Since Lippi-Green’s (1997) seminal chapter on the cinematographic performances of accented English in Walt Disney animations, an abundant literature has been published in a new field of study encompassing audiovisual translation, sociolinguistic approaches to films and critical analysis of linguistic ideologies in cinema (Abecassis, 2008; Cronin, 2009; Gambier, 2004; Orero, 2004; to name but a few). Inasmuch as the back of the book claims that it will question whether ‘bad guys in Hollywood movies necessarily speak ‘broken’ English’, it is clear that Bleichenbacher’s research walks in the footsteps of Lippi-Green’s. In other words, it aims at drawing attention to the way popular media reproduce linguistic discriminations and foster linguicism (i.e. prejudices held against individuals for the language – or the variety of language – that they speak), or more specifically and as Bleichenbacher puts it, at ‘testing’ a charge often levelled at Hollywood filmmakers, namely that Hollywood movies perpetuate patterns of negative stereotyping with regard to the use and the speakers of other languages’ (2008:1). To serve this purpose, Lukas Bleichenbacher, Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Teacher Education in St Gallen, Switzerland, studies the presence of languages other than English in Hollywood movies and the way the characters speaking them are
depicted, which is to say whether the latter are consistently translated or if they speak at all in the other language (and not barely code-switch), and if they do use the other language, whether it is shown as a positive participation (unlike, for example, the orders barked by German soldiers in popular World War 2 movies).

*Multilingualism in the Movies* presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 28 successful American films produced between 1984 and 2004, and in doing so proposes a framework for the description and interpretation of multilingual practices in popular cinema. As a couple of chapter titles enunciate, the book opposes ‘multilingualism in the real world’ to ‘multilingualism in fiction’, examining linguistic practices in films in terms of their *authenticity* or fidelity to *reality*. In this view, the second chapter provides an introduction to basic linguistic notions of multilingualism and describes very briefly multilingual practices, such as the way language choices are made according to the context or the interlocutor, and diverse attitudes to the *other* language(s) (e.g. linguicism vs. linguistic courtesy).

Chapter three introduces the book’s theoretical framework. The choices made by Bleichenbacher are original as they bring together the well-known tripartite semiotic model of Gal and Irvine (i.e. ‘Iconicity-Recursivity-Erasure’, 1995) with a less known taxonomy proposed by a Czech scholar, P. Mares, which categorises treatments of multilingual discourses in fictional texts.

Chapter four (‘The Language Contact Movie Corpus’) presents the list of films that are to be analysed and explains the criteria that guided their choices. These criteria are summarized under four characteristics: linguistic (the films’ plurilingualism had to be frequent and in European languages – which are, it seems, sufficiently mastered by the author for an enlightened analysis), generic (the chosen movies are realistic and exclude fantasy and science fiction), economic (the movies are high-budget movies that met a worldwide audience) and chronological (the movies were produced in the last two decades). Bleichenbacher reminds the reader that what he is interested in is ‘how the use of any languages other than English comes across to a viewer, and might then inform his or her attitudes towards multilingualism in general’ (2008:49). However, from there onwards, the book rather focuses on the treatment of languages other than English in films. Even if the ideologies displayed in films may well be shared by the audience and read as assumed by Bleichenbacher, one should bear in mind that a real analysis of the viewers’ reception of these ideologies would have required a different research design.

Chapter 5 uses Mares’ taxonomy to categorise the corpus of movies in four types spanning from a complete erasure of the languages other than English to their full use in the dialogues. The first type, *elimination* is ‘characterized by the
complete absence of any linguistic hints to the nature of the language(s) replaced’ (2008:57) as it is the case for Milos Forman’s Amadeus (1984) in which all the characters are Austrian and German but speak in English and no mention of the foreign languages is made. The second type, signalization is ‘defined as the literal naming of a language in the text’ (2008:59) – bearing in mind the paradox that, even though it is named, it is nevertheless not spoken. Thirdly, evocation, ‘defined as the use of a marked variety of English’ (2008:59), appears for example in the use of Russian accents in McTiernan’s Hunt for Red October (1990) or Polish and German accents in Spielberg’s Schindler’s List (1993). Interestingly, at this point, Bleichenbacher demonstrates that there is a principle governing variation in the strength of characters’ foreign accents that could be enunciated as follows: the less important the role of the character in the fiction, the stronger the accent. Finally, ‘presence’ when the other language(s) is/are used. The last category is then divided in ‘partial presence’ (the other languages are part of a linguistic landscape – partly audio in what Kelly-Holmes (2005:186) calls ‘language as soundtrack approach’, partly visual with the use of topographic signs or advertisements displayed on the set) and ‘individual multilingualism’, in which Bleichenbacher studies when and how other languages are replaced by English as well as the authenticity of multilingual practices such as code-switching.

Chapters 6 and 7’s approach is character-based. In these chapters, Bleichenbacher does not tie his analysis to linguistic features as such, but rather to linguistic choices assigned to characters, in other words, whether the way the characters speak is meaningful of their worth or fictional importance. As Kozloff (2000:27) insists, any analysis of film dialogues should reflect on questions such as: ‘Who gets to speak about what? Who is silenced? Who is interrupted?’. Applying the Iconicity/Recursivity/Erasure semiotic processes (Gal and Irvine, 1995) to the proposed data, Chapter 6 (‘Characterizations’) formulates three hypotheses (2008:93–94): (1) L1 speakers of other languages are negative, powerless, and insignificant characters; (2) Native speakers of other languages are worse L2 users than native speakers of English; (3) Simplification results in erasure. Through qualitative analysis of dialogues and quantitative data (sex, age, occupation, fictional importance and linguistic repertoire of 518 characters in a sub-corpus of 16 movies), Bleichenbacher demonstrates that if the first hypothesis is often true, contrary to what the second hypothesis proposed, most of the speakers of other languages are highly skilled in English. As for the third hypothesis, the process of erasure in the films studied is undeniable with regard to the absence of complexity in cross-cultural encounters and simplification of the contextual factors guiding the choice of language and code-switching. Chapter 7 uses a similar methodology but, with an emphasis on language choice, it postulates that: (1) The use of other languages indexes undesirable social
practices; (2) The content expressed in other languages is irrelevant; (3) Important factors which governed the use of other languages are erased (pp. 147–148). Even if English is used in more positive contexts, Bleichenbacher’ study shows discrepancies between genres and linguistic behaviours (e.g. the fact that Russian spies speak in Russian is a sign of bad intentions indeed). The second hypothesis could not be corroborated: Bleichenbacher finds in his corpus that contrary to common belief characters are often translated and that subtitles is the favoured mean of translation. The third hypothesis was partly confirmed as patterns of code-switching were, for the most part, unrealistic and greatly simplified.

In the vein of books dealing with the imperialism of the English language, one aim of *Multilingualism in the Movies* was to test whether Hollywood movies were ‘bolstering monolingual and anglocentric language ideologies’ (2008:2). Ironically, it seems that the focus of the book itself reinforces the view. Are American movies the only ones refusing to display linguistic diversity? If the choice of American mainstream movies was justified from the start of the book with the argument that Hollywood cinema meets larger audience due to the global nature of the distribution of US majors, the restriction is regrettable as other big cinematic markets (such as Hong Kong or Bollywood) also deal with linguistic issues, and other books mentioned supra have studied the choice of languages other than English as a replacement for other languages (see Orero, 2004, for studies for example on the political choice of Castilian, Galician, Basque or Catalan in Spanish TV programs, and Gambier, 2004, for studies on German, French and Chinese).

As Bleichenbacher ends the monograph with a reflection on the fact that ‘media blurs the boundary between fiction and reality’ (2008:222), one observes that the book does not manage to fully address the complex relation between fiction and authenticity: not merely how fictional discourses compare with reality but how they embody assumed linguistic ideologies of the audience and by the same token perpetuate them. The linguistic behaviours analysed in the book are definitely stylized as they make use of prominent features to index social groups (i.e. the iconicity) and have therefore a complex relation with authenticity (see Coupland, 2001). Movies are obviously not real but have to be credible to be fully enjoyed by the audience. A complete study of linguistic practices as performed in films should take into account the fluid and two-way dynamic between audiovisual media and spectatorship.

*Multilingualism in the Movies* is the monograph of Bleichenbacher’s doctoral thesis which was submitted to the University of Zurich in 2007 and it does read like a PhD dissertation: it spends a long time justifying theoretical and methodological choices as well as forestalling critiques, and is not void of a few
spelling mistakes and missing references. However, it has merits as it sheds more light on a new field of study and provides a tentative framework where a widely agreed-upon framework is lacking. It opens new and fruitful avenues for future research: for example, Bleichenbacher gives a few hints at a possible diachronic evolution in the treatment of foreign languages in fiction (e.g. James Bond opuses often replaced other languages with English before millennium but since 2000 have tended to opt for presence rather than elimination), but admits having been limited by his corpus. Interestingly, a more recent book (Cronin, 2009) comes to the same conclusion as it includes in its corpus several other movies – such as Lost in Translation (Coppola, 2003) and Babel (Iñárritu, 2006) – that give a significant place to plurilingualism and languages in contact phenomenon in their stories.

Despite a few flaws, the book is a thought-provoking read and should appeal to researchers in Film Studies as well as students of Linguistics who have an interest in critical analysis of discourses and ideologies in the media.

References