances between two completely different civilizations. He notes that:

> The film is a striking illustration of the thesis that translation issues are at the heart of any serious interrogation of any stereotype and that a sensitivity to questions of translation and language difference is fundamental to any investigation of cultural realities distorted by reductive falsehoods. (46)

In other words, the idea of asking questions implicitly leads to an act of communication by establishing relations and connections between people with different cultural backgrounds.

Obviously, together with these notions related to the intention of learning and using foreign languages as a means of multicultural communication, concepts of misunderstanding and mistranslations come to fore, as it is explain in the third chapter of Cronin's book. These latter terms are two important factors that exploit ideas related to cultural clashes in screen translations between the Old and the New World. It is often believed that "cinema as a medium both produced by and watched by the migrants that poured across the Atlantic was inevitably going to become a site for the challenges and concerns which clustered around language differences" (Cronin 54). One way of exploiting these native particularities is through comedy as if represents language and culture originality. However, what makes any language difficult to translate is the presence of ambiguity, fact that implicitly points to the difficulty of learning that particular language. A part of this difficulty is trying to understand the implications of language

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contact and more importantly, the ability to communicate with others. Hence misunderstanding derives from the inappropriate applied terms in English or any other language.

To give a clearer perspective on how can certain terms in different languages be misunderstood, one should first refer to the globalization of languages, which can be viewed as a process of increasingly and international communication. In his study *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, Manfred Steger notes that there are five key variables that influence the globalization of languages. The first has to do with the **number of languages**, as in some parts of the world they seem to decline. Nevertheless, this thing does not necessarily mean insecurity, but rather empowering other cultural forces. The second variable has to do with the **movements of people**, because when they travel, they carry their own languages with them. The third concept deals with the idea of **foreign language learning and tourism**. One could only argue that the practice of language learning helps the spreading of several languages beyond national and cultural boundaries. **Internet languages**, the forth variable, talks about the language used on the internet as being a key factor to international communication. The last term implies **international scientific publication** because they contain languages of global international use (83). If one were to reflect upon these five variables, than he/she would find some contradictions that could only be associated with the effects of worldwide globalization. One concern would be the popularity of some languages in contrast with some still anonymous ones. Another problem would revolve around those cultural values that are more exposed to degradation than others.

Because of such cruxes that occur between languages, one could argue that many genres of films have as major theme the translation issues embodied in a globalized world. Cultural differences together with major difficulties embracing the translation of emotions are indeed highly problematic issues that bring to light the vulnerabilities of various global means of communication. These being said, the following examples will try to reflect particular challenges through the sphere of at least two important movies *Schindler's List* (Spielberg 1993) and *The Pianist* (Polanski 2002). Because the storylines take place during World War II, it should be noted that apart from English, the other languages encountered in the films are German, Polish and Hebrew. This aspect clearly reflects that certain cruxes take place among these four cultures. On the one hand, the war has a certain impact on all people, while on the other the very fact of language variety implies certain issues related to lexical and grammatical understanding problems that occur in an everyday subtitling process. However, as it has already been explained, apart from these two challenges the cultural translation issues take place because these are very important aspects of both the source language and the target language. One could say that culture-bond problems could be related to different intricate dialects a certain culture has. Nevertheless, there are also advantages attributed to the subtitling processes. It should be noted that if the subtitle respects the original soundtrack, one could get acquainted with both the source and the target language, in this way making quick associations with both languages, and implicitly with the cultural aspects of the original film.

If these aspects are thoroughly taken into consideration, than one could argue that linguistic choices are never random in a film. In their study, *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*, Cintas and Remael rightfully consider that the characters' way of speaking reveal things about their personality and background "through idiosyncrasies and through the socio-cultural and geographic markers in their speech, which affect grammar, syntax, lexicon, pronunciation, and intonation" (185). To put it differently, if such linguistic patterns are deeply rooted in certain communities, the individuals are often believed to have both connotative and denotative functions.

In order to give an example one should refer to specific examples encountered in the two already mentioned movies: in *Schindler's List* the main character is a perfect example on which the other characters rely; on the one hand, he designates himself as being a successful businessman, while the other characters learn to call him a righteous person. On the other hand, the idea of connotation comes hand in hand with the suggested meaning of associating someone or something with a specific meaning. Given Spielberg's film, one could say that Oskar Schindler is a German who was simply looking for essential workers in his factory, while Jews label him as the one who managed to save thousands of them from death during World War II. In another chain of thoughts, *The Pianist* succeeds in denoting the main

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character as a musician, while his brother manages to attribute German soldiers different kinds of names. On a connotative level, because of his race, he and many others are believed to be war enemies.

Although at first sight *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* seem to revolve around the same theme – that of war, despair and eventually solace and freedom – these two movies are completely different from many points of view: register, grammar and lexicon variants. The characters' way of speaking, meaning their style, the accents and pronunciation together with their emotionally charged language are characteristics that are often toned down or even deleted in the process of subtitling. For a better understanding, these characteristics as well as these films should be discussed separately.

As Cintas and Remael claim, some registers indicate a profession, while others reveal a character's social position (189). Accordingly, *Schindler's List* presents businessmen, soldiers, priests, accountants and more importantly, "essential workers" as Oskar Schindler likes to address to all the Jews who are (or are not) qualified to work in his factory. In another chain of thoughts, one could say that Steven Spielberg's movie is a story about a well-respected German, a story narrated by the Jews who had the opportunity to work for Oskar Schindler. Being a businessman, Oskar is obviously using a specific jargon that places him on a specific social scale. For instance, in a scene where he convinces his future accountant, Itzhak Stern, to run the company for him, the main character uses all his knowledge about Jews' way of doing business in relation to his part in the affair:

Original script *Schindler's List*	**Official RO subtitle**
Schindler If you want, you could run the company for me. **Stern** Let me understand. They put up all the money. I do all the work. What, if you don't mind my asking, will you do? **Schindler** I'd make sure it's known The company's in business. I'd see that it had a certain panache. That's what I'm good at. Not the work. Not the work. The presentation.	**Schindler** Dacă vrei, ai putea conduce compania pentru mine. **Stern** Lăsaţi-mă să înţeleg. Ei pun toţi banii, eu fac toată munca. Dvs, dacă nu vă supăraţi, ce veţi face? **Schindler** Voi avea grijă de renumele companiei. Să aibă o anumită prestanţă. La asta sunt bun, nu la muncă.

One could clearly understand that the personal pronoun "they" that Stern uses refers to the Jews who were believed to have a certain affinity for doing business and making money. From this example, one could only infer that Oskar Schindler has a well-prepared plan for each and every part in the affair; while Jews provide the company with money and Itzhak Stern takes care of the investments, the main character is concerned with the most visible aspect of a company. In other words, he shall be the image of a profitable factory in times of war.

Proceeding with the discussion, it should be noted that "when translating from English, subtitlers have to resort to other visual, linguistic and narrative clues in the source film to determine relationships between characters" (Cintas, Remael 190). Because English has no equivalent for the German "Sie" or the Spanish "usted" or the plural form "ustedes" or even the Romanian "dumneavoastră", it is rather difficult to say what kind of relationship each and every character has with the other ones. Whether it is a formal or an informal one, the viewer must pay attention to the register used and more importantly, to the

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characters' gestures and reactions to different kinds of impulses that come towards them. For instance, there are numerous scenes in *Schindler's List* in which Jews were encouraged, if not forced to formally address German soldiers in this way showing a tremendous amount of respect towards the military forces. However, as many scenes portray German soldiers talking to Jews in a very disrespectful way. For example there is a scene that reflects cruelty not only towards Jews, but also towards Jewish women:

Amon Goeth
I mean when,
When they compare you to –
To vermin and to rodents and to lice –
You make a point.
You make a very good point.
Is this a face of a rat?
Are these the eyes of a rat?
Hath not a Jew eyes?
I feel for you, Helen.
No, I don't think so.
You're a Jewish bitch.

(Spielberg, *Schindler's List* 1993)

This scene clearly reflects discrimination towards Jewish women, as Amon Goeth convinces himself Helen is not worth loving. From his monologue one could deduce that there are certain culture-bond terms associated with Jews. If the previous example showed that Jews are believed to be good businessmen, this one brings to light both racial and sexist discrimination.

The Pianist has even more such scenes, as it sometimes gives the false impression of exaggeration and mockery. Probably because Roman Polanski's film seems to be more personal, as the main character this time is a Polish-Jew pianist, facts are presented in a more dramatic way. Discrimination together with public humiliation and starvation are crucial themes that revolve around the whole storyline. For instance, the scene in which Wladyslaw Szpilman's father walks along an alley and two German soldiers want to humiliate him is an example that perfectly reflects the theme of authorship towards expandable people. The following example is a translation from German into English, and then from English into Romanian:

Original script *The Pianist*	**Official EN subtitle**	**Official RO subtitle**
Der Deutsche Offieziere Sie! Hier komm! Warum haben Sie sich nicht verbeugt? **Father** Entschuldigen Sie. **Der Deutsche Offieziere** Euch ist der Gewheg verboten. In die Gosse mit dir!	**The German Officer** You! Come here. Why didn't you bow? **Father** I'm sorry. **The German Officer** You can't walk on the pavement. In the street with you!	**Ofițerul german** Dumneata! Vino aici! De ce nu te-ai înclinat? **Tatăl** Îmi cer scuze. **Ofițerul german** Nu poți merge pe tortuar. În stradă cu tine.

It has been proven that the English personal pronoun "you" can be translated into German either by choosing the equivalent "Sie" that in Romanian means "dumneavoastră" or in this informal case "dumneata"; or it could simply be translated as "dir" which is the dative form from "du", referring to the second person singular this time. Of course, there are other elements that should be discussed and explained. For instance, the German feminine noun "die Gosse", which in English has plenty of meanings

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varying from "gutter" to "sweage" and "duct". However, in this context, the German soldier forbids Wladyslaw's father to walk on the pavement which implicitly means that if one cannot walk on the sidewalk, than he/she should walk on the street between cars.

Nevertheless, not all Germans behaved as the one previously mentioned. Oskar Schindler, for instance, actually gives the impression of respecting and carrying about other cultures besides his own. According to Cintas and Remael "culture-bond terms are extralinguistic references to items that are tied up with a country's culture, history, or geography, and tend therefore to pose serious translation challenges" (200). Thus *Schindler's List* brings to light references related to the Jewish culture:

Schindler
How's it going, Rabbi?
Levartov
Good, sir.
Schindler
Sun's going down.
It is Friday, isn't it?
Levartov
Is it?
Schindler
You should be preparing
for the Sabbath, shouldn't you?
What are you doing here?
Schindler
I've got some wine in my office.
Why don't we go over there?
I'll give it to you. Come on, let's go.

(Spielberg, *Schindler's List* 1993)

One could easily say that the noun "Rabbi" is emblematic for the Jewish culture, as it denotes the person who performs religious rituals when necessary. One equivalent would be to refer to him as being a Jewish priest. Another culturally-bound word is Sabbath, in which the seventh day of the week is celebrated with prayers, wine or grape juice, a clean tablecloth, a knife, candles, fresh flowers salt and some other things.

Going further with the discussion, one should tackle a rather sensible facet of cultural and geographical languages – dialects. Here should be included another film, namely *Amistad* (Spielberg 1997). The movie presents a group of African slaves that are brought to The New World on a ship named "Amistad". Luckily, a group of men tries to give them freedom, but the process itself in indeed highly problematic. For instance, in a scene where the young lawyer Roger Baldwin, together with Theodore Joadson, an African American representative from the Anti-slavery Society, bring a translator in order to fill the cultural gaps of misunderstanding Mende, Professor Gibbs acts as if he is an expert in linguistics. Although the slaves communicate with each other and claim that they do not understand a word from what the professor is saying, Gibbs acts as if they agreed to take a look on the map and tell Baldwin and Joadson where they come from. Moreover, when they are asked in Spanish and English if they come from Africa, the slaves talk in their own dialect and decide to end the conversation because they see the three Americans as idiots.

Nevertheless, Baldwin decides to continue his investigation probably because he is intrigued by the situation of differences between cultures. He tries to make connections with the mother-land by placing soil in Cinque's hands, in this way hoping to make him understand that he together with the other slaves came from Africa, and not from Cuba. One could only infer that the situation is indeed highly problematic because without a mediator, the characters will not be able to understand the intricacies of a foreign language. Luckily, Theodore Joadson finds an ex-slave who speaks both Mende and English.

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From here on, the situation seems to be rather simple. Still, there is an important aspect that should be included here: when trying to win the case Baldwin speaks with Cinque and says what he should or should not do. However, the translator claims:

Ensign Covey
I can't translate that.
Baldwin
You can't translate what?
Ensign Covey
I can't translate 'should'.
Baldwin
You're sayin' there's no word
in Mende for 'should'?
Ensign Covey
No. Either you do something,
Or you don't do it.

(Spielberg, *Amistad* 1997)

Probably the most moving scene from the film is when Cinque tries to convince the judge that they should be released; as the lawyers argue about whether or not one has the power over the slaves, Cinque stands up, raises his hands towards the crowded courtroom, and thoroughly states in broken English: "Gives us free! Gives us free! Gives us free!" (Spielberg, *Amistad* 1997). Although the impact on audience is so powerful, because of Cinque's effort to convince the Americans that they are human beings too, here of course the process of subtitling corrects the grammar mistakes.

Apart from dramatic events, *Amistad* has also humorous instances in which the cultural clashes occur. Because of the numerous misunderstandings, the film characters succeeded in creating a realistic environment in which they were supposed to communicate using signs and mimics. Although he often failed in having a mutual understanding of the language context, the main character, namely Baldwin, never really gave up the idea of communicating with Cinque. Hence, one can find humor in every particular instance, be it cultural or even language bound.

One could further argue that translating humor is indeed a provocative challenge, because apart from the linguistic transfer between cultures, one must keep in mind certain principles that are central to humorous jokes. Cintas and Remael rightfully consider that:

Subtitling humor requires insight and creativity, but it is also a matter of establishing priorities.

> Humor can occur on different levels: it can arise from the interaction between word and image, or a play on words, but it can just as well be an integral part of the story plot, reside in experiments with genre features and intertextuality. (215)

In other words, there are different categories of jokes. They can refer to nationality, culture, a community's sense of humor. Certain jokes can depend on language as they include a variety of puns and word plays, while there are also visual and aural jokes. The last category of jokes is called complex, because it combines several types of jokes at the same time.

For a better understanding, one should recall Disney's *The Lion King* from which one should try to translate language-depended jokes in relation to visual ones. In order to clearly reflect the cruxes between different cultures, one should first use the word for word translation:

Official script *The Lion King*	**Personal subtitle**
Timon He looks blue.	**Timon** Arată albastru.

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Pumbaa I'd say brownish-gold. **Timon** No-no-no. I mean he's depressed. **Pumbaa** Kid, what's eatin' ya? **Timon** Nothing. He's at the top of the food chain.	**Pumbaa** Aș spune maro-auriu. **Timon** Nu nu nu. Vreau să spun că este deprimat. **Pumbaa** Puștiule, ce te mănâncă? **Timon** Nimic. Este în vârful lanțului alimentar.

As can be seen from the example, transferring humor into another language using the method of word for word translation is not sufficient. The translator must really work in order to find the perfect equivalent of a pun in the target language. That is why one should once again try to interpret the later example not in order to reflect what the characters said, but what they meant:

Official script *The Lion King*	**Official RO subtitle**
Timon He looks blue. **Pumbaa** I'd say brownish-gold. **Timon** No-no-no. I mean he's depressed. **Pumbaa** Kid, what's eatin' ya? **Timon** Nothing. He's at the top of the food chain.	**Timon** Este negru de tot. **Pumbaa** Mai degrabă maro-auriu. **Timon** Nu. Vreau să spun că este supărat. **Pumbaa** Ce te roade, puștiule? **Timon** Nimic, este în vârful piramidei alimentelor.

In should be noted that for a better understanding, one should specify the kind of pyramid needed in this context. It is obvious that one does not need to talk about the Great Pyramid in Egypt. Instead, by looking at the animal species, and also at the title of the movie, one should know that the lion is considered to the king of animals, and implicitly it is the ruler of all the other animals. Hence, it is at the top of the food chain. Another instance in which the playfulness of language is used is when the two characters, Pumbaa and Timon, sing the song of Hakuna Matata:

Original transcript *The Lion King*	**Official RO subtitle**
Timon Hakuna Matata. **Simba** Hakuna Matata? **Pumbaa** Yeah, it's our motto. **Simba** What's a motto? **Timon** Nothing. What's the motto with	**Timon** Hakuna Matata. **Simba** Hakuna Matata? **Pumbaa** Da, este moto-ul nostru. **Simba** Ce e un moto? **Timon** Nimic.

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you?	Tu nu ai un moto?

Here, of course, one can see that the joke from English could no longer be transferred into the target language. Probably because "What's the motto with you?" is intended to be a humorous way of asking "What's the matter with you?". Thus, the Romanian subtitle will lose this humorous effect. Nevertheless, jokes in this instance are also visual, as they are closely related to the instantaneous images that follow the characters' lines.

This current study has gone some way towards enhancing the understanding of the process of screen translation together with issues related to the globalized world of languages. However this paper could not be fully appreciated without mentioning another important theoretician, namely Yves Gambier. In his study entitled "Challenges in Research on Audiovisual translation" he rightfully considers that:

> AV media certainly play a major linguistic role today, just as school, newspapers and literature did in the past. Looking at subtitled programs, it is as if one were reading the television. Watching a 90 min. subtitled film every day means reading a 200 page novel every month (24).

One can observe here the theoretician's positive point of view in relation with the fashionable practice of reading a subtitle instead of a printed edition of a book, a magazine or a newspaper. Consequently, if one were to take into consideration the monthly read 200 pages, it would seem rather superficial for an adult's mental capacities to read approximately 6 pages and a half per day. However, reading TV implies at least two basic things that Gambier agrees on. The first one deals with the reinforcing of reading abilities, while the second one takes into consideration a passive learning of foreign languages (ibidem). Through the acquisition of interlingual subtitles, viewers seem to assimilate accents or expressions that are important steps in learning a foreign language.

As it has been shown, this paper has also dealt with the idea of democracy as seen in the perspective of subtitling proving that the problems and concerns encountered in field of audiovisual translations are indeed highly problematic topics, not only to the American society, but also to the entire world. It has been demonstrated that globalization mainly represents the Americanization of world views, ideas, and other aspects of culture and civilization. In this way, the selected paper and screen materials have demonstrated that mass media focuses not only on the cultural differences that define the individual as part of a certain society, but also on the perspectives of spreading and keeping record of certain particularities related to language. In order to properly comprehend the importance of audiovisual translations, people need to acquire certain values that are really helpful in the process of understanding motion pictures from a bicultural perspective.

One can now argue that the act of watching movies somehow reconstructs realities, by remaking and reinventing new ways of discussing events in the public sphere. However, wouldn't that be a disposal of reality itself? Of course, and that is the precise reason why subtitling attempts to be a mediator between fiction and reality, between the source and the target language. To put this differently, living in a consumerist culture, where the primary instinct is to have and use all the necessary resources in order to stay informed, is indeed highly problematic. This type of society needs to avoid real issues in order to function properly it needs to empower the symbolic value of the films and to fabricate realities that can be easily accepted as an image of the real.

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