

“Just say what’s in your *squanch*
and people understand”:

Analysis of an invented language and
language variation in *Rick and Morty*

Master’s thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman pääasiallisena tarkoituksena on tarkastella animoidussa tieteisfiktiokomediassa, <i>Rick and Morty</i> (2013–), esiintyvää kielivaihtelua, sekä tutkia vaihtelun ilmenemistä ja vaikutusta sekä katsojan että ohjelman sisäisestä näkökulmasta. Kielivaihtelua tarkastellaan myös sen ymmärrettävyyden ja tulkinnan näkökulmista, selvittäen mitä käännös- ja tulkintastrategioita sarja tarjoaa katsojalle automaattisesti, mutta myös mitä strategioita katsoja joutuu väistämättä käyttämään itse ymmärtääkseen sitä osaa kielivaihtelusta, jota ei käännetä. Kielivaihtelu sarjassa nousee esiin luonnollisten kielten käytön seurauksena, mutta pääasiassa se ilmenee sarjassa esitetyn kehitetyn kielen johdosta. Tutkielman toisena päätarkoituksena onkin määrittää kyseessä oleva kehitetty kieli sen rakenteen, roolin ja käytön puolesta. Tutkimuksen kohteena olivat sarjan kolme ensimmäistä tuotantokautta, ja niiden yhteenlasketut 31 erillistä jaksoa.</p> <p>Analyysimenetelmät koostuivat pääasiassa laadullisesta sisällönanalyysistä, jonka avulla data jaettiin useisiin lohkoihin eri teemojen mukaan, kuten 'luonnollisten kielten rooli koodinvaihtolanteissa' tai 'kehitetyn kielen visuaalinen tulkinta', jonka jälkeen kerättyä dataa voitiin luokitella ja arvioida sekä laadullisesti, että määrällisesti. Sisällönanalyysin tueksi menetelmiä johdettiin tutkimuskirjallisuudesta, erityisesti eri luokitteluiden muodossa. Eri tutkijat ovat luoneet lukuisia luokittelusteikkoita kehitetyille kielille esimerkiksi niiden rakenteen ja tehtävien määrittelyyn. Monikielisuuden ja kielivaihtelun taustakirjallisuudesta nousi erinäisiä luokitteluja koodinvaihtelun motivaatioista, monikielisuuden rooleista fiktiossa, sekä kielivalinnoista, tukemaan kielivaihtelun analyysia luonnollisten kielten välillä, sekä avustamaan fiktiivisen kielen käytön analyysia.</p> <p>Tutkimus onnistui tavoitteissaan määrittellä <i>Rick and Morty</i> -sarjassa esiintyvä kehitetty kieli, sekä koota kokonaiskuva sarjan kielivaihtelusta, sen ymmärrettävyydestä sekä tulkittavuudesta. Käännöksen puuttumista korvaavia erillisiä tulkintastrategioita havaittiin kolme.</p> <p>Vaikka fiktiivisten kielten suosio on nousussa, niiden tutkiminen on jäänyt hyvin vähäiseksi useasta syystä: kehitetyille kielille ei ole juurikaan omia tutkimusmenetelmiä, vaan tähän tarkoitukseen sovelletaan yleisiä kielitieteen metodeja. Tämä käytäntö puolestaan on aiheuttanut paheksuntaa tutkijapiireissä menetelmien sopimattomuuden vuoksi; ihmiskielten tutkimiseen suunnattuja menetelmiä ei voisi soveltaa muiden lajien käyttämiin kieliin. Menetelmien vähydestä johtuu myös kehitettyjen kielten tutkimuksen yksipuolisuus — tutkimusten kohteena ovat pääasiassa kielet, jotka ovat kehitetty vastaamaan luonnollisten kielten mittavuutta esimerkiksi kielioopin ja sanaston puolesta. Itse tutkimuksen lisäksi argumentoin tässä maisterintutkielmassa tämän alan tutkimusmenetelmien muokkauksen ja soveltamisen puolesta, ja myös sen, että menetelmien kehittämisessä olisi tulevaisuudessa harkittava myös (kieli)tieteen ulkopuolisten toimijoiden panosta.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords invented language, science fiction, language variation, interpretation, comprehension	
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Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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1 INTRODUCTION

Language in fictional works has gained the important role of not only providing the reader or the viewer with the intended story, but introducing them to the created world of the body of work as well. Language possesses a role, both external to the narrative and internal within the story, of conveying the new world to the viewer; it is the vehicle that transports all the intended information, and conveys the intricacies of individuals portrayed. What is more, as an internal feature within the narrative, language can function as a source of additional information about the world and society it helps depict. More than often in the entertainment industry in the past, films and television series, especially in the Western film industry, have been notably monolingual, with the exception of instances of code-mixing. The mainstream entertainment industry in America has produced these works primarily in English, to the extent that even the foreign characters are made to speak a different language than their own, often with a heavy accent. While the use of English as a lingua franca seems realistic — and in fact it is, in the context of an international workplace, for example — the phenomenon in film has been taken to such lengths as a group of characters who all share a foreign mother tongue are portrayed speaking extremely broken English to one another. This phenomenon is not, however, native to the American film industry: filmmakers in European cinema have been culprits in representing unrealistic monolingual communicative situations as well (Bleichenbacher 2008). This tradition has fortunately already experienced its peak. As Kozloff (2000: 80) argues, the growing trend in cinema and television, including the various online streaming services introduced more recently, has been to include different languages to achieve realism in language use, to acknowledge the presence of multicultural relationships and communication. Kozloff suggests a possible reason for the expanding cultural inclusion to be the growing presence of independent filmmakers in mainstream markets.

Multilingualism and language use in general have been the topic of many a scientific work and an interest of researchers for decades. Notably, however, the focus has been on human languages, neglecting the instances of artificial ones. Some individual fictional languages have been examined further by researchers, but these languages, as a collective, have remained relatively untouched (Cheyne 2008: 388). Genres of fantasy and especially science fiction often utilise and introduce languages that are out of this world and therefore perfectly unknown to the audience. These languages and their functional aspects as elements of multilingualism in cinema are topics that

could be analysed as many times as there are works of fiction in which they appear; nearly all ought to be analysed individually, since the instances are mostly original and differ greatly. What is more, to correctly interpret the language and what it represents is a difficult task, since often the generic, Earthly rules of language study do not apply to invented languages, as attested by a crowd of researchers (see for example Meyers 1980, Stockwell 2006, Cheyne 2008). Nevertheless, this does not mean interpretations and analyses should not be conducted, or at the very least attempted. Simply because there are fewer means to execute the analyses, does not mean this genre and the languages in it are not deserving of a closer look. Lukas Bleichenbacher (2008) compiled an extensive study of multilingualism in the cinematic entertainment industry, deliberately omitting from his analysis science fiction and artificial languages. Precisely for this reason, in the current study I examined a case of a fictional language, to which I applied, among others, some of Bleichenbacher's methodology, further introduced in the sections below. As to be discussed in length in this study, the classic conventions of language study are continually, albeit somewhat problematically, applied to fictional languages. I employed many of these theories and practices in the present study, while also acknowledging their shortcomings, because however complicated, they currently remain the sole instruments for research in this field.

In this study, I analysed the variation in language use in the first three seasons of the animated science fiction comedy *Rick and Morty* (2013–2017), drawing special attention to the use of an artificial language featured in the show. The strange, extra-terrestrial language, to which I will refer as Alien, is not eased upon the viewer, nor further explained at any point; it gains little to no recognition throughout the series, yet it is fluently understood by one of the protagonists and used in one form or another in almost every episode. Cheyne (2008) remarks that the lack of interpretation of an unknown language provided for the viewer may well function as a meaningful signifier on its own, and Bleichenbacher (2008: 16) states that the use of a different language, or any form of language for that matter, is always meaningful and should never be dismissed as arbitrary or insignificant. Blake (1999), as cited by Bleichenbacher (2008: 27), further notes that the more recent the work of fiction, the more meaning employing different languages in it carries. The data for this study was published in the second decade of the 21st century, denoting it highly modern and recent, allowing me to presume the role of Alien to be noteworthy. The peculiar, yet seemingly meaningful task of interpreting an alien language with little noticeable assistance, assigned to the viewer without prior negotiation, is one of the focal topics of this thesis, though other lines of inquiry will be pursued as well. After inspecting Alien for its formation,

categorisation, and functions as an invented language, I moved on to inspect other natural languages and the language variation to which they contribute in the show. These particular instances were viewed for their significance as elements of multilingualism, and their functional roles as narrative constructs. After analysing the use of Alien and the variation caused by it and other natural languages, I shifted the focus to the viewer and considered the variation from the point of view of comprehension and interpretation.

I will begin the thesis by introducing the research literature in the field of language study which concerns multilingual language use, and which can, to an extent, be applied to fictional languages. I will feature the customary theories and frameworks of the discipline and note their applicability to this study, as well as consider their limitations. From the domain of multilingualism and language use, I will move on to science fiction and the languages within the genre, and the traditional strategies of translation in multilingual films and series. Finally, before moving on to present the methods of analysis and the data, I will discuss in length the restrictions and obstacles studies of this nature may face, for the many problems regarding the methodology. After this, I will move on to introduce the source series and the collected data and review the methods employed in the analysis of the study, followed by the analysis itself. Finally, I will discuss the findings and draw final conclusions from them, as well as discuss some of the major issues regarding this field of study — and perhaps make a few notes about the future of research in this field as well.

2 RESEARCH LITERATURE

2.1 Reaching for realism: multiple languages in use

To begin the thesis, I will introduce the select areas of research and examples of research literature closely connected to the primary points of focus of this thesis. I will explore the subject of multilingualism from a structural and functional view, the use and selection of languages in communicative events, as well as the common downfall regarding language choice in works of popular culture — linguicism. From the conventions of language study regarding the use of natural languages, I will move on to the genre of science fiction and present invented languages in that context specifically: I will discuss their different categorisations and the methods developed or modified for the field, addressing the shortcomings and issues, and further discuss the problems a study of this kind can encounter as well. After this section, I will present the research questions,

the show from which the data were collected, and the methodology I have chosen to use in this study.

The relatively recent trend to broaden the scope of language use in cinematic works, has received a heap of attention from critics and researchers alike. While the stance of English as a global utility language even in film has not been diminished, the focus on language use has developed to more realistic a view in what Androutsopoulos (2016: 140) refers to as **telecinematic works**, a term used to avoid separating the concepts of cinema and television. As Androutsopoulos (ibid.: 139) explains it, language in telecinematic works is a rich area of study for its intricacy in semiotic multimodality and importance as a vehicle for sociolinguistic representation. A product of such representation is of course multilingualism, which is the representation of two or more languages in a text or a film, presenting language use and language contact in the most natural way possible. As a result of the increasing number of studies on linguisticism (see for example Hill 1995 and 2007, Androutsopoulos 2016, topic further discussed below in section 2.1.3), creators of fiction, especially in the Western entertainment industry, have begun to display awareness of the discriminatory effects such actions, i.e. imposing a character with a foreign accent, can have. The tradition of “bad guys” discussing their evil plan alone in broken English is slowly fading away, since the credibility of such a situation has become challenged by not only researchers, but globalised, multilingual audiences as well. In his study, Bleichenbacher (2008: 220) notes and exemplifies the understandable frustration of speakers of cinematically represented minority languages, e.g. Russian in an English-speaking film; the unrealistic representation of poor linguistic skills of minority language characters, incorrect translations into the primary language, or negative portrayal of minority languages and the characters speaking them are unfortunately prominent features of multilingual films, which may cause annoyance in multilingual audiences. Undoubtedly, to portray natural multilingualism in film and to integrate different languages as needed, occurring as naturally as possible, is a growing trend.

Bleichenbacher (2008) studied multilingualism in Western cinema in his doctoral dissertation by analysing 28 mainstream films from different genres in which language contact and multilingualism are portrayed to varying extents, from both European and American film industries. He studied the portrayal of speakers of minority languages, i.e. other than English, and the specific functions multilingualism performs when languages are portrayed in parallel. He further divided his data into 16 films in which multiple languages were present, and 12 in which

expected multilingualism was replaced by a monolingual practice. He describes multilingualism having three distinct aspects: societal, individual, and the use of it in discourse. Briefly, societal multilingualism refers to language choice and use in a given societal context, and the environment and culture shaped by those choices, as well as the individuals shaped by the same environments, representing those cultures to the rest of the world. Bleichenbacher (ibid.: 9) cites Edwards (1994) and Darquennes (2004) by adding that language contact and multilingualism on a societal level frequently lead to conflict and often carry heavy political undertones. Although these topics make very interesting foci of research for sociolinguists, this subject will regardless be left out of the present study. The second aspect, individual multilingualism, describes the linguistic repertoire of an individual, as well as the use of it, though there is debate over the definition of multilingual and the level of linguistic proficiency an individual must possess to be referred to as multilingual (Bleichenbacher 2008: 9). Pavlenko (2005: 6) suggests a turn to the use of “use-based definition of language proficiency” instead of learning to speak two languages at home and being multilingual as a result. This notion has largely begun to replace the one of “native speakers” with “expert users”, or with other modifiers to describe linguistic proficiency without basing it on geographical origins. The third aspect, the use of multilingualism in discourse, is a vast topic to cover and closely related to the study at hand. Multilingual discourse refers to any instance of multiple languages used in written or spoken form. Whether the decision to include more than one language is a conscious one or not, it is never meaningless and it should never be considered haphazard. Different forms of multilingual discourse, for example code-mixing and language choice, will be discussed below.

Much like the form of multilingualism, the function of it in literary and telecinematic works is threefold as well. However, Bleichenbacher (2008: 26–30) explains this topic to be a difficult one to examine. The decision to portray multilingualism depends on the writer and the piece of work in question, the reception depends on the interpretation made by the audience, and it is always case-specific. While he agrees it is impossible to compile an exhaustive and definitive list of the functions and effects of multilingual discourse, he offers three broad objectives representing multilingualism in fiction may intend to reach: creating an air of **realism**, expressing **social criticism**, and finally, functioning as an instrument to portray **humour**. Bringing an element of realism into a story by employing multilingual discourse, a writer can persuade the audience to regard the work as realistic, and can thus gain the trust and grasp the attention of the audience. Depicting interlocutors from different backgrounds naturally in language contact can improve the

continuity of the story and cohesion of the characters (Grutman 2002: 333, translated and cited by Bleichenbacher 2008: 26). Bleichenbacher (2008: 26–27) moves on to discuss the critique around the term realism in relation to representations of conversation in fiction, and agrees with the difficulty to portray realistic language use in fiction, when in fact all written and scripted speech is far from realistic or natural. Although, it would be even less realistic to omit conversations altogether, therefore reaching for realism is the only option. Locher (2017: 299) seconds this notion, and strongly advocates for the consideration of dialogue in fiction as “naturally occurring in its own right”.

The second function, expressing social criticism, is a powerful tool to utilise and can bring a sense of pressure for the creator of fiction. Historically, multilingualism has been used in fiction to combat such issues as the industrialisation, class division, human rights, and equality (Bleichenbacher 2008: 27–28). The often political and ideological agendas conveyed through multilingualism in fiction, much like in other works of popular culture such as music, are the people’s chance to voice their concerns on the platforms to which they have access (Pennycook 2006). Languages such as the politically oppressing Newspeak from George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and Nadsat from Anthony Burgess’ *A clockwork orange* (1962) are excellent examples of employing multilingualism to express social criticism. Stockwell (2006: 4–5) describes the importance of Nadsat when addressing uncomfortable topics in the book, stating that the new, different language enabled Burgess to bring forward and describe events, including excessive brutality and violent sexual abuse, which would normally repel a reader much faster. Aside from the political aspect of social criticism, Bleichenbacher (2008: 28) notes that multilingualism can be utilised to elicit emotional responses from the audience, either positive or negative, by creating a closeness or a distance between the text and the reader.

The final functional aspect is introducing humour through multilingualism, which proves an ethically problematic topic altogether. Finding humour in multilingualism suggests there is an existing inequality, an imbalance in power, between two or more languages or forms of language. This imbalance is perceived as entertainment primarily by those members of audience who identify with the language in power. This interestingly is a recurrent element in modern telecinematic works. For example, in the television series *Modern Family*, one of the characters is of Colombian decent and struggles with conversational English, which is often perceived as amusing by the other characters. Another example rises from the modern cult show *How I Met Your Mother*, where in

one particular episode (season 3 episode 2) a foreign character is deceived by the core characters, who use the technical, or otherwise more difficult variables of everyday English words. One of the core characters compels the others to use their “big words”, suggesting the foreigner will not be able to follow the conversation and is by implication only capable of using “little” words, creating extreme juxtaposition between the two varieties of words as well as the two linguistic competences present in the scene. This line of dialogue is extreme, as it not only conveys the pragmatic message of the superiority of English, but also constructs a physical image of the distribution of power; native speakers are big, others small. The issue of utilising language in unequal division of power will be further discussed below, when I examine the issue of linguisticism more closely. Next, I will present a subcategory of multilingualism, which functions as an integral part of everyday communication as well as language use in modern telecinematic works.

2.1.1 Code alternation

Code alternation — commonly referred to as **code-mixing** or **code-switching**, and especially in educational contexts **translanguaging** — is a linguistic practice of presenting two or more languages within a single communicative turn, a strategy to which interlocutors in conversation occasionally resort. Alternating between codes — that is, languages — requires prior linguistic knowledge of at least two languages, since it is by definition the action of mixing different languages in the same turn, excluding the instances of loan words. This practice may be spoken or written, and as short as a single word in a language different than the original, appearing somewhere in a given communicative event. According to Mazzaferro (2018) the term translanguaging refers to the negotiation of language choice among multilingual speakers, particularly in educational settings. While the concepts of language change and choice remain the same when discussing translanguaging or code-mixing, there are subtle differences. For this reason, I will exclude translanguaging as a term of use from the present study for its heavily educational connotations in research literature. Commonly, the shift from one language to another occurs after a threshold between two sentences, when the speaker intends to confirm their argument or refer to the turn of another speaker (Gumperz 1982: 75–84). Gumperz (1982: 61) argues that the mixing of languages in a conversational code-mixing situation must be as if only one language was used — the newly introduced language must fit the syntactic, semantic, and grammatical conventions of the source language for it to continue to carry or support the original message and be pragmatically acceptable as meaningful code-mixing and not simply arbitrarily

changing the language with random words. An example of technically correct code-mixing would be stating your affection to a friend by saying: “Minä pidän sinusta, you know that right?”, whereas a flawed and futile mixing would manifest as: “Minä like sinusta.”. In this example, the mix is made from Finnish into English, as the core message expressing the emotion is conveyed in Finnish.

Being a highly noticeable phenomenon in multilingual discourse, code-mixing is unsurprisingly regularly featured in telecinematic works as well. As Androutsopoulos (2016: 141–142) explains in detail, code-mixing in works of fiction has a long-standing history as a research topic, as does multilingualism. The conscious decision to select a language for a communicational event and the possible changes to that selection occur in everyday interactions, in formal as well as informal communication, and even in dialogue in fictional works. They are phenomena with which we all are familiar, though the mechanisms behind and motivation for them may remain unknown to a layperson. Code-mixing can provide metaphorical meaning to language use, yet it can simultaneously function as an equally meaningful structural element. Auer (1988: 210) even compares code-mixing to such elements of speech as intonation and pitch level. The sheer existence of code-mixing can provide significant amounts of information about the environment in which it appears — the chosen language always reflects the speaker, as well as the surrounding situation. Generally, shifting to a minority language signals as a use of what Gumperz (1982: 66) defines as “we-code”, in contrast with the “they-code” of the majority language, of a particular situation. These codes are examined when exploring further information of the identification of the speaker, and their attitude towards different social groups, for example. As Gumperz (*ibid.*: 61) notes, there is an evident, direct connection between social context and language use; selecting a language to use in a multilingual communication event, between a majority or a minority one, conveys the speakers’ personal language ideology and social stance, whether done consciously or subconsciously.

Although code-mixing and code-switching as terms are widely considered interchangeable, there is debate over the specific definition of the terms, since research literature exists in both (see for example Heller 1988 and Auer 1999 for code-switching, and Muysken 2000 for code-mixing). Auer (1999) suggests the term mixing to be a separate function from code-switching, but the term has since been popularly fused with the prefix “code”, and is, as Muysken (2000) describes it, the more seldom used alternative for code-switching. There have been attempts to distinguish the two

terms in regard to their specific function, but unfortunately the results of these attempts have proven contradictory as well. Auer (1999) provides a rather detailed suggestion for the distinction between code-switching, language mixing, and a third concept, fused lects — a term seldom present in literature — and he notes these are all practices on the continuum of bilingual language use. He defines language mixing as the form code-switching takes when it is performed more frequently with an increased pace. Bleichenbacher (*ibid.*: 14) merges Auer's notion of language mixing with code-mixing by positioning the two terms on either side of a mutually inclusive “or”, rendering them uniform. As a direct contrast, in his study Muysken (2000) selects code-switching to reflect the faster variety of mixing two or more languages in a communication event. In this study, I have chosen to use the term code-mixing over code-switching for the following reasons: while the two terms are relatively synonymous in this regard, the former better describes the action from the point of view of my data. To further explain the choice, I regard “switching” between languages a somewhat random, though contextually significant, individual decision about language use in a given situation, whereas “mixing” can be considered more deliberate and calculated, and therefore better fits this study, for the language use in my data is preordained and scripted, as it is from a fictional, animated show. While all language could be argued to be planned, since one is ultimately in charge of what one constructs and produces using linguistic abilities and repertoire, language in fiction is planned by someone else than the producer of the utterance, and therefore the producer is already a secondary user of the language. Since resolving the issue of the distinction between the two terms is not the aim of the present study, I will disregard the debate and simply select code-mixing.

Unfortunately, the inconsistency and contradiction extend from the debate over the definition of code-mixing to the principles governing its use. Combining two or more languages within a conversational turn or any communicative event has, on the one hand, been viewed as a sign of deficient linguistic abilities in either or both of the languages used. On the other, it has been regarded a sign of enriched linguistic ability, as the successful functional fusion of two or more languages (Cheng and Butler 1989). Jørgensen (1999: 440), for example, argues the former view to be entirely erroneous in his study about the power distribution of bilingual language use. In the present study, I will not focus on the interlocutors' linguistic abilities from the point of view of whether they code-mix for the lack or abundance of their linguistic repertoire, but rather direct the attention to the contextual and situational cues of the instances of code-mixing and multilingualism. In the following paragraphs, I will present and discuss some of the structural and

functional aspects of code-mixing.

In his book on cinematic multilingualism, Bleichenbacher (2008) discusses the distinction between two types of motivations for code-mixing in language use: instances that are motivated by linguistic reasons and instances that require code-mixing from a narrative point of view. He notes (ibid.: 17) the significance of code-mixing, stating that it not only functions as a frequent local construct in a subsequently multilingual conversation, but it can also be utilised as a reaction to various social phenomena as well. Gumperz (1982: 60–61) describes the two linguistically motivated varieties of code-mixing as conversational and metaphorical code-mixing. Conversational code-mixing refers to a code-mixing event, in which the immediate external factors — such as the other interlocutors, relevant history, or the social environment — surrounding said event encourage the interlocutors to employ more than one language. Conversational code-mixing could perhaps be classified as a more casual and unintentional form of mixing different languages, whereas metaphorical code-mixing concerns the intentions of the speaker and the message they convey, specifically with their choice of language. In addition to linguistic motivations, Bleichenbacher (2008: 191–214) introduces altogether four forms of code-mixing in fiction deriving from narrative motivations, including the above-mentioned concepts of situational and metaphorical mixing, as well as the additional concepts of indexical and edited code-mixing.

Even though the context of language use is transported from the real world into a fictional one in Bleichenbacher's (2008) study, the concepts of conversational and metaphorical code-mixing maintain their original definitions (Gumperz 1982), although Bleichenbacher does rename the terms for two of the concepts. He relabels conversational as situational, and presents metaphorical alongside an alternative term, marked. The narrative motivation for situational code-mixing is highlighted by the social situation and especially the perceived linguistic abilities of the addressee of the speaker, while the motivation for metaphorical code-mixing is derived from the desire for a significant deviation from the source language, which itself conveys further meaning. The two remaining forms of code-mixing from a narrative point of view are indexical and edited. According to Bleichenbacher (2008: 208–214), indexical code-mixing can be utilised as an indicator of the geographical origins of a character, and the instances are often commonly known words and phrases rather than complex concepts. However, he found in his study that it is not a frequently used form of code-mixing in cinema, since it seldom carries substantial amounts of pragmatic information to advance the plot, nor is it employed as a vehicle of linguisticism, as different structures

of language choice sometimes can be. Lastly, the category of edited code-mixing, which is relatively self-evident a concept: edited code-mixing is included in scenes through editing after the dialogue has taken place, or alternatively, through external manipulation of the dialogues present. Edited code-mixing regards scenes in which multilingual conversation is presented to the viewer by, for example, switching between locations where simultaneous and interrelated conversations are active in more than one language, or in a single location, where separate conversations in different languages are presented to the viewer by moving the camera.

While both narrative and linguistic motivations for conversational and metaphorical varieties of code-mixing share the same principles, the primary difference rests in the users of the language. As discussed above, characters in fiction do not own their words and rarely invent them themselves — excluding perhaps instances of improvised lines of dialogue in telecinematic works and performances broadcast live. Therefore, the message the interlocutors convey in real life is not the same in works of fiction. In fiction, the characters are the creators' vehicles for transporting messages; they can communicate something about themselves, their community of practice, or the world in which they live, all in the words of the writers. In this study, I will apply Gumperz's (1982) theories of the four narrative motivations for code-mixing, modified and directed at telecinematic use by Bleichenbacher (2008).

Both multilingualism and code-mixing are essential areas of research for the present study as they appear in multitude in the data collected for analysis. The unknown alien language surfaces in the data occasionally on its own and at times alongside English. In addition to the alien language, there are several instances of multilingualism and code-mixing in other natural languages, such as Russian and Spanish. When examining any instance consisting of more than one language, it is paramount to look beyond the languages used, and inspect the scene from afar: who is talking in what language to whom; who else is present apart from the producer of the utterance; is the language changed during the scene; where is the scene taking place; what exactly is said; and how does the multilingual dialogue affect the immediate context, or perhaps even the entire show? Even though each excerpt of dialogue in the data of this study could be analysed separately through countless angles, to maintain the study at an appropriate length, I must keep the central focus solely on the linguistic structure of each utterance and the message conveyed rather than perform in-depth analysis on the characters and their linguistic backgrounds. I utilised much of Bleichenbacher's (2008) frameworks, which he reserved for natural languages, to categorise the

types of code-mixing instances in *Rick and Morty*. In the sections below, I will introduce more key frameworks, which I applied to my own analysis.

2.1.2 Multilingual communication and language choice

The specific multilingual communicative events can be further analysed by categorising the language choices of the speakers. When a speaker finds themselves in a situation which requires a conscious choice of language, instead of arbitrarily choosing one, there are several aspects they must consider before the selection. Firstly, one must consider the other participants of the interaction and the possibly shared linguistic knowledge of all attending parties. Selecting a language in which all or most of the interlocutors are proficient can be interpreted as a sign of politeness, and it can positively affect and aid the development of the interaction. Secondly, the social and environmental context must be accounted for. This includes the immediate surroundings and their significance, as well as the larger context of the environment in which the communication event takes place; is it culturally appropriate to use any language; does the setting require a specific language; will speaking a certain language place the speaker in a particular spot on a social spectrum? And lastly, the topic in question may determine the language choice. The level of formality and the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors can greatly affect this selection (Bleichenbacher 2008: 12–13). In a bilingual or multilingual situation, the participants must try and find the most convenient way for the communication to progress, including selecting the optimal language for the interaction. According to Sachdev and Giles (2004), language choice in a communicative event is not only influenced by the interlocutors' individual competences, but in addition to the immediate surroundings, by the social and cultural history of the speakers. An example of this would be communication between a police officer and a member of a certain social group with a history of confrontation with the local law enforcement.

To examine language choice in a bilingual or multilingual communication event, **the communication and accommodation theory** can be employed to examine the motivations for and impact of language choice in a given situation (Sachdev and Giles 2004). Whenever a multilingual communicative situation arises, the speakers must negotiate and select a language to use. One of the participants must decide whether to select a language that benefits the other interlocutors, possibly compromising their own competence and consequently the successful transfer of the intended message of their own turn. Alternatively, they can proceed with their own language to ensure the effectiveness of their own speech, but possibly compromising that of others.

These choices are known as **convergence** and **divergence** (Sachdev and Giles 2004: 355–360). An example of the use of a convergent strategy would be an immigrant student addressing the teacher in an English-speaking classroom in the language of the majority, English. Similarly, a speaker of the majority language may use the language of a member of the minority language group to practise their own skills or to express sympathy. Sachdev and Giles (2004: 354) note, for example, that in multilingual conversations in francophone areas of Canada, French-speakers appreciate the convergent strategies of their English-speaking communication partners and vice versa. However, convergence may be interpreted as an act of condescension as well (Bourdieu 1991: 68), as deliberately converging to a language in which the speaker is not as competent as their fellow interlocutors can be seen as a comment on the other interlocutors' language proficiency. When choosing a divergent strategy, the speaker continues with a language with which they feel the most comfortable. Sachdev and Giles (2004) report that often the choice between convergence and divergence does not have a crucial impact on the successful progression and outcome of a given communicative event, though it may, reflect the character of the speaker, or the social or cultural context. By converging to the language of the majority, a speaker displays social inclusion and acknowledgment of the addressee's linguistic repertoire, whereas diverging to one's own language may indicate insufficient knowledge of the majority language or, in terms of social etiquette, divergence may also display indifference towards the other interlocutors. Whichever the strategy employed in a conversation is and for whichever reason, according to the communication and accommodation theory, one of the two options is always selected. This theory will be accounted for in the data analysis of the present study when the multilingual speech events of the show are more closely examined. As discussed above in regard to multilingualism in entertainment and reinforced directly above in regard to the motivations behind language choice, multilingual situations can sometimes also function as platforms of linguistically hostile behaviour. The specific manifestations of such behaviour will be discussed next.

2.1.3 Linguicism

There are several ways in which language can be used to deprive a certain group of power, or to manipulate the perception of a particular group in a desired fashion. Arguably, the most drastic form of hostile linguistic behaviour is **linguicism**, which according to Rannut, Phillipson, and the scholar who coined the term, Skutnabb-Kangas (1995: 72), is the action of divesting a linguistic minority of their linguistic human rights, resulting in unequal distribution of power between users

of two or more languages. More subtle forms of linguistic racism are regularly utilised in entertainment, often without realising the negative and degrading implications of the practice or simply disregarding them. Hill (2007) explains the concept of “mock” varieties of language, which is a term for using a language, e.g. Spanish in predominantly English conversation, with the intention of creating a playful tone. This is a highly insulting practice, as it suggests the other language to have a diminutive role in comparison to the primary language of the conversation. The practise of linguistic racism in regard to the Spanish language is in fact so common that the instances of sincere use of Spanish have sparked research in and of themselves. Kozloff (2000: 81), for example, discusses the use of Spanish without jocular overtones in the United States and argues the language implies the entity in which it appears has a preferred target audience, as it is portrayed realistically and not ironically, and it can actually be seen as a comment on the language policies in the United States.

Using “mock” varieties of languages is indeed a way of infiltrating linguistic racism into the lives of the viewers of telecinematic works in which these instances are presented, and it is done in such a volume that the pejorative indications of the practice go wildly unnoticed. Hill (2007) has found extensive evidence of this, and emphasises the hypocrisy especially in the United States as there to be labelled a racist is a painful judgement, yet racist discourse is widely used and ignored throughout the country, especially mock-Spanish. While it seems incredible to have such a widely spread infestation of linguistic racism go unnoticed, this can be tested by asking someone whether they think replying “Mañana.” to decline a request to complete an impending task is considered racist or not. An expected reply may be that it is not, but it is, in fact, a linguistically racist response. Utilising Spanish only to address, and in this case to refuse a request to perform a task, assigns the language a role in the opposite of working or taking action, establishing a connection with inactivity or even laziness. Spanish has a demonstrably unfortunate track record as the go-to language used to reflect a *laissez-faire* attitude, especially regarding work ethic, particularly in the United States (Hill 2007). By participating in this practice, a speaker intentionally or unintentionally assigns an entire society or culture a place in their perceived societal hierarchy and subsequently communicates their stand towards said culture. The issue with combatting linguicism is the subtle nature of it and the fact that it is used as an element of humour, especially in the entertainment industry. If one challenges the “well-intended” discriminatory use of another language, and by extension the joke about the culture to which it is tied, one can risk being labelled humourless and possibly accused of restricting the freedom of speech. Blackledge (2005: 44) notes

that linguistic racism can be, and often is, cloaked in naturally occurring forms of discourse, complicating the attempts to unravel the instance and challenge its use.

According to Irvine and Gal (2000) linguicism can appear via three semiotic processes in telecinematic works as manifestations of characterisation and stereotyping. **Iconization** as such a process means essentially linking a language or a variety of a language to a specific group of users of said language, thus creating an image of an average speaker and insinuating all the speakers are the same by extension. Other languages in English-speaking works of fiction are often reduced to signals of an attitude, a mentality, or a mood, and only exist to support an underlining argument of such a connection, e.g. Spanish-speakers are relaxed and jovial. The relevant and narratively most important conversational turns, however, are most commonly reserved for English. The second process, **fractal recursivity**, bears much resemblance to iconization, with the distinction that it poses the two expressed attitudes or ideas as opposites. Utilising fractal recursivity implies the other language does not necessarily have to be translated nor understood, suggesting it is irrelevant in nature. Finally, **erasure**, as the term suggests, is the convention of eliminating a language from a certain context by replacing it with an alternate language, which in Western fiction often is English. One of the results of this process is the classic composition of “bad guys speaking broken English amongst themselves”. The use of erasure has recently diminished for the obviously negative connotations it produces about different cultures and groups. Representing ideologies — be it language ideologies or other — in fiction is a difficult task to perform without taking a stand, and as Bednarek (2010: 218) notes, the quantity of the portrayed characters embodying the discussed features, e.g. ethnicity and character traits, is not as relevant as the particular way these characters and their traits are portrayed. For this reason, the number and frequency of natural languages in *Rick and Morty* are not essential figures to examine in this study, but rather the instances themselves and what they represent.

Discussing multilingualism and the many issues raised by the topic can prove problematic, though is technically simpler than it seems for the multitude of theories and frameworks on which a researcher can rely. Shifting the focus to fictitious realms and languages invented for them is much like turning it all upside down: the conventions for the study of these languages are not sufficient in quantity nor quality, though in some way the languages are easier to interpret for the lack of any trace of complicated humanity in them. I do recognise many of these languages stem from natural languages, as will be discussed below, but they do not share any of the political, societal, and

historical issues with which we are familiar; they do not have native speakers who could reach out in outrage against any analyses, since the languages are all merely extensions of our interpretations. Next, I will introduce the genre to which the source series of my data, *Rick and Morty*, belongs, and the invented languages of their world, developed in ours.

2.2 Science fiction and its languages

The genres of fantasy and science fiction depict life and environments of the imaginary kind, either including elements that do not exist in our world or being fully constructed of something new and fictitious. These stories generally take place either on Earth or a distant location in outer space, often involving humans and extra-terrestrial creatures. Works of science fiction are defined by a framework of fantasy and imagination, the location and characters portrayed in such a story may well be familiar to us — for example Earth and humans — but in such a case the fantasy must be introduced by secondary elements, e.g. aliens or space travel. The more remote the location and obscure the resemblance of the characters to humans, the fewer secondary elements are needed for the construction of otherness and sense of fantasy. Regular consumers of science fiction can easily recognise a work to belong to that genre by identifying certain salient elements, often present in science fiction. Telotte (2001: 17) lists these elements to include “character types, situations, clothing, lighting, tools or weaponry, [and] settings”. Furthermore, he argues that works of science fiction share one or more of the distinguishable, traditional themes for the genre, which he divides into three separate sections. The first theme is the challenge humanity faces when encountering extra-terrestrial beings. It is a combination of curiosity, uncertainty, and fear, which the audience can sense via various elements throughout the work. The second theme is connected to the first one by the aspect of humanity; it is the expression and representation of humanity as a concept, tied to emotions and the ability to express them. The distinction between a human and an alien is often emphasised by assigning the ability to portray emotions to humans alone. The final theme outlined is the element of a threshold between the real world and fantasy and taking the obligatory step beyond. Works of science fiction often contain a moment when the characters and the audience are forced to desert logic and accept there is something beyond our own world. Telotte describes this moment as the point in the story where the story and genre pause to deliberately challenge the credibility of everything. The point from which to proceed, one must accept the presented truths such as the existence of extra-terrestrial life or space travel at the speed of light (Telotte 2001: 16–30). The fictional works of this kind are made to be believed, that is to say they

are made as realistic as possible. In these cases, different elements, such as language, are used to enhance the experience of the audience by creating an air of believable fiction or what could be called realist fiction.

2.2.1 Invented languages in science fiction

The goal for an author or a creator of science fiction is essentially to achieve a connection by disconnection between the reader and the text or the viewer and the film; to alienate the audience from the story by creating a distinct gap between the world of the consumer and the world portrayed in the creation (Beckton 2015: 81–82). Along with more salient elements, such as extra-terrestrial location and alien beings, some science fiction creators choose to use an invented, fictional language as an additional alienating feature in their stories. Fimi and Higgins (2018: 22) argue that accompanying an invented world with a fitting invented language is considered a fundamental part for the foundation of the story. Inventing a language to function as a “textual agent”, as Beckton (2015: 87) describes it, is an excellent addition to the broad repertoire of the many signifying elements of the strange environments and cultures in these stories. As discussed above regarding the functional aspects of multilingualism in fiction, adding an element of realism through a local, though in this case fictional language, can assist the audience process the story as more realistic and regard even the most extravagant elements of the invented world as believable, of course within the confines of the story. In addition to entire linguistic systems, science fiction developers follow a long-standing tradition of enriching their work with neologisms, which are scientific concepts with names based in natural languages, such as ray-gun and dimension portal (Stockwell 2006). These items are often highly futuristic weapons and technological inventions, further reinforcing the notion of science, and as many of these concepts do not exist and they are created solely for the benefit of the specific work in question, they enhance the sense of fiction as well. *Rick and Morty* is positively full of scientific neologisms, but as they are such a traditional concept in science fiction and their presence is more of an expectation than an exception, they are not considered a part of language variation and thus not included in this study.

A language developed purely for fictional purposes understandably differs from natural languages, such as English. These languages, generally created by a single person, often lack the complicated and sophisticated web of rules and norms which our natural languages possess. Fictional languages are compiled for beings out of this world and should be easy to assimilate for commercial purposes in a very short period of time, such as the time it takes a person to read a book from cover to cover.

There is great demand for well-constructed fictional languages by science fiction enthusiasts (Chozick 2011), who often take necessary action among themselves to develop an interesting language further (Stockwell 2006: 6) by providing it with a vaster vocabulary and distinct rules of grammar based on the examples of the language available to them. Some of the more well-defined and further-developed fictional languages have become incredibly popular among fans: Stockwell (2006: 9) notes that Klingon, the language from the film franchise and television series *Star Trek*, was estimated to be spoken as a foreign language by hundreds at the time of his publication, and in 2009 the newspaper *The Daily Mail* reported a Minnesota man teaching his infant son to speak Klingon as a first language (*The Daily Mail* 2009). More recently, numerous fictional languages have been catalogued to language learning websites, enabling anyone with Internet access to learn J. R. R. Tolkien's Quenya, Zamenhof's Esperanto, and Dothraki, developed for HBO's fantasy drama series *Game of Thrones* by David J. Peterson (Fimi and Higgins 2018: 27), among other languages. These language courses appear, for example, on www.memrise.com and on the popular language learning mobile application *Duolingo*, which features Klingon and High Valyrian which is one of the languages spoken in *Game of Thrones*.

There is unuttered pressure for inventors of fictional languages to maintain the vocabulary and grammar simple enough for the enthusiastic consumers to learn them, although however imaginative and unusual, most created languages in fiction derive their linguistic properties, especially morphology and full lexical items, from natural languages. Understandably, whichever the language, it must be extremely well-developed regarding its linguistic structure, and the rules must be easily and readily available for any learner for the language to be privately learned by the general public. There is, however, a myriad of fictional works in which the invented languages only consist of a handful of words or a small number of phrases, enough to set a mood or give a slight edge to the environment or characters. Beckton (2015: 85) reports this to be the case in the *Artemis Fowl* novels (2001–2012), as well as the film *Watership down* (1972). Only a fraction of invented languages in fictional works can be fully learned, since most only exist to serve the purposes of the work for which they are created. Beckton (ibid.) further expands on this notion by stating that creating a comprehensible language is a lengthy, tiresome process, which will consume a significant amount of the author's time, and therefore most fiction writers will not spend excess time generating an advanced language.

Even though some artificial languages are developed to be spoken as foreign or even first

languages, there are still constant complaints about their insufficient and irregular linguistic structures (Cheyne 2008). While Gobbo (2016: 44) states that extra-terrestrial creatures speaking English in the *Star Trek* films was “rightly seen as a weak point”, he refers to invented languages as “Hollywood languages” and to the development of them as “Hollywood linguistics”. Gobbo (2016) admits such a language can add value to a story by providing it with additional credibility, and it can also function as an additional gift for the fans. However, the general tone with which he discusses the development and current state of “Hollywood linguistics” is rather cynical, and there is a detectable suggestion of “Hollywood linguistics is not real linguistics”, as if the languages of fiction did not belong in academic research. The primary reason why invented languages have not reached the standards of researchers and scholars is the simple fact that before the explosive popularity of television and film, science fiction writers were not necessarily experts in linguistics nor were they collaborating with any. Currently, any production team of a telecinematic work with a sufficient budget can employ a linguist or a language enthusiast to develop a credible, well-structured language for them, which is exactly what happened with *Avatar* (2009), *Arrival* (2016), and *Game of Thrones* (2011), to mention a few. Instead of pleasing the academia, the creators of fictional languages aim to please the consumers and ignore the groans of displeased researchers by continuing to invent and develop the languages to the extent that is appropriate for their work. The criticism regarding the completeness of invented languages will likely remain as it is, though the scrutiny of the further-developed ones can be expected to decline for the increased expert input in the development processes.

The study artificial languages in fiction has focused on inspecting them from two points of view. On the one hand, the languages have been studied as a part of the larger context of all constructed languages, including languages created for human communication, such as Esperanto, and on the other, they have been studied in the context in which they appear, which is the genre of science fiction (Cheyne 2008: 388–389). What is more, the study of these languages has been insufficient considering the multitude of new languages created for science fiction and fantasy. A decade ago, the number of officially catalogued constructed languages approached 2,000 and that of created languages in fiction had surpassed 700, and there are even conferences for researchers and enthusiasts of constructed languages held since 2006 (Cheyne 2008: 388). While these languages may not possess perfectly structured grammar or vast vocabularies, they perform a crucial function in works of fiction and should be treated as equally relevant as any other literary element. One of the primary justifications for neglecting researching invented languages, especially ones created

for literature and film, is that scholars claim the conventions that currently exist for studying natural languages cannot be adequately applied to fictional ones. Most issues concerning the research of fictional languages are largely connected to this lack of well-suited methodology, which derives from the difficulty of inventing such. As researchers note (see for example Meyers 1980, Cheyne 2008) the conventions of linguistic analysis cannot be applied to fictional languages to analyse them accurately or even adequately enough, for they are not the original target of the conventions. However, as we do not possess a separate set of tools for analysing fictional languages, we must utilise the conventions developed for the study of natural languages.

Cheyne (2008) herself first argued for the need and then presented a suggestion for an alternative strategy for studying artificial languages of fiction. She proposed the languages be considered complete as they are and not regarded flawed or unfinished. As discussed above, the issue facing analyses of fictional languages is that they are all developed to varying extents, and the languages with more detailed grammatical constructs and vast vocabularies are prioritised in regard to academic focus. Another issue rises from the variety of creators of fictional languages: the majority of these language developers work alone to generate the best-suited language for the intended piece of fiction. They arbitrarily compile a set of rules and words, which more often than not are based on an existing natural language; rarely the same, though. As a result of this practice, essentially none of the created languages in fiction share any commonalities and subsequently cannot be grouped, as natural languages are, in language families. They are, however, all referred to as invented languages, even if they do not share any features. The fresh approach Cheyne (2008) suggests for studying invented languages is a level-based construct, consisting of four separate sections through which a fictional language conveys meaning in a given body of work. The main aim of this approach is to discover whether the language in question embodies the common features of a created language of fiction and to provide an advantageous new framework for analysing these languages.

The primary motivation behind the use of an extra-terrestrial language system can be said to be the representation of otherness and difference, critical in science fiction as discussed above. Cheyne (2008) argues for the necessity to examine specifically the form of the strange language first, before interpreting its meaning. It can be considered less complicated and perhaps more natural to perform a bottom-up examination on the encountered new language, and thus the first level of her framework is to inspect the form and manifestation of the artificial language; in what

different ways is the language produced and reproduced, and how is it introduced to the viewer? Only the second level in this framework is to analyse the specific meaning of those words and utterances, and in fact whether or not any meaning can be deduced from the given excerpts of the language. Occasionally, the translation or interpretation process is mediated by additional aids for comprehension, discussed in more detail below in section 2.2.4. The final two levels represent customary features of an artificial language in science fiction: the third level concerns the information the language conveys of its speakers; a strange language can function as a type of a modifier for the beings who communicate in it. Fimi and Higgins (2018: 23–25) as well as Cheyne (2008) and Meyers (1980), note the common tradition of providing characters in science fiction with a language that corresponds their appearance or nature and in turn helps the audience distinguish between different groups of characters or environments without requiring them to actually understand the language. Cheyne (2008: 392) explains there to be a connection between the specific phonetic qualities of a fictional language and the aesthetic features or personality traits of its native speakers. Furthermore, she argues there is a correspondence in the level of difference between the aesthetics and phonetic structure of the source language and the newly introduced one, e.g. English and an alien language, and in the level of difference in the aesthetics and nature between the users of said languages. The stranger the appearance of an alien being, the more complex and distant from a natural language the fictional language in which they communicate likely is. Similarly, an aesthetically pleasant and harmless creature will likely speak a language with a soft, vowel-intensive phonetic system. The fourth and final level on which Cheyne argues fictional languages to communicate with the audience is the possible linguistic connection between the artificial language and any existing natural language. Traces of natural languages in the grammar and lexicon of a fictional one can aid the audience to relate to the language, as well as decrypt the meaning without instantly relying on external translation (Cheyne 2008: 390–394). As has been suggested by several researchers cited above, the link between the two is nearly inevitable and often intentional.

2.2.2 Further defining invented languages

Since invented languages in fiction have received so little academic attention in the past, there is some debate and confusion over the terminology surrounding the subject. These languages are referred to by many names in research literature: invented, planned, fictional, artificial, constructed, created, imaginary, and further grouped into smaller categories, as discussed below.

Stockwell (2006: 6) refers to all artificial constructs of languages as “neographies”, whether fully developed or represented by a handful of words, and Cheyne (2008) essentially sets **constructed languages** as the umbrella term for all purposefully formed languages, and as its subcategories fictional, artificial, and created, which can all be used when referring to invented languages in fiction. She further explains an artificial language to be intentionally constructed at a specific time, for a specific reason, to perform a specific task. There is debate whether one can call languages in fantasy and science fiction constructed, since they are often not fully developed. The term constructed seems to require well-defined, linguistic constructs that are built on others and therefore result in a neatly compiled structure, a constructed language (Cheyne 2008: 386). This does not accurately describe the majority of fictional languages and is therefore a questionable choice for a study of such. I argue the term imaginary to be problematic as well, since it describes the physical state of the language as only existing in the imagination, therefore rendering it non-existent. This could certainly benefit a case in which the name of the language is provided without any further information, leaving the language for the imagination, but in my opinion does not serve the purpose of the present study. To avoid a sense of constant repetition, I will employ several of the terms mentioned above to refer to the fictional language examined in this study. However, I will refrain from using the terms constructed and imaginary for reasons explained above.

As invented languages are known by many different terms, some of which are quite synonymous, they can be divided into smaller subcategories depending on their formation and function. According to Okrent (2009), most artificial languages can be divided into three categories according to their formation, as well as three others according to their function. To begin with formation, a created language can be modelled after an already existing language, in which case it is categorised as an **a posteriori** language. A good example of this is Nadsat, briefly mentioned above, the mixed language between English and Russian created by Anthony Burgess for his novel *A clockwork orange*. If the language is created as a completely new one, not modelled after a prior one, it is grouped as an **a priori** language. An example of this is Na’vi, the language developed for the fictional, indigenous beings in the 2009 motion picture *Avatar*. Provided a language embodies elements from both groups, it is assigned to the third group, **mixed**.

As language use is never arbitrary, and should not be considered as such, the invented fictitious languages perform different functions much like their natural counterparts. Some artificial languages exist merely to provide a story with a cultural aspect or a sense of realism, whereas

others may have a significant meaning in terms of the storyline or the social context of the fictional world. In addition to the classification according to the formation of an invented language, they can be divided into separate categories according to their purpose and function. Stockwell (2006) provides two threefold divisions for the languages, in regard to their function as an invented language and as a specific structural element in a given body of work. According to him, a fictional language can be **auxiliary**: a simplified, easy to learn constructed language, such as Esperanto or Simple Finnish in which a separate section of the news is broadcast for language learners and those with only marginal proficiency in Finnish. These languages are meant for general application and usage, and they are structurally streamlined, often with less demanding pronunciation. **Artistic** invented languages refer to languages created for fictional works, as can be inferred from the root word art — practically all fictional languages can be argued to belong to this very broad group. Lastly, fictional languages categorised as **logical** are more technical, developed primarily by scientists for experimenting with linguistic or philosophical theories and ideas. An example of this is a logical language called Loglan, developed in the 1950s to test out the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about the relativity of language; whether speaking a language with highly logical rules and grammar would make the speaker more logical a person (Stockwell 2006: 6). Moreover, as Cheyne (2008: 395–396) states, even though many science fiction writers are tempted to apply the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of the relativity of language to their created worlds and languages, the hypothesis should not function as an ultimate linguistic theory for which to strive. While on the one hand, the theory was developed considering human communication and language use and perhaps should not be applied to extra-terrestrial languages, on the other, the key characteristic of science fiction is that there are no limits, and rather than applying the Whorfian theory, a writer could imagine and create anything and everything at all.

When embedded in a work of science fiction or fantasy, much like a natural language as an element of multilingualism, an invented language can serve a further, internal function in a story. Stockwell's (2006) model of the function of a fictional language is threefold and overlaps to an extent with Cheyne's (2008) levels introduced above in section 2.2.1. Stockwell (2006: 9) describes the function of an invented language to be either **elaborative**, **indexical**, or **emblematic**. When a fictional language provides a story with elaborative structure, it can be compared to a decorative item — an ornament of a kind, presenting the viewer or reader with a richer reflection of the world in which it exists. As discussed above, it is a common practice to connect the two entities, the language and its speakers, to one another in appearance to create stability and clarity

of the different cultures and worlds for the viewer. This is well exemplified by considering Marc Okrand's Klingon, which contains rather harsh phonemes to depict the speakers, as they are a bellicose race, or the alien beings and their language in the motion picture *Arrival* (2016), in which the language consists of circular ink blots with thorn-like extensions, used by the pitch-black creatures, who resemble hybrid forms of giant bacteriophages and dementors — the language and the beings communicating in it are equally incomprehensible to an average audience member. As an indexical element, the function of an invented language is to assist the audience to accept the introduced world; the more refined the language, the more acceptable and real the world appears, which in turn enables the audience to immerse themselves in the story. Finally, the possible emblematic function of a fictional language is to support or represent an idea with thematic significance. A clear example of an emblematic role of a fictional language would be the role of Nadsat in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which provided further social and societal commentary on the role of an individual and the relationship between the government and the governed.

A fictional language can itself be classified into different categories according to its structure and function, but at the same time it should be viewed as a structural element of a given story and examined for its function as a language from the external point of view of a language included in fiction, as well as from the internal point of view of the story in which it appears; the societal and cultural role of it and its importance to its speakers. Science fiction has a long-standing tradition of including new languages in the worlds created for the genre, developed to radically different degrees. These languages in fiction, much as their natural counterparts, are not always easy to understand or translate, which is why the process of comprehending them is often eased by specific features added or embedded in the works in question. I will now shift the focus towards the expected viewer experience and the processes through which different languages may be understood and interpreted in fiction.

2.2.3 Understanding (sci-fi) languages

Despite the growing role of multilingualism in telecinematic works and people around the world increasingly gaining access to means of learning languages, the audiences of these works cannot be expected to be multilingual. Purely for financial reasons, most mainstream films are produced for audiences around the world, not for a particular group of people who happen to speak the language presented, and as Androutsopoulos (2016: 147) remarks, for vast numbers of audiences

around the world a successful cinematic experience depends on translation. Translating a work of fiction is done for the benefit of the viewers who would not otherwise understand the language portrayed; Lefevere (1992), as cited by Grutman (1998: 157), states that translations are purely provided for the benefit of monolingual viewers, to allow them to explore works to which they otherwise would not have access.

As the decision to incorporate multiple languages in a single piece of work could prove problematic, considering audiences might possess restricted skills in foreign languages, there are several ways to combat the possible incomprehensibility of multilingual dialogue in a telecinematic piece. These strategies of translation and interpretation moderate the experience that is consuming a multilingual fictional work. Linguistically modifying a fictional work to best cater to the target audience's language proficiency is a difficult and detailed process, greatly affected by the linguistic competence of the person providing the service. In an attempt to avoid getting 'lost in translation', the translator has to consider the pragmatic elements of language, as well as collect and utilise all "cognitive baggage" (general knowledge) and "cognitive context" (previously presented information about the target of the translation) available to them to form an informed interpretation or translation for the target audience (Salama-Carr 1998: 113). It is not always, however, entirely the fault of the translator if a message is distorted by an incorrect translation; the translator can never know for absolute certainty what the thought process, which has led to the production of a certain utterance, has been (Mason 1998: 32). This is precisely why many products of different forms of translation and interpretation are riddled with errors, and why computerised translation is not an adequate mode of translation to use — there simply is not a single person or a machine who can definitely or definitively translate an utterance they have not produced themselves.

In his study a decade ago, the data of which consisted of multilingual crossings between natural languages, Bleichenbacher (2008: 173–191) examined the most common strategies of assisting linguistic interpretation in 28 multilingual films, and through intensive analysis he identified three main processes of easing comprehensibility for the audience. He discovered the most prominent strategy in his data to be subtitling, followed by the use of familiar words and cognates, and lastly interpreting by other characters — all of these strategies may be applied to interpreting fictional languages as well. Bleichenbacher also discusses the absence of an interpretation strategy, where the instances of different languages remained untranslated to the viewers. I will now shortly

introduce these three comprehensibility strategies, as well as list a few other prominent strategies after them, and draw specific focus on the absence of such a strategy, as it is a matter closely linked to the study at hand.

Subtitling

Subtitling, as described by Gottlieb (1998: 244), is one of the most commonly used strategies of translation in the entertainment industry. He defines it as the process of translating a telecinematic work by superimposing a transcription of particular elements of the audio of the piece on screen as text — generally placed on the bottom of the screen — and explained it was one of the two most frequently used strategies of translation in his study in 1998. A decade later, Bleichenbacher (2008), found subtitling was the most frequently used strategy in the data of his study. Now, another decade later, in the age of online streaming services and YouTube, subtitling seems as popular a translation strategy as ever, and even though subtitling as a practice of translation has developed further since Gottlieb's time, the general theories and arguments of his study still stand.

There are several ways to distinguish between different varieties of subtitles according to their form, function, and target viewers, which is why the definition of the strategy is rather broad. Gottlieb (1998: 247) divides subtitles into categories according to their linguistic as well as technical properties. Linguistically, there are two varieties of subtitles: interlinguistic and intralinguistic. The former term describes the translation of the dialogue or other auditory elements from the source language into the target language, which is often the case when the target audience is not exclusively the speakers of the source language. Forming interlinguistic subtitles requires the translator to exceed not only the mode of the language from spoken to written, but also the language itself from one language to another. Intralinguistic subtitles refer to the repetition of the source language in a different mode for the benefit of, for example, learners of the source language or the Deaf and hard of hearing. These subtitles are employed when there is no need for translation into another language, yet the source language must be reinforced.

Gottlieb (1998: 247) additionally divides subtitles in regard to their technical aspects as closed or open subtitles: closed subtitles are available for voluntary activation for the viewer, whereas open subtitles are present regardless of the opinion of the viewer. The former are a regular feature on streaming entertainment services such as Netflix and HBO, on DVDs, and other modern off-line viewing equipment, as well as some YouTube videos. The selection of languages and the quality

of the translation, however, can vary to a great extent. In contrast to closed subtitles, open subtitles are a common feature in films screened for an audience in countries in which the source language is not widely or at all spoken. Open subtitles may be applied simultaneously with closed subtitles in case the dialogue is in a language no member of the audience is expected to understand. Bleichenbacher (2008: 190) notes the issue with subtitling to be the unequal division of power using subtitles assigns the languages in question, no matter how unintentionally produced — the translated language becomes marked with otherness, and its speakers foreign.

Because the primary function of subtitles is to transport the audible pragmatic message to the audience through text rather than repeat the exact words of the dialogue, the lexical precision of subtitles ranges from accurate to unfortunate. A general guideline dictates that the text to be simple enough to read in the time frame assigned to the particular scene, that the subtitles should appear as one or two lines of text at once, and that the text should consist of a maximum of approximately 70 characters per screen (Gottlieb 1998: 244–248). This limitation may affect the correspondence of the dialogue and the subtitles, which can result in the distortion of the original message. Harmless as this may seem, omitting certain elements, mistranslating the original speech, or even translating the dialogue word to word instead of according to the pragmatic whole can greatly change the intended meaning. Androutsopoulos (2016: 147) adds to this notion, stating that be the translation provided dubbing or subtitling, it alters the original message, and translating a language with a perceived role of that of a minority can raise notions of social exclusion. Therefore, a viewer who employs subtitles, especially closed interlingual subtitles, is at the mercy of the translator, experiencing their interpretation of the intended message. Nonetheless, subtitles remain a frequently used translation strategy because they do not pose a need for additional recorded audio, and they provide rather soft assistance in translating or interpreting the work in question.

Familiar phrases

Apart from subtitling, when including a foreign language in a predominantly monolingual film, a common strategy is to integrate words and phrases that are familiar to the audience, but unexpected or different enough to at least indicate otherness or unfamiliarity. In Bleichenbacher's (2008) study, he notes several instances in which a character uses code-mixing to convey information of the immediate environment, their background, or intentions. The change in language use is often mediated by the choice of simplistic words, words that are stereotypical in nature, commonly present in the entertainment industry — swear words, greetings, words of agreement or

disagreement. The switches to cognates, words whose origins or roots transcend languages, are usually swift, bringing to question the importance of the meaning of the performed code-mix. Employing cognates or other familiar words in other languages is used primarily to draw focus on the change in language, rather than the literal meaning of that part of the utterance, and this practice can decrease or even eliminate the need for a separate translation, which can in turn ease the progression of the work by not distracting it with additional interpretation attempts. Cognates are especially prominent in **evocation**, which is the linguistic phenomenon of portraying a character speaking a variety of a language other than their native language and then providing further proof of their first language by introducing words in their speech, often cognates, from that language (Bleichenbacher 2008: 59–69). As will be evident from the data of the present study, the use of cognates is a common feature in *Rick and Morty* as well.

Interpreting by characters

The third comprehension strategy in Bleichenbacher's (2008: 183–190) study is utilising other characters to interpret the instances of different languages. Aiding comprehension through character involvement is a less common strategy than, for example, the two introduced above. An obvious prerequisite for a character who is able to work as a translator is of course the linguistic mastery of at least the two languages being used in that situation — the source language, and the target language. Conveniently enough, the character with the precise linguistic knowledge is often near and available for the task (Kozloff 2000: 80), which is understandable since arguably most telecinematic works are not scripted to include time-consuming search processes for a translator. Interpretation by other characters serves a dual benefit, as narratively the language is translated for the characters, ensuring the successful continuation of the story, and this way the translation is conveyed to the audience as well.

In addition to functioning merely as a medium of translation, character interpretation can function as a narrative tool as well. Especially flawed interpretation, be it intentional or not, can serve as a source of humour or as a device for developing relationships between characters or the audience and a character. Intentional and malignant misinterpretation can be used to affect the audience's opinion of a character or a group of people a character represents, a notion supported by Bleichenbacher's (2008: 183–190) findings. He presents an example from a film in which the characters speak both English and French, the protagonist being American and in need of help from the French law enforcement, who are evidently reluctant to help and this is reflected in their

communication. The American provides them with a detailed description of a missing person, and an interpreter translates the description to a monolingual police officer, but instead of translating everything, the officer streamlines the description as he chooses. Bleichenbacher argues this portrayal of uncooperativeness and contempt of the French law enforcement not only affects the American character's attitude towards them, but the audience's as well.

Other strategies

These three strategies are of course not the only comprehension strategies available. Another practice, in literature, is for an author to provide the reader with a glossary or some form of a vocabulary within the covers to aid the process of interpretation. Stockwell (2006) notes that Anthony Burgess provided the reader with a Nadsat dictionary as an appendix in *A clockwork orange*. Similarly, George Orwell alike provided a guide to the language of Newspeak in the appendix of his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and in his novel *Utopia* (1516) More informed the reader through the text that the final verses of the book, which appeared in the language Utopian, were transcribed from the authentic local language, since the printer supposedly had not yet received the letters to express the writing in said language. As films cannot, for obvious reasons, include glossaries for the audience at the end, filmmakers must make use of other strategies if the above-mentioned are not sufficient or otherwise applicable. One such strategy, employed especially in films with children as their target group, but in general use as well, is **dubbing**, which is the re-recording of the dialogue of the film or show and replacing the original with dialogue in the majority language of the specific country in which the work is intended to be published. This practice has two primary branches: dubbing, as the recording of voices in the target language, mimicking the lip movements and temporal cues of the original dialogue as closely as possible, and **revoicing**, which is the process of editing a new set of dialogue to replace the original, disregarding lip synchronisation (Baker and Hochel 1998: 74–75). Dubbing has been a prominent translation strategy especially in German-, French-, and Italian-speaking countries (Gottlieb 1998: 244). One of the most salient issues with dubbing is depriving the viewer of the access to the source language, whether they want to learn it or experience the work in the original language. Another clear issue posed by revoicing is the visible conflict between the physical source of the utterance and the final product, i.e. the difference in the movement of the mouth of the speaker and the planted voice heard by the viewer, which can be distracting.

To summarise, there are several different forms of interpretation, all to ease the comprehension

experience of the consumer while attempting to maintain a realistic flow of dialogue by utilising multiple languages. It must be noted, however, that the interpretative mechanisms can be flawed and can distort the message conveyed. Ultimately, the audience members who possess the linguistic repertoire necessary to successfully interpret the languages autonomously are the ones who can experience the presented multilingualism with the highest level of accuracy and the lowest level of additional effort. This imbalance of power is decreased with fictional languages, for virtually no one can possess the knowledge necessary to interpret these languages when they are first introduced. The structures of these languages are incomplete to differing degrees; more words are added to their lexicons with a pace much faster than in natural languages, and none of these languages have actual native speakers — therefore all audience members begin the interpretation process from the same level, as foreign learners. Although, this is not to propose interpreting fictional languages is any simpler a process, even if all viewers begin from the same level of understanding; especially, if there are no comprehension aids provided. The following section considers the absence of such aids in films and series.

2.2.4 Absence of translation

The decision to omit interpretational aids altogether is a strategy in its own right and perhaps the one most closely connected to the study at hand. As briefly mentioned above in the introduction, most of the alien language in *Rick and Morty* is left untranslated, and one of the main objectives of this study is to examine this lack of translation. If there are indeed no salient comprehensibility strategies employed when presenting another language in film, a common strategy for a viewer is to attempt to decipher the message by relying on the surrounding contextual information, detect familiar words, and utilise any and all linguistic knowledge they may possess. A fictional language may not be translated, but Meyers (1980: 8) highlights the cruciality of including connotation and connotative elements to enable the audience to experience the feeling of achievement when interpreting an instance of an invented language use successfully. Nevertheless, as Stockwell (2006: 5) reminds, there is a fine line in what is an acceptable level of incomprehensibility; the audience may disregard a fictional language, regardless of how important it thematically or narratively may be, if it is simply too much work. This thought may encourage the people incorporating these languages in their work to ease the comprehension process as much as they can without damaging the primary role of such a language: creating a sense of difference.

A filmmaker may, however, make a deliberate decision to exclude translations for the audience

for multiple reasons, and as Cheyne (2008: 393) suggests, a filmmaker might convey meaning on another level by intentionally leaving an utterance untranslated. This way the untranslated unit of dialogue is an important signifier of its own and should be considered important for the very absence of translation. Bleichenbacher (2008: 181–182) examined untranslated excerpts from films depicting war, concluding the absence of translation in his data to reflect the position of the American soldiers, who were not expected to understand the languages of their enemies, and the filmmakers' desire to allow the audience to share the experience of the particular characters. Featuring characters speaking an untranslated foreign language is simultaneously a method to alienate the audience from the foreign characters and a way for the audience to sympathise with others who do not understand the language. A very common combination, a compromise of a sort, in multilingual telecinematic works is to translate those parts of dialogue which hold the most narrative importance. This practice does, however, bring to question the significance of untranslated sequences and whether filmmakers mark these languages obsolete by not translating them.

Excessively utilising comprehension strategies with invented languages can pose some problems for the significance and function of the languages themselves. Cheyne (2008: 394) explains that in regard to her own framework about the levels of meaning conveyed by an invented language, discussed in section 2.2.1 above, if the members of audience understand the language completely, the language may well begin to lose the effect of the first level: alienation. The viewers are hardly expected to consider the new language introduced to them as alien if they have no trouble following conversation in it. An unnecessarily strange and difficult language may intimidate or repel viewers, but equally importantly, an unnecessarily simple and — through translation — familiar language may have the same result, in which case the need for the language in the first place becomes questionable. Specifically mentioning science fiction, Grutman (1998: 159) explains that a translation can function as a “cushioning” between the strange world portrayed and the familiar world of the audience and the creator. The message moving from the “other” language through complete translation to the language of the story can, however, reduce the “other” to nothing but a sign of unfamiliarity and an exoticism, which creates a clear division of power between the languages.

While overt and blunt realism is not perhaps the most desirable strategy considering the profitability of a given work of entertainment, it is perhaps the most realistic way to express multilingualism in telecinematic works. In addition to being an element of realism and a signifying

element of otherness, an untranslated instance of language may well be meaningful in and of itself. Considering the strengths and shortcomings of different translation strategies, it becomes evident they are indeed needed, at least to an extent, especially in regard to invented languages in fiction. I will next address the many issues regarding the study of invented languages, after which I will shift the focus towards this study, presenting the research questions, data, and methods of analysis.

2.3 Research restraints in studying invented languages

Before moving on to present the data in more detail and the methodology used in this study, I must address a few key obstacles any study of this kind may face, some of which are issues already mentioned above. This area of linguistics, concerning invented languages, is full of technically problematic methodology, and the research is met with constant scrutiny over the validity of the results. The core of the issue lies in not knowing everything, or even enough, about the language in question, a problem which unfortunately — but not surprisingly — extends to the study at hand. There are four major issues I intend to raise in the present section, each a very common phenomenon in this area of study and many which concern the study at hand as well.

Firstly, the lack of methodology that would cover all aspects of the topic, and the contradictory attitudes towards the existing methods of study. There are few methods developed particularly for fictional languages; the traditional conventions do not apply, as Cheyne (2008: 388) notes, since fictional languages are predominantly created for the communication between beings from other worlds. These languages cannot be fully analysed for their communicational functions or structural properties, because the conventions applied to these issues have been developed for human languages to analyse human communication in natural languages. Nevertheless, these methods of language study are applied to fictional languages or modified to suit the study of them better, and the researchers accept to be met with scrutiny by their peers regarding the validity of their studies, as they stand accused of employing insufficient or inappropriate methodology — even though the sufficient and appropriate methods clearly do not exist. Many researchers studying fictional languages, e.g. Stockwell (2006) and Meyers (1980: 5), have voiced their objections against these comments. This critique is not, however, shared widely among the fans of invented languages, who, as mentioned above, are in fact the ones developing fictional languages further and using them. The second issue is the unequal distribution of academic attention appointed to specific invented languages. Even if an artificial language in fiction is analysed, the studies focus on

languages that are developed further to a level where they begin to resemble a natural language. Only the most detailed and developed languages are chosen for analyses, which can distort the image and statistics of the nature and appearance of these languages. There are hundreds of catalogued invented languages in science fiction alone, but only a handful have been studied to a respectful extent, which I do understand is caused by a combination of the structural incompleteness and scarcity of examples of the languages, and the lack of conventions for such studies. It is an issue nevertheless, and Cheyne (2008: 389) remains vocal about this exclusion of smaller languages from research, as she dismisses the structural incompleteness as an admissible criterion because “invented languages are not primers”. The third obstacle, an issue facing the development of sufficient methodology, lies in the proper categorisation, or the lack thereof, of invented languages, as they are continually grouped and discussed as a single unit. Much of the language study regarding natural languages is based on the concept of language families and the foundation of relation between languages. This allows for a range of different foci and aspects to be analysed and discovered in natural languages, but does not unfortunately apply to invented languages, and therefore eliminates the vast number of research objectives from being applied to them. Finally, the fourth issue is yet another clash between the academia and laypeople as it is a fact that many creators of invented languages are not linguists themselves (Stockwell 2006: 9) and, as such, are likely to ignore academic restrictions, i.e. consistent rules and necessary structures in grammar, which greatly shape the development process of natural languages. Meyers (1980) notes the structural soundness of the languages is not the primary goal for the creators of fiction to achieve, which can be in turn deplored by linguists. All of these issues can be summarised as (1) the lack of methodology, as a result of a research topic which does not scientifically exist, and (2) the clashes in views and opinions between professional and non-professional language enthusiasts: essentially, it is the fans who want and demand quantity, and the researchers who want and demand quality.

Although examining a language which technically does not exist, using methods developed for languages which do very much exist, is problematic in itself and poses many issues, there are three specific obstacles concerning this particular thesis and the invented language analysed in it. Firstly, it is uncertain, whether there is more than one alien language in *Rick and Morty*; even though there are many indicators towards the existence of multiple alien languages, I cannot know for certain whether Alien is in fact a single language with differing variants, or a collection of altogether different languages. Despite the fact that Alien as an invented language is a core topic to be

examined in this study, I must group the various forms of it as a part of a single, unified linguistic system, for examining all instances separately would extend this study to unnecessary proportions. However, I do recognise the possibility of the plurality of alien languages, though this notion will not be centrally featured or elaboratively present in the analysis.

Another posed difficulty concerns the instances of Alien and the interpretation of them: whether the words and phrases actually mean what I have perceived and interpreted them to mean. As will be discussed further in section 3 below, the analysis regarding the meaning of Alien relies on my interpretation, which I of course base on contextual information presented in the show as well as research methodology, but nevertheless interpret myself. This uncertainty regarding the meaning of Alien words poses issues especially towards the analysis of code-mixing and multilingual communicative events, as it cannot be known for certainty whether particular words mean the same to me as a non-speaker of Alien and to the characters who use and understand Alien proficiently. For example, words for edible items and currencies are not salient instances of code-mixing, but merely names for the items described, as are names of foods and currencies in different natural languages, e.g. “falafel” and “Euro”. Not knowing which words in Alien are in fact Alien and which are extensions of English, complicates the analysis process, though from the point of view of the viewers, any unfamiliar words could be regarded as instances of code-mixing, which is exactly how I processed them in my analysis.

Finally, the issues posed by the uncertainty regarding the role of English outside planet Earth in *Rick and Morty* and what the precise division of power between the two languages is. It is not revealed or discussed in the show, whether English is a minority or a majority language in the extra-terrestrial locations in the universe of *Rick and Morty*, the frameworks of the communication and accommodation theory (Sachdev & Giles 2004) and theories of code-mixing (Gumperz 1982) still highly depend on this distinction. From the point of view of the viewers, and the characters from Earth, English is of course the majority language, and it is spoken widely throughout the universe of the show by other characters as well, likely for the benefit of the viewers. However, as there are infinite universes and realities, explained several times by Rick in the show, it would be extremely arrogant to presume English to be the dominant, reigning majority language in all of them. I conducted the analysis by examining each instance of multilingual conversation individually, considering each situation in the particular social and environmental contexts in which they occur.

To describe the issues presented here in one word, the problem is the constant, comprehensive **uncertainty**, a problematic issue addressed by Stockwell (2006: 7), as he reminds his readers, “the aims and purposes [of a fictional language] cannot always be known.”. To work around these issues, I followed the general advice of linguists in this field, e.g. Cheyne 2008 and Stockwell 2006, and considered the alien language complete as is it and regarded my interpretations as correct, though as with most research in social sciences, I do not presume to possess definitive answers. I will now move on to present the data, the methods of their collection and analysis in more detail.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research questions

The analysis of this study was broadly divided into two sections in regard to the two primary topics inspected: language variation and comprehension of said variation. The former topic was examined from two points of view: the creators’ and the characters’, and the latter topic focused on the experience of the viewers. The foremost goal of this thesis was, however, to categorise and examine the fictional language Alien in *Rick and Morty* and to find out what type of comprehension strategies are provided for this language which is seemingly left untranslated. In addition to extra-terrestrial languages, I analysed the use of other natural languages apart from the source language English. The first three seasons of the show feature several instances of natural languages, used either as single-word mixes in otherwise English-speaking dialogue or as full lines of dialogue without translation. The introduction of different natural languages in a predominantly monolingual show is a meaningful choice, and I analysed this form of variation, similarly to Alien. To summarise, my primary points of focus in the analysis were:

1. Regarding its apparent structure, formation, and function as both a structural as well as a conversational element, what type of a fictional language is Alien?
2. How is language variation presented and present in the show: which languages and why; what is their function in the show both as elements of multilingualism and as narrative constructs?
3. Which comprehension strategies are offered by the show to assist the interpretation of language variation? If one is not offered, how are the viewers expected to interpret the presented variation?

In short, the research questions and motivation for analysing an invented language in a work of fiction arose from the absence of such studies in linguistics, especially of a language as obscure and infrequent as Alien. The first research question considers both the structural aspects of Alien, as well as its use as an element of multilingualism. As previously stated, a fictional language should not be exempt from analysis simply for its seemingly unfinished structure, which is why I decided to examine this rather strange and clearly incomplete language more closely. The first question focuses on a more detailed analysis of Alien, to determine in which modes it is presented, and which forms it takes in these modes. By analysing the language, it can consequently be placed in a particular category of invented languages according to different aspects of it, such as formation, and perhaps be considered a part of such a group in future research. Essentially, this analysis might bring Alien a fraction of the academic attention it deserves among its contemporaries.

After this, it was a natural step to move on to the wider notion of the presence of Alien, and to consider the appearances as language variation from the point of view of multilingualism. The second research question considers this phenomenon. The decision to incorporate a new, untranslated language into the show is intriguing, and after reading Bleichenbacher's (2008) dissertation on multilingualism and its functions in natural languages, I decided to perform a similar study on an invented one, as they were not considered in his study at all. In addition to Alien, there is a small number of other natural languages included in the analysis, to construct a complete view of the language variation in this particular show. Multilingualism as a research topic is not new, of course, but as a concept it is increasingly present in film, and a combination of natural languages and an invented one is rather unusual, thus analysed in this thesis.

Finally, the third research question regards the interpretation of this variation in language use and the different languages presented. This question is posed with the assumption that not all audience members necessarily speak the languages presented, and thus full comprehension requires aids for the intended message to be transferred to the viewers. The final section of the analysis considers the identified comprehension strategies in the show, and the strategies required for interpretation in case a comprehension strategy was not detected. Discovering these interpretation strategies may give further insight into the processes of language comprehension and interpretation audience members utilise, when watching modern, multilingual telecinematic works. Further research could be conducted in the future on the reliability of the strategies found.

3.2 The data

The source of data for this study, *Rick and Morty*, is an animated science fiction comedy series, created by Justin Roiland and Dan Harmon for the network Adult Swim. It first aired in 2013 and has continually aired for three seasons until 2017. The show is available for online streaming on Netflix, which is where the data for this study were collected. The show follows Morty Smith and his maternal grandfather Rick Sanchez on various adventures, most of which take place in the most bizarre locations in outer space or different dimensions throughout the known universe. Rick, who has acquired a reputation of an evil genius, is in conflict with the Galactic Federation — a federal intergalactic body of government — for his actions in the past as a radical freedom fighter, as well as the Council of Ricks, who are a unified collective of Ricks from different dimensions with different haircuts, working against the Federation, and the protagonist Rick for not conforming to their rules. Rick does not believe in rules nor laws: to him, they are arbitrary and redundant, and he considers himself exempt from them. He is a mastermind in science and thus perceived a threat by the authorities. Despite his anarchist nature and highly abusive verbal habits, he shows great devotion towards his daughter — which he displays as contempt for her husband, Jerry, who Rick believes is not good enough a mate for his offspring — as well as his grandson, whom he keeps relatively safe during their adventures and even selflessly rescues in one episode, sacrificing himself. Rick's grandson, Morty, is an average, insecure teenage boy with a need to please his grandfather who is more of a father-figure to him than his own father. Morty often functions as a voice of reason for Rick's reckless behaviour, and therefore makes an excellent adventure partner. Together, the two protagonists travel through dimensions using Rick's portal gun and find themselves exploring alien terrains either alone or with a changing sidekick, such as one of Morty's parents, Beth or Jerry, or his sister, Summer. They travel the universe either through the portals, when they can change locations and dimensions instantly, or by Rick's flying machine, which functions as a sort of a space car with which they are able to move tremendously fast from one place to another.

The data for the present study were collected from the first three seasons of the series, as at the time of this study, only three seasons of the show were published for general consumption. The show is currently available for viewing on the online streaming service Netflix, and the specific region of viewing at the time of the data collection was Finland. According to the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com 2018) the show was first broadcast in 2013, and has aired until the end

of its third season in October 2017. The show will continue with its fourth season in the near future, according to the creators on their social media accounts. The three seasons considered in this study consist of 31 separate episodes, episode length ranging roughly from 21 minutes to 24 minutes.

3.2.1 Language variation in Rick and Morty

The language of the show is predominantly English. The core characters, the Smith family, are from the United States and the adventures on Earth are restricted to their home country. Even if they switch dimensions, but remain on Earth, the language spoken is English. Interestingly, even when the characters travel to other planets in either their own dimension or others, the language often remains English. There is, however, evidence of intricate extra-terrestrial linguistic systems, to which I refer as Alien, and this form of language is regularly, though always relatively briefly, featured on the show. While the lingua franca in outer space still appears to be English, there are instances of individual code-mixing between English and Alien, as well as instances of Alien used alone, both in written and oral modes. It seems there might be several separate alien languages, used by different characters and at least two different written forms of Alien. I referred to all of the languages as Alien, yet I recognised the plurality of them in some sections of the analysis. In my analysis, I treated the instances of these languages individually and as separate languages when appropriate. I drew attention to any similarities, while considering their differences as well. In this study, the focus was on the oral side of Alien, since the copyright and distribution regulations of Netflix heavily restrict the possibility of using visual data for imagery of the written instances. Therefore, I settled for descriptions of the written forms when they were relevant to be included in the analysis.

The instances of unusual lexical items, or incomprehensible lines of dialogue of characters were divided for analysis according to their phonetic structure. The unintelligible utterances were regarded as **indecipherable Alien** and the strange, yet transcribable utterances as **transcribable Alien**. The phonetic anatomy of the latter variety will be presented in phonetic alphabet as well as anglicised text, when applicable. In addition to Alien, I analysed all representations of other natural languages apart from English. The viewer is expected to extract information from the surrounding context of the particular situation in the show in which the switch to another language occurs, as well as use pre-existing knowledge from the real world and apply these two to form an interpretation of the occurrence of language variation in question. There is but one instance of open subtitles provided during the first three seasons of the show, and it is for the most part the task of

the viewer to decipher and interpret the variation in language use. Next, I will present the methodology and the conventions of language study I used to conduct the analysis, while acknowledging the shortcomings of such conventions and the issues regarding a study of this kind.

3.3 Methods of analysis

This thesis is a qualitative case study, as I examine both the case of a particular language presented in the source show, as well as the phenomenon of language variation in a single case or unit, *Rick and Morty*. According to Gillham (2000: 2), research regarding case studies has only recently been developed enough to stand on its own, though it is one of the most preferred forms of study in social sciences and qualitative studies. Although I collected enough data to analyse them using quantitative methods, I selected qualitative methods as my primary method of analysis, for Alien as a language has not been, to my knowledge, studied in depth before. This study functions as an introduction into it, as well as a possible stepping stone for further research. The goal of this study is not to provide statistical information about Alien, but a description of it as a language and to explore its use, among other languages, therefore requiring a qualitative approach.

The particular method I used was qualitative content analysis, which as Weber (1990) describes it, is an ideal method for examining this type of data, as the method can be applied to the particular instances of languages (words and phrases), the collection of them as a comprehensive whole (dialogue), and the combination of language and social interaction (conversations). Schreier (2014) further states that as a method, qualitative content analysis is highly responsive and malleable, as well as methodical, which are desirable factors when handling large amounts of qualitative data, such as open responses or excerpts of language. Qualitative content analysis requires the researcher to divide their data into smaller groups and possibly subgroups according to the themes, points of focus, or research questions they wish to explore. It is highly unlikely that all of the data will provide useful information on all matters examined in a study, and the researcher must divide the data in appropriate categories to produce valid results (Schreier 2014). This particular method suits this thesis well, since there is an abundant amount of data which had to be divided into smaller sections according to the specific topic discussed. For example, I catalogued all instances of languages apart from English, and further divided the catalogued data into Alien and natural languages, to be able to analyse their properties separately. More specifically, I registered all instances of Alien and natural languages, and placed each instance of language in a collective table,

with surrounding data I deemed relevant for the analysis; the time and episode of appearance; the actual display of language, i.e. what was said or shown; the form, whether it was spoken or written; the nature or function of the utterance or text, e.g. whether it was saliently based on English, functioning as a greeting; and finally, the context and environment in which it appeared, as well as the characters involved. This detailed categorisation of the language variation assisted the analysis, and consequently allowed me to analyse each communication event according to the methodology and relevant research literature for the aspects of multilingualism, code-mixing, comprehension, and interpretation. After a comprehensive listing of all instances, I could use content analysis to form a themed group and retrieve items of data for analysis according to the topic discussed, e.g. all instances of Alien which were not translated, or all instances of Spanish. I will introduce these divisions further below in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

All of the analysis of Alien as an invented language, be it its structure, use, or function, relied on qualitative content analysis performed by myself. The phonetic structure was reconstructed in the International Phonetic Alphabet and presented when applicable, according to what I audibly perceive to be produced. The analysis and conclusions in a case study rely on the researcher and their objectivity, and as Stewart (2014) reminds, the researcher bias must be accounted for. Therefore, it must be noted that I do not know for certain the intentions of the creators of the show, and for this reason I did my best to explain my choices and interpretations. I will now present the research methods used in both halves of the analysis respectively.

3.3.1 First half: Language variation

I began the analysis by examining the extra-terrestrial language, Alien, which is presented to the viewer throughout the show. Firstly, I considered Alien as an entire linguistic system and observed the different modes in which it appears. In this section, I also distinguished between the different varieties of the language. I moved on to categorise Alien as a fictional language by employing content analysis, and I approached the data with specific themes, beginning with formation and function. As I attempted to establish what type of a fictional language Alien is structurally, I considered Okrent's (2009) classifications of fictional languages (a priori/a posteriori/mixed) and turned to Stockwell's (2006) threefold categorisation (auxiliary/artistic/logical) when examining the intended role of Alien. When analysing the formation, I selected specific instances of Alien and observed the structure of the words and phrases, to detect similarities with existing languages. For the analysis on its function, I considered the surrounding dialogue and the communicative

events in which the instances occur. While this section of the analysis also examined Alien from a rather technical point of view, I did not attempt to interpret the specific linguistic properties of it; rather than inspecting in detail the definitive structural formation and lexicogrammar of Alien, the primary focus of the analysis was on the mere existence of it and its impact on the show.

Next, to distinguish the specific variety of Alien as an artificial language, it had to be evaluated for its applicability to different situations, its usefulness from a societal point of view, and whether or not it has a detectable effect on its speakers. Further, Cheyne's (2008) extensive contribution to the topic of fictional languages in science fiction includes a model of four levels on which such a language transports meaning between the story and the audience, and an artificial language should demonstrably embody at least some of the four levels of Cheyne's model. I utilised this framework to identify these different levels of meaning conveyed by Alien in both halves of the analysis from the point of view of the narrative and the characters, as well as later from the point of view of the viewer. As the framework was introduced in detail in section 2.2.1 above, the following summarising table exemplifies the contents of each level and the additional questions relate the framework to the present study.

Table 1 Cheyne's levels of meaning conveyed by invented language (compiled from Cheyne 2008: 392–294).

Level	Content
1st	Form and manifestation of the language: - In which modes, and how is the language produced and reproduced? - How is the language introduced to the viewer?
2nd	Content and meaning of the language: - What meaning, if any, can be inferred from excerpts of the language? - Can the language be, or is it, directly translated, or must the meaning be deduced from context?
3rd	The language and its users: - Is there any detectable connection between the phonological construction of the language and the aesthetic appearance of the users, as commonly found in science fiction?
4th	Connection to natural languages: - Is there a detectable connection between any linguistic aspect of the invented language and any existing natural language?

Advancing from the superficial structure of Alien to examine what it as a language **does** rather

than what it **is**, Stockwell (2006: 9) provides a framework of three functions with which an invented language in theory enriches a work of fiction: elaborative function, indexical function, and emblematic function. I examined Alien for these three functions: firstly, whether it supports the world of *Rick and Morty* purely as a decorative element further representing the world to the viewer. Alien can provide an indexical function as well, assisting the viewer to construct a cohesive whole of the portrayed world and to interpret the world as plausible. Lastly, I examined the data for traces of an emblematic function to see whether its existence conveys meaning in itself. As evident, these three distinct functions to an extent coincide with Cheyne's levels presented above, perhaps only reinforcing the validity of them, and to maintain the primary focus on the data the frameworks were conjoined in the analysis.

Expanding from the alien language towards its role as a multilingual element, I examined the roles of Alien and natural languages as structures of multilingualism, in regard to Bleichenbacher's study (2008) and the three distinct functions of multilingualism in film he distinguished. He argues utilising multiple languages can aid in constructing **realism**; it enables the creators to depict the world they have chosen to portray as natural and realistic as they deem possible. As a form of realism, the second suggestion Bleichenbacher makes is that multilingualism can be a medium for **social criticism**. It is arguably more realistic a way to present social issues and inequality in the languages in which they naturally occur, since all parties are represented by the language of their choice rather than a translation. The third aspect of the functions of multilingualism is its role in recreating and conveying **humour**, which holds tremendous value for the entertainment industry and thus presumably for the source of data of this study as well. In the analysis, I once again employed the conventions of content analysis and formed individual groups representing each function and screened the data for instances belonging in these groups.

Following this, I analysed both Alien as well as later the instances of natural languages in the show for their contextual functions as elements of multilingualism in conversation. Previous research providing the methodology for this analysis consists of Gumperz's (1982) theory of motivation for code-switching, the three aspects and three functions of multilingualism introduced by Bleichenbacher (2008), and the communication and accommodation theory by Sachdev and Giles (2004). From the point of view of the characters and narrative, I viewed the languages in the sociolinguistic contexts in which they appear and analysed the code-mixing instances for the detectable motivations behind them. I utilised Gumperz's (1982) methodology to determine

whether the motivation was narrative or linguistic and which category of motivation guided each instance. Using Bleichenbacher's (2008) updated terminology combined with Gumperz's (1982) original theories on code-mixing, I further analysed the motivations for said mixing by categorising them as either situational, metaphorical, indexical, or edited. One obstacle regarding the terminology and conventions here was that the shortest instances of code-alternation could not always be accurately placed in one of the categories regarding code-mixing, which is a problem for the study at hand as the vast majority of code-mixing between the different languages occurs as very short changes. This was understandably the case when considering mixing between English and Alien as one of the languages is fictional and has no official rules or detailed structures. To solve this dilemma, I decided to base the analysis on Gumperz's (1982) theories and terminology, as well as Bleichenbacher's (2008) updated terminology, but also add two further categories, **structural** and **contextual** code-mixing, to be able to address the shortest instances too. These two new terms allowed me to form a division between each instance of code-mixing regardless of their length and to consider them, as the terms suggest, as either structurally or contextually relevant mixes.

Another topic essentially connected to multilingual communication and discussed in the analysis is the study of the motivations behind language choice and the examinable consequences of it. The contrary notions of **convergence** and **divergence**, introduced in Sachdev and Giles' (2004: 353–370) communication and accommodation theory, refer to a decision an individual makes about the choice of language in a situation with an impending demand to select a single language in which to pursue the interaction. Convergence refers to a speaker selecting a language considered suitable for their co-interlocutor(s) and perhaps differing from their own first language. Divergence, contrarily, is the selection of a language in which the speaker is most comfortable. This topic will be revisited regarding the individual choices in language use and especially changes in expected language use. For the close link in contents, the phenomena of code-mixing and language choice were discussed collectively in the analysis.

These theories, frameworks, and methods were all utilised with both Alien and natural languages, as will be evident below. After the comprehensive analysis on **how** the language use in *Rick and Morty* varies and which functions this variation performs, I will move on to the second part of the analysis, concerning the expected audience reaction to said variation and the general processes of interpretation and comprehension required for understanding the linguistic aspects of the show.

3.3.2 Second half: Interpretation of language variation

In the latter part of the analysis, I focused on the language variation from the point of view of the audience. I aimed to provide some insight as to how Alien and the other natural languages can be understood or interpreted, even though they are often left untranslated. I also noted and discussed the comprehensibility strategies present in the show, as well as the possible issues regarding the successful transportation of the intended message of the show to the viewer when such a strategy is not detectable. For this part of the analysis, I turned to the comprehension strategies Bleichenbacher (2008) discusses in his study about multilingualism in cinema. In addition, I continued to utilise Gumperz's (1982) research on code-mixing and drew support from the compiled research of Baker et al. (1998) on translation studies. Even though research in the topic of translation has primarily focused on natural languages, these comprehension strategies are frequently and observably used with invented languages, too. For this reason, I examined the instances of Alien and natural languages to configure whether any salient comprehension strategies are provided by the creators to ease the comprehension process or whether interpretation is aided by elements embedded in the show or whether, in fact, the interpretation is entirely in the hands of the viewer and their respective abilities to gather contextual information to form an apt translation of the unfamiliar lines of dialogue. This section about deciphering and interpreting an invented language featured in science fiction, largely relied on my own interpretations of the contents of the dialogue, and the categorisation processes of qualitative content analysis were employed here again. I established three separate groups for the three strategies for assisting interpretation of another language in a multilingual film — subtitling, employing cognates, and character-based translation, discussed above in section 2.2.4 — and screened the data for these features. I established an additional group of “no overt strategy” to include and examine the remaining incidents for which such a strategy was not provided. This categorisation process enabled me to inspect the instances quantitatively as well and to discuss the relative presence of each comprehension strategy. Further, I focused on the “no strategy” group to determine how exactly these instances can be interpreted, if not through the conventional means. I created subgroups for all untranslated instances and assigned each analysed item — an instance of language — to a particular subgroup according to the perceived required interpretation process. I will now move on to the analysis and present the data and findings with illustrative examples.

4 ANALYSIS

The analysis of this study consists of two primary themes: the different languages and elements of language used in the show, deviating from the source language English, and interpreting and understanding them. I will begin with an extensive examination of the form and function of **Alien**; its different manifestations and varieties, its categorisation as an invented language, and its importance and function in the show. After this, I will present the other natural languages appearing in the show and discuss their functions as constructs of multilingualism alongside Alien. In the latter part of the analysis the focus will be shifted towards understanding these different instances of unfamiliar language use and especially the processes of interpretation: whether any comprehension aids are provided for the viewer or whether interpreting the languages depends entirely on the viewer. I will conclude the analysis section with a compiled summary of the topics examined and discussed in an attempt to prepare for the discussion in section 5 below.

4.1 Language variation

I have divided the first section into two main parts: Alien and natural languages. Before addressing the structural and functional elements of Alien in the show, I will attempt to establish a categorisation for it in the realm of invented languages for it to be considered a valid member among its kind. While I intend to include as many examples from the dialogue of the show in my analysis as possible, I cannot present all instances of the elements analysed, e.g. Alien words, though they will be discussed and I will attach comprehensive lists of the discussed matters in the Appendices. I will begin the analysis with the primary language of intrigue in this thesis.

4.1.1 Alien

The primary focus of this study is on the analysis of the variation in spoken language use, with the exception of discussing the general frequency and quantity of written languages. In the following sections, I will note the instances of written forms of Alien and natural languages, but deliberately omit them from further analysis. The reason for only analysing the spoken instances in detail are the legal constraints posed by the streaming service, regarding the attainability of the data. This exclusion of the written forms will, however, enable me to maintain the length of this study appropriate for the genre. After a detailed analysis on the various forms of Alien, as well as its role as an element of multilingualism and a narrative structure, I will introduce the other natural

languages appearing in the show.

4.1.1.1 Manifestations of Alien

When examining the uses of extra-terrestrial languages spoken in *Rick and Morty*, it is clearly noticeable that these instances manifest as different varieties of the unfamiliar language, perhaps even as separate languages. However, without further knowledge of the creation and development of these alien languages to determine their respective origins or language families, I had but one option to classify them as parts of a single unity. During the collection and categorisation of the data, I considered any incomprehensible gurgling which portrayed an alien being communicating, as well as nonsensical words and dialogue with pronunciation close to the phonetic system of English, as Alien. In this section, I will firstly introduce the different varieties that form the totality of Alien; the transcribable and the indecipherable spoken varieties, as well as discuss written Alien, though to a far lesser extent. This general introduction will include a description and examples of the different forms, times of occurrence, and details of the surrounding context. After introducing the varieties, I will discuss their overall frequency and use, and present the examination of the function of Alien as a multilingual narrative element, as well as the analysis of it from a sociolinguistic point of view, regarding the characters and plot. After a comprehensive analysis of the formation, presented form, and functions of Alien, I will discuss the presence and function of natural languages from similar points of view.

Spoken Alien

The spoken varieties of Alien can be separated into two categories according to their phonetic construction, more specifically the perceived repeatability of the utterances. The words and sentences which a viewer could, upon desire to do so, easily reproduce are referred to as **transcribable Alien** in this study, as transcribing them in anglicised text or in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a relatively simple process. I have provided examples of the transcribable variety of Alien in Table 2 below, excluding still the second category of Alien, by which I refer to any speech in incomprehensible and phonetically ambiguous language. The spelling of each instance of transcribable Alien is an interpretation of mine, with possible referential aid derived from the closed subtitles provided by the source streaming service — closed subtitles were otherwise not utilised in the data collection. Furthermore, the anglicised spelling of each item in Table 2 is accompanied by a corresponding phonetic transcription of the word,

following the conventions of the IPA. The table contains selected examples of transcribable Alien in the order of their chronological appearance in the show, each instance presented in isolation with a transcription of their pronunciation, as well as the name or a description of the source character for further reference. When presenting examples in tables in this study, I have abbreviated season to “S” and episode to “E” and provided the specific time of occurrence in each episode. A full list of words and phrases in transcribable Alien can be found in the Appendices as Appendix 1.

Table 2 Examples of spoken, transcribable Alien

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	ALIEN IPA transcription /eɪlɪən/	SOURCE
S1 E11	18:20	(1) wubba lubba dub dub /wʌbə lʌbə dʌb dʌb/	Birdperson
S1 E11	19:01	(2) gabba nub nub doo rah kah /gʌbə nʌb nʌb du: ɹɑ: kɑ:/	Birdperson
S2 E2	22:25	(3) chabos, flobos /tʃɑ:bəʊs/, /fləʊbəʊs/	Commercial announcer
S2 E3	16:46	(4) blemflarck /blɛmfɫɑrk/	Blim Blam the Korblok
S2 E6	07:22	(5) eek barba dirkle /i:k bɑ:ɪbʌ dɜ:ɪkəl/	Zeep Xanflorp
S2 E6	15:07	(6) kalu kada shala /kʌlu kʌdʌ ʃʌlʌ/	Morty
S2 E6	16:08	(7) roh roh danugah /ɹəʊ ɹəʊ ˈdʌnʊgə/	Morty
S3 E5	18:35	(8) ouf /əʊf/	Risotto Groupon
S3 E9	03:42	(9) ooloo /u:lʊ:/	Kiara
S3 E9	03:54	(10) chaimuntolo /tʃʌɪmʊnˈtəʊləʊ/	Kiara

As evident from the phonetic construction of the examples in Table 2, the pronunciation of Alien does not differ significantly from the pronunciation of a particular variety of English, as the use of the rhotic r phoneme, /ɹ/ exemplifies. This sound is a highly common feature in the phonetics of American English and is quite conveniently present in transcribable Alien as well.

Transcribable Alien has a recurring role in the show; it appears in dialogue in approximately 50 different words and phrases, in 16 of the 31 episodes analysed. The number of these instances is an estimation for the simple reason that many items were counted only once, though repeated several times in the show; Rick's catchphrases, one of which is presented as item (1) in the table above, pose a difficult issue for the count as they are repeated and modified in different ways, as is the term *squanch* as an adaptable morpheme. Both elements are repeated and reproduced in multiple ways throughout the series. A collection of Rick's catchphrases and the different uses of *squanch* are compiled into tables and presented in Appendices as Appendix 2 and 3 for further reference. Of the above-mentioned 50 instances of transcribable Alien, approximately 12 are produced by Rick, and of these 12 two words are produced by an alternate Rick from a different dimension, though a Rick nevertheless. An estimated 20 of the instances are uttered by characters with at least a moderate amount of narrative importance, such as Morty, Jerry, Birdperson, and Risotto Groupon. The remaining instances are announced over a loudspeaker, or uttered by less relevant, perhaps even unnamed characters. As slightly over a fifth of the instances are produced by Rick alone, it can be argued Rick is familiar with Alien and is proficient in it.

In addition to transcribable Alien, which can be effortlessly reproduced by anyone because of its relatively simple pronunciation, there are several scenes in which an alien being speaks a form of Alien that is much more incoherent and laborious to transcribe or mimic verbally, a form which I have decided to term **indecipherable Alien**. Incidentally, the producers of utterances consisting of or containing this variety are always extra-terrestrial beings. Although different scenes throughout the series feature background noises and conversations which are not structured distinctly, but could well be manifestations of this form of Alien, the only instances included in the analysis of this study, were ones where a being could clearly be seen attempting to communicate with the sounds they produce. Mere generic grunts were not accounted for, even if they were produced by aliens. These instances, which appear to a far more infrequent extent in the show than transcribable Alien, are presented in Table 3 below in their chronological order of appearance along with additional information.

Table 3 Occurrences of spoken, indecipherable Alien

SEASON EPISODE	TIME NO	THE INSTANCE	SOURCE
S2 E2	17:14 (1) 17:36 (2)	Strange gurgling: rich with /b/ /g/ /l/ sounds and nasal vowels	Ticket seller alien (1) Mugger alien in an alley (2)
S2 E3	07:56 (3)	Alien being screeching and gurgling	Blimblam the Korblok
S2 E8	17:10 (4)	Similar looking creature as in items 1 and 2, similar phonetics in the speech.	Alien newscaster on TV
S2 E10	15:27 (5)	“Kids are calling it <i>*inaudible*</i> ” The sounds resemble those of clearing one’s throat, or gurgling. Creating tension in/controllably spasming throat	Insect-like alien newscaster
S2 E10	18:28 (6)	Hoarse voice screeching and making splashing sounds	automatic phone operator
S3 E8	12:40 (7)	/l/ /m/ /g/ sounds and nasal vowels, sound effects of splashing sounds added	Captured alien

To regard this variety of Alien as indecipherable is perhaps an understatement. These lines of dialogue produced by various grotesque creatures are comprised of splattering phonemes, rich in guttural and uvular consonants and nasal vowels, accompanied by rather unappealing splashing sounds presumably added in the editing process, such as pouring liquid onto a surface to resemble extreme salivating. Apart from one of the instances, all are perceivably longer turns of speech, such as full sentences and possible questions. The one dissident instance, item (5) in Table 3 above, occurs when an alien being resembling an insect is depicted delivering the intergalactic news in English. The alien introduces an upcoming news story by saying: “Up next: teenagers are calling it **inaudible**, and it’s not what you think.” (S2 E10 15:27). The incomprehensible word is uttered by the visibly salivating newsreader and the image is amplified by an added sound effect of squishing something wet or slimy. This remains the only instance of code-mixing into indecipherable Alien and it is produced by a creature whose kind have been depicted speaking English in several episodes prior to this one. It is perhaps safe to assume this species is or has a tendency to be multilingual. The other lines of dialogue in the strange, indecipherable language are unsurprisingly uttered by equally unappealing creatures, who seem to contribute to the

strangeness spectrum of this particular sci-fi world with their visual appearance as well as their odd speech. Three of the instances, items (1), (2), and (4) in Table 3 are produced by creatures who appear identical in bodily structure: they have spikes on their heads as hair, small beady eyes, a great maw, and a wide set of sharp teeth. Two of the instances, items (3) and (7), are produced by two different beings, who do, however, share similar features in appearance and who could be described as “classic” stereotypes of aliens: they are large, colourful lumps with distinguishable faces, and their bodies have holes and extensions on them for an added sense of awkward peculiarity. The remaining utterance, item (6), is produced by an automated telephone operating system, leaving the appearance of the speaker hidden.

As the modifier I have given this variety of Alien, indecipherable, suggests, presenting these instances with phonetic transcriptions was not a viable option for the analysis. As I could only attempt to describe the sounds with exemplifying information, an endeavour to analyse it thoroughly was rather impossible. For this reason, I decided to discuss the use and especially the users of this variety in regard to their importance as elements contributing to Cheyne’s (2008) levels of an invented language, but reserve the more detailed linguistic analysis regarding the formation of Alien for the transcribable variety. Of these two spoken varieties, transcribable Alien is featured much more frequently in the show; it appears in 16 of the 31 episodes of the first three seasons as either full sentences or single words, whereas the indecipherable variety only appears in five different episodes as seven separate instances. I will return to the matter of the final form and the speculated formation of spoken Alien in more detail below, as I attempt to categorise Alien as an invented language after introducing the written form.

Written Alien

As previously mentioned, the written forms of Alien will unfortunately be relatively absent in this study, for the rules of Netflix governing data extraction prevent me from including images of the writing, which in turn complicates the presentation and description of the data since the analysis of written information would rely on visual evidence. There is, however, such frequency with which written forms of alien communication are presented in the show, I would be remiss to dismiss it from the analysis altogether. Overall, there are several visibly different writing systems of Alien, as there are audibly distinguishable spoken varieties. The written form presents itself as series of different symbols generally in a horizontal line, much as in most natural languages, though it is not clear from which direction it is meant to be read. The symbols themselves range

from sharp-edged rectangular symbols to more soft, rounded, and flowing compositions often including dots in various positions in the text. In most written varieties all of the symbols, regardless of their form, seem to form a whole by appearing individually with distinct gaps between symbols, much like characters in natural languages. Even though the different writing systems are present in different episodes and at times there are two or more varieties in the same episode, for example in season 2 episode 5, there seem to be some slight regularities in written Alien. It appears when Alien text regards the Galactic Federation — the sinister organization who intend to control the universe — it is presented in a particular style of symbols and these instances coincidentally occur in scenes with the above-mentioned spiky-haired aliens who only speak incomprehensible Alien. These specific alien beings and the specific form of written Alien do not, however, have a further detectable connection. Perhaps the co-appearance of the angular and sharp-edged symbols of the writing and strange monsters speaking only incomprehensible nonsense forms a representation for and a sense of “alien hostility”.

Different styles of written Alien script appear in 14 of the 31 episodes of the show, generally on buildings, above doorways, and on device screens, as alien beings use their technology and seem to navigate in Alien. Bleichenbacher (2008: 73) notes that written information in the linguistic landscape is often left untampered, as replacing the original written language in a particular reality results in distorting said reality and may irritate viewers. Emerging from this notion, I found the inconsistency in the use and relationship between written Alien and English particularly interesting in the show: in season 2 episode 9, Rick and Morty visit a planet on which the habitants speak English, but the signs on their buildings are in strange Alien script. The two languages are also often used aboard different spacecrafts, whose crews generally converse in English, though who are depicted as aliens. For example, in season 1 episode 4, Rick and Morty’s father Jerry are captured inside a simulation by English-speaking, humanlike creatures called Zigerions, with English names such as Kevin and Cynthia, and as the two humans and a simulation of Morty travel through what they perceive to be the Zigerions’ spacecraft, there are signs in both English and Alien along the way. Using English as a way to subconsciously manipulate and guide the captured humans through the gigantic vessel would make sense in such a situation, but using both languages seems redundant. Moreover, English is used in isolation inside the space craft; there is a button labelled “DOOR” in the work space of a Zigerion guard, in a secluded space the characters from Earth never enter. From an external point of view, this phenomenon could be explained by the lesser importance or even irrelevance of the dual-language policy in signs regarding the

progression of the story, and they may have been overlooked or ignored by the creators and editors of the show when creating the linguistic landscape of the scenes. From an internal point of view of the world and characters of *Rick and Morty*, this could be a sign of universal bi- or multilingualism of the Zigerions or perhaps the parts for the spacecraft were acquired from different vendors who each use a different language in their companies and products, a notion which suggests a much larger and systematic implementation of more than one language in societies in space.

There is an example of clear written code-mixing as well, as words in, what I consider the written form of transcribable Alien, are inserted into an otherwise English sentence: Jerry is on a distant planet and walks past a vagrant mendicant alien with a sign reading: “Why lie? Will use glems for gloobies.” (S2 E2 17:26). This is the only instance and record of written transcribable Alien, but it is not acknowledged by Jerry or any other character — in fact, it is visible for mere seconds, and never returned to again. It is an interesting choice of language, as this particular adventure of Jerry’s is the source of a considerable amount of indecipherable Alien, as it is one of only six episodes in which the variety appears.

The multiple varieties of written Alien render it, too, quite impossible to decipher since, as was the case with spoken Alien, it cannot be known for certain whether it is all one language with multiple writing systems, varieties of one language, or different languages altogether. The unexplained written Alien appears untranslated in such a volume that it allows the audience to disregard the semantic meaning of the strange text entirely; it appears in approximately half of the episodes, yet none of the instances carry significant narrative importance or require closer inspection as the text is never addressed, and therefore the viewer has no motivation to attempt an interpretation. However, the text does serve as an adequate filler for the linguistic landscape of outer space and alien worlds and aids in navigating the viewing experience by serving as a signifier for the unknown environments. Even though written Alien does not draw any attention to itself, it seems to meaningfully exist to fulfil Cheyne’s (2008) first level of communication of an invented language of creating a difference between the show and the audience, and Bleichenbacher’s (2008) function of multilingualism of creating an air of realism, as it is plausible for alien beings to have developed their own linguistic systems. In total, Alien appears in either spoken or written form in 24 out of the 31 episodes of the first three seasons of the show; it is present in 8 of the 11 episodes of the first season, 9 of the 10 episodes of the second season, and 7 of the 10 episodes of the third

season. The length of each instance of Alien varies remarkably and ranges from a single spoken word to entire sentences. The written forms can be observed ranging from what could be construed as a word to larger bodies of texts or lists. I will now move on to consider the categorisation of Alien as an invented language by inspecting its structure and use, and comparing this information to the different classifications presented above and discussed again below.

4.1.1.2 Categorising Alien

Alien is admittedly a frequent feature in *Rick and Morty*, appearing in multiple different forms in all but seven episodes of the first three seasons. Disregarding the issue whether the instances are variants of a single language or each a language of their own, I grouped these variants as a single invented language for the time being and set out to categorise Alien as a fictional language. Sections 2 and 3 above featured the frameworks governing such classifications, which I will briefly revisit below as I explain the categorisation process. As much of the other analysis in this study, this section relied on content analysis which was ultimately based on my interpretation of the fragments of the alien language presented in the show: I identified different linguistic features of Alien, such as morphological and syntactic features, to form a comprehensive definition of it as a valid linguistic system. The analysis in this part focused on the spoken varieties as I could more easily provide examples of it.

When examining the features of Alien in *Rick and Morty*, I employed the threefold model by Okrent (2009), introduced in section 2.2.2 above, according to which a fictional language can be structurally one of the three: entirely new (**a priori**), modelled after a natural language (**a posteriori**), or a mixture of the two (**mixed**). The spoken varieties of Alien appear as incomprehensible strings of sounds or as bizarre words pronounced interestingly enough well within the limits of the phonetic system of English, closely resembling that of American English, yet there is no indication of consistency in grammatical structures or a detectable unified system of pronunciation. Nevertheless, words in especially transcribable Alien can be, and in fact are, inserted into sentences that remain syntactically correct in English and even the inflectional morphemes of English are successfully applied to some Alien words, especially when expressing plurality. This particular section of the analysis was only conducted on transcribable Alien as I could not analyse indecipherable Alien for other factors than its phonetic components, which are too specific for the task at hand, though their connection to natural languages is discussed in general in this thesis. Table 4 below consists of a selection of examples of the specific grammatical

features of English which are applied to Alien words. The features are highlighted in bold script and presented with the episode and time of their occurrence, as well as a preliminary interpretation of the specific morphological function they provide.

Table 4 Grammatical features of English in spoken Alien

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	FEATURE
S1 E1	14:20	“The glarp zone (1) is for flarping (2) and unglarping (3) only.”	(1) premodifier in a noun phrase (2) -ing (3) un-, -ing
S1 E11	17:38	“Hey squanchers (4), the party is squanching (5) on at my place!”	(4) plural -s (5) -ing
S2 E5	16:25	“That was Chunkytunk with ‘ Full (6) Ming Mong, empty (6) Gorbdork ”	(6) combined with premodifiers
S2 E8	08:09	“ Bag of bobbish (7), that’s eight rapples (8).”	(7) unit in a noun phrase (8) numerical premodification and plural -s
S3 E7	11:25	“--grandson, you keep me peelin’ squabsquams and slippin’ nib nibs--” (9)	(9) plural -s

As evident from Table 4, several common morphological features are applied to Alien words present in predominantly English sentences to maintain the syntactical structure grammatically correct. The most common elements used in the show are inflectional suffixes **-s** indicating plurality in what is perceivably meant as a noun, and **-ing** indicating progression in a verb. In addition, Alien and English words are combined to form noun phrases, such as the ones in items (1) and (7), and finally, English words are used to modify Alien, whether it is premodification, as the adjectives in item (6), or numerical modification in item (8). To further exemplify the connection, the word “rapple” in example (8) is preceded by the premodifier “eight”, and the inflectional morpheme -s is added to it to maintain the intended structure grammatically correct, as nouns in English are accompanied by an indication of plurality when preceded by a number higher than one. Therefore, it can be inferred that on the one hand, some forms of Alien are clearly influenced by English, especially in pronunciation, and malleable by the rules regarding sentence structure of it, whereas on the other, the indecipherable Alien words and utterances do not bear clear resemblance to any natural language, nor do the words in transcribable Alien. Considering

these factors, Alien — by which I refer to both varieties, transcribable and indecipherable — could be categorised as an a priori language for its unusual structures, but must be categorised as **mixed** rather than either a priori or a posteriori, regarding both its formation and relation to other languages. It lacks the grammatical independence and individuality an a priori language would possess, as well as any detectable consistency regarding any linguistic features. The problem in defining Alien based on its appearance and formation is the same as with most invented languages; there simply is not enough material to analyse. I must acknowledge this restriction in the analysis and content myself with this categorisation.

To further define the language and more specifically its role as an invented language in fiction, Stockwell (2006: 6) reports these languages can be additionally divided into three distinct categories according to their intended purposes: **auxiliary**, **artistic**, and **logical**. To revise, auxiliary invented languages are developed with the intention of general public use, consisting of simplified rules and pronunciation to aid its acquisition by the masses; artistic languages appear both in literature as well as in film and they exist to support the world they are in or for the sake of existing; and lastly, logical languages are argued to reflect the logical structure of the language onto its speaker (Stockwell 2006: 6–7), in which case the relativity theory of language use would be highly accurate — the language shapes the cognitive processes of the speaker and vice versa. Even though Alien in *Rick and Morty* appears in relatively small quantities compared to other artificial languages in other works of fiction, such as J. R. R. Tolkien’s Elvish or Quenya in which entire conversations are conducted in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogies, Alien appears in either spoken or written form in almost every episode of the three seasons analysed. These turns and parts of speech constitute but a fraction of the dialogue and linguistic landscape of the show and because of this rather minimal presence, the language cannot be classified as any but artistic following Stockwell’s categorisation. The only artificial languages developed for fiction which can be argued to near the level of an auxiliary invented language, are indeed J. R. R. Tolkien’s Quenya (Stockwell 2006: 8) and Marc Okrand’s Klingon (Fimi and Higgins 2018: 26). Moreover, for the lack of any further knowledge of the users of the alien language or the language itself, any form of Alien in *Rick and Morty* can hardly, at this point with the present information, be considered a logical invented language.

In addition to determining the general function of an invented language, Stockwell (2006: 9) introduces another division for fictional languages specifically, for defining what it means to

present such a language to the audience in the first place. According to him, introducing a new language can operate as an **elaborative** factor; it can serve partly as an ornament representing the world in which it and its users exist. Another possibility is to create and include a language to help the audience conceive the world as more believable, in which case the language serves as an **indexical** element, aiding in structuring the created world. Lastly, a fictional language can be a thematically important representation of an idea itself, providing the story with an **emblematic** function. As Alien has previously in this study been categorised as an artistic language, it is a natural conclusion to consider it to provide an elaborative function for the show, if not indexical as well. The lack of distinction between the varieties of Alien, which with more information might be revealed as different languages altogether, prevented me from categorising it as an indexical language, not to mention emblematic, but I do acknowledge the prospect of such a classification. However, for the time being I have regarded it elaborative, as it most definitely provides the show with a flare of distinctive otherness as an integral part of the cultural representation of other species in extra-terrestrial locations.

Moving further towards how Alien as a fictional language functions as a structural element in the show, rather than what it specifically manifests as in regard to its sentence structure and grammar, I turned to Cheyne (2008) for her extensive contributions to the subjects of defining and studying fictional languages. Regarding Cheyne's (ibid.) notions of the role of an artificial language in fiction as a way to convey information of the work of fiction, *Rick and Morty's* Alien can be found present on all four of the levels. The first communicative level is the classic representation of otherness and difference, which in this show varies according to the type of language used. The several forms of Alien do indeed create a difference between the viewer and the show, since even though some of the specific lexical items do conform to the grammatical structures of English, the forms of the language do not seem to bear resemblance to any natural language regarding their structure or phonetic appearance. As noted by Fimi and Higgins (2018: 22), often the representation of difference is accomplished by the mere presence of unusual phonemes or sounds in comparison with the language of the target audience or any other language more prominently featured in the work in question. What is more, in the instances in which only incoherent Alien is spoken, the morphology and syntax also vastly differ from English, and thus may result in deeper alienation of the viewers. Not only are the sounds strange, but the audience cannot fully grasp where a word begins and ends or which elements of speech correspond with which syntactic features. These issues of challenged interpretation and the aids provided for it will be discussed

separately in section 4.2.1 below. While the objective to create a difference by alienating the audience from the work is a crucial one for science fiction, there is such a concept as “too strange”. Creating enough of a difference to alienate the audience, but not estrange or repel them from the creation, is a task which requires precision and balancing, and for this particular reason it is perhaps favourable for the show for indecipherable Alien only to be featured in such a low quantity as it is.

In contrast with natural languages, when examining an invented one with Cheyne’s (2008) level-based framework, the attempts to interpret the specific meaning of the utterances occur only as a second step rather than being the first action one takes when encountering a strange language. This is a natural chain of events with fictional languages for the probability that virtually no one understands a newly invented language, unless the creator of said language intends them to. For this reason, Cheyne’s second level considers the actual meaning of these lines of dialogue, which is a much vaster topic and will be discussed in detail in the latter part of the analysis. After progressing from the structure and layout of the language to its meaning, the next measure is to shift the focus onto the users. The third level of conveying meaning are the users of a fictional language, who may provide pivotal information about the language and the world in which the language and the speakers exists. There is an interesting trend, a correlation in fact, in the physical appearance of a creature speaking an unfamiliar language and the phonetic makeup of the language in question. Cheyne (2008) and other researchers in the field (Meyers 1980, Fimi and Higgins 2018) note that languages which the audience may perceive as harsh are often spoken by creatures depicted to possess physically unappealing features, and the same can be argued to apply to aesthetically pleasing creatures and speech rich in vowels and softer consonant sounds, such as sibilants. *Star Trek*’s Klingon and the circular ink language from *Arrival* remain good examples of the former phenomenon.

A correlation between the user and the language is apparent in *Rick and Morty* as well, especially regarding the indecipherable variety of Alien and the speakers of it; there is a clear intention to repel the viewer with both the language and the appearance of the aliens, which extends to the context and the roles of these characters. The spiky-haired aliens in season 2 episodes 2 and 8 produce utterances rich in such sounds as the velar /g/, lateral /l/, and bilabial /b/, and back vowels which are rendered nasal by disrupting the airflow into the mouth. The combination of these creates an uncomfortable sound sphere, which is matched by two of the instances, items (2) and (4) in

Table 3, in which the aliens in question explode into splashes of transparent phlegm. The insects who are portrayed conversing predominantly in English are introduced as representatives of the Galactic Federation's military branch and unsurprisingly the form of indecipherable Alien one of these insects is portrayed speaking, item (5) in Table 3, is a string of hoarse screeching and clicking sounds combined with dribbling and splashing, which is depicted on screen as the insect suddenly salivates excessively. This disturbing set of sounds and imagery can be argued to function as an enforcer of the insects' role as intimidating authority figures. There are exceptions to this level of aesthetic correspondence as well, of which a good example is Jerry's alien girlfriend Kiara in season 3 episode 9, who possesses a very unusual appearance: blue skin, a pointed head, three breasts, and what can be inferred from Jerry's sordid suggestion, two sets of female reproductive organs. Her primary task is to hunt and ruthlessly kill a species of beings called the Varrix. Despite her rather extreme looks and lifestyle, she addresses Jerry as her *ooloo*, and replies to Morty's correctly posed Krootabulon greeting by saying *chaimuntolo* back. These words, whose meaning will be interpreted below, arguably sound softer than expected considering how she looks and acts, as the words consist of round vowels and gentle consonant plosives and laterals. These two round phrases are juxtaposed, however, by the term for the target of the hunting, the Varrix, and by a phrase uttered by a member of Kiara's species, Trandor, who outs her attempts to be deceitful, by regarding it "gorgon shit" (S3 E9 20:32). These two latter examples include harder consonant sounds than the previous examples and create much more aggressive an atmosphere, perhaps better suitable for the appearance and actions of the two aliens.

The last level on which Cheyne encourages researchers to examine the meaning conveyed by the use of an invented language is the possibly detectable connection to any existing natural language and perhaps by extension any existing invented language. Sharing similarities in grammatical structure or phonology with a natural language familiar to the audience, an invented language can convey meaning without being translated — delivering clues of the intended message by utilising decipherable words or structures, in sounds that fluctuate in familiarity. Although there is yet again a fine line here, regarding the comprehensibility of an invented language and the purpose it serves as a meaningfully added element in the work of fiction, not to be crossed by the creators of works featuring these languages and the language developers themselves. The primary role of an invented language can be argued to be to serve as an indicator of otherness, establishing an alienating relationship between the audience and the work of fiction. If this relationship is demolished by overt translation or correlation between a natural language and the invented one, surely the primary

role is rendered ineffective. Even though Alien in *Rick and Morty* is not saliently based on a natural language for any other of its linguistic structures, the instances of transcribable Alien do follow the phonetic constructs of English and its many words and phrases are often effortlessly incorporated into English sentences. What is more, the sounds used to create indecipherable Alien are human-made, although occasionally enriched with added sound effects. As a result of these practices, there is a definitive link to natural languages and humans, though it is not strong enough for Alien to be saliently connected to any one in particular.

To summarise the categorisation of Alien in *Rick and Morty* in concordance with the suggestions and rules of such categorisations provided by several researchers in the field, it seems that as a unity Alien is structurally a **mixed** fictional language with an air of **a priori** to it, functioning as an **artistic** language providing the show with predominantly an **elaborative** effect. Alien was found present on all of Cheyne's (2008) levels of meaning conveyed by an invented language: Alien establishes a connection by disconnection as an element of strangeness, especially when an indecipherable variety is spoken or any form of written Alien presented as the interpretation is much more difficult and nuanced than that of transcribable Alien; the second level, meaning, is met as many of the instances can be successfully, or at the very least adequately, interpreted with the help of contextual information, as will be discussed below in section 4.2.1; thirdly, there are both consistencies and inconsistencies in the correlation between the appearance of the users of Alien and the aesthetics of the phonetic structure of the language itself. As the show is a comedy, expectedly it contains structures that deliberately break the presumed norms and rules of society, which is likely why some of the alien characters speak English instead of a strange language as could be expected. Finally, regarding the connection between the language and an existing one, it is clear that the grammatical rules and structures of Alien do not prohibit it from being inserted into English sentences and this practice in turn enables the viewer to interpret the use of Alien more effortlessly. The matter of interpretation will be the central focus of the second half of the analysis. In addition to the categorisation and nature of Alien as a language, I will discuss its role as a structural element in *Rick and Morty* as well, though relatively briefly. I now turn to inspect Alien to examine its function as a multilingual construct in its own right, as well as a multilingual element in dialogue.

4.1.1.3 Alien as a structural element

As the show is predominantly in English, technically any variation to the core language transforms

those particular conversations and scenes multilingual. Bleichenbacher (2008) considered multilingualism to perform three functions when introduced in works of fiction in his study, although he did acknowledge the three are not necessarily the only meanings multilingualism can convey. For the lack of specific methodology for invented languages, I intend to utilise these three distinct functions of multilingualism in the analysis of Alien in this study. Discussed in detail above, multilingualism can for example: signify and construct additional **realism** to the world in question providing a sense of authenticity; it can serve as a specific vehicle for **social criticism**; or it can be used as a source of **humour**. While there are distinguishable roles the decision to include multilingualism can perform, these functions are certainly not exclusive of one another within one work of fiction. I would argue the multilingualism in *Rick and Morty* by the use of Alien is an expression of both realism in the invented reality as well as — and especially — humour. The tables below present examples of both manifestations of multilingualism by Alien; Table 5 consists of words and phrases which contribute to creating a more realistic view of the world outside our planet, whereas Table 6 includes examples of the use of Alien as a source of humour. Instances of the indecipherable variety contribute to both themes and will be discussed respectively, though not accompanied by examples as it is virtually impossible to transcribe.

Table 5 Examples of realism by Alien

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	FURTHER INFORMATION
S1 E1	14:20	(1) “The glarp zone is for flarping and unglarping only.”	Loudspeaker announcement at a travel station in space
S1 E4	03:40	(2) “Check every five quintons ”	Unit of measurement
S1 E5	11:43	(3) “We’ve got scarlog poppies , flurlow , halzingers --”	Items on a menu
S2 E2	03:12	(4) “Here you go, 3000 flerbos . Do you have the weapon?”	currency
S3 E9	03:53	(5) “Chaimuntolo” “Chaimuntolo, younglings”	greeting

From strange units of measurement such as *quinton* (2), currencies such as *flerbos* (4), and depictions of some alien beings greeting others in their own language by *chaimuntolo* (5) it is possible to infer the creators’ intentions of adding a further sense of realism to the show. Regardless of the specific structure of the alien language, it is highly plausible developed species

in other galaxies would not only have their own languages and ways of communicating, but also different definitions and terms for processing general concepts as well. This is illustrated well by the use of indecipherable Alien as it not only depicts the indigenous language the specific species use to communicate, but it presents the unknown worlds to the viewers as they appear to the characters encountering them; as incomprehensible. Perhaps the best example of this occurs in season 2 episode 2, when Jerry ventures outside the “Jerryboree” — a day care centre for Jerrys from all dimensions, at which he is left by Rick and Morty — and attempts to purchase a ticket to Earth at a local travel centre. He is yelled at by an alien in Alien and neither Jerry nor the viewer understand the contents of the alien’s shouting. The meaning is implied, of course, in the tone of voice of the alien and the surrounding context. This situation may seem familiar to any viewer who has travelled in a foreign country without knowing the language, thus the Alien provides this scene with a familiar sense of realism.

Another role for multilingualism in *Rick and Morty* is to express humour; either simply through the introduction of a different language or through situations created by the combination of the use of a different language and differing levels of comprehension. The examples listed in Table 6 below consist of transcribable Alien as it is far more straightforward to exemplify, and it is used quantitatively more in constructing humour, than indecipherable Alien. However, I will present an example of a humorous scene containing indecipherable Alien later in section 4.2.1, though not include it in the table below.

Table 6 Examples of humour by transcribable Alien

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	FURTHER INFORMATION
S1 E11	02:25 (1) 04:46 (1a)	(1) glip glops	(1) Summer, ironic use (1a) Rick, actual use
S1 E11	18:18 (2) 19:00 (3)	(2) Wubba lubba dub dub (3) Gabba nub nub doo rah kah	Very serious translations, for silly-sounding phrases like these
S2 E6	07:19 (4)	(4) Eek barba dirkle	a rather strenuous way of saying “ooh la la” considering how simple it is in natural languages
S2 E7	07:34 (5)	(5) Planet Ee-arth	Supposedly a challenging word for an alien

While the majority of humour in the show is conveyed in other methods, there are clear examples

of Alien providing a humorous effect to particular scenes. Item (1) in Table 6 above, *glip glops*, is a plural term both Summer and Rick use to refer to alien beings. However, Summer clearly uses it as an expression of sarcasm as her tone and emphasis suggest when she asks her grandfather: “Are some glip glops from the third dimensions going to come over and play cards?” (S1 S11 02:25). To an average viewer the term might seem informal and a light-hearted attempt to describe an alien. Rick, however, scolds Summer for using that particular turn of phrase, explaining its offensiveness to a certain group of aliens by saying: “It’s like the N-word and the C-word had a baby, and it was raised by all the bad words for Jews.” (S1 E11 02:32). The severity is apparent to all characters present as well as the viewer, until Rick greets a group of party guests by using the same term in his utterance “What up, my glip glops!” (S1 E11 04:46), transforming the previously disqualified term suddenly apt and credible, creating a running joke of the matter.

Items (2), (3), and (4) in Table 6 are examples of Alien phrases with ludicrous pronunciation, but with rather surprising translations. Rick’s seemingly harmless and jocular catchphrase “Wubba lubba dub dub”, which is repeated and occasionally slightly altered during the three seasons, is revealed as a desperate cry for help and equally surprisingly the succeeding phrase with similar childish structure “Gabba nub nub doo rah kah” is revealed to mean “Whatever lets you sleep at night.” (S1 E11 19:03). The third example of a surprising translation is item (3) above, produced by a scientist named Zeep Xanflorp. He and Rick are having a conversation which in itself is almost identical to one Rick had with Morty mere minutes before. The only difference is Zeep changing the beginning of Rick’s previous phrase “Ooh la la, someone’s going to get laid in college.” (S2 E6 03:35) to “Eek barba dirkle, somebody’s gonna get laid in college.” (S2 E6 07:23). It seems Zeep’s version of “ooh la la” is amusingly arduous considering the relatively insignificant pragmatic content the simple phrase carries in English. The final example of a humorous effect of transcribable Alien, presented as item (5) above, is from a scene in which an intergalactic marriage counsellor introduces couples from all over the galaxy, who are participating in their counselling retreat. The counsellor speaks English throughout the episode, but amusingly introduces Beth and Jerry to be from planet Earth, pronouncing Earth incorrectly as Eearth (/i:ʌɪθ/). This erroneous lapse in the character’s otherwise flawless English is rather strange and for the very unexpected nature of it is an expression of humour.

Alien as a structural element provides Rick and Morty with the much-needed air of alien realism, customary to works of science fiction. What is perceived obvious and logical by the characters

within the show — the fact that the aliens have and use their own language — is expectedly considered strange, though believable, by the audience. It is a clear construct assisting the show to be placed in the genres of science fiction and comedy; it is used as an alienating factor depicting realism in the imagined worlds of *Rick and Morty* and manipulating this very use of it can convey humour on many levels, as exemplified above. Next, I will consider the users of Alien and how it is employed in conversation by different characters, for expectedly different reasons.

4.1.1.4 Alien as a conversational element

When examining Alien more closely within the sociocultural context of the events and environments of the show, it can be analysed as a recurring conversational structure present in code-mixing instances and on its own. This part of the analysis explores the use of Alien as a language opposite of English; the distribution of linguistic power presented between the two entities; how multilingual code-mixing events emerge and further reinforce this relationship; and how the languages are selected and used in conversations by individuals. Analysing the role of Alien as a multilingual construct is only a secondary objective in this thesis, for which reason this section will not explore every instance in detail, but is rather a closer look into Alien in active use and an inspection of its users.

English and Alien are depicted co-existing seamlessly in most locations of the universe portrayed in *Rick and Morty*, yet it would seem there are some great inconsistencies in the language policies regarding their use in space: neither English nor Alien appears to have claimed the position of an official language and there are examples of writing in both languages in the linguistic landscapes of the show. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the dialogue in the show is in English and the alien beings in the show are portrayed speaking it quite perfectly occasionally mixing in words or phrases in alien languages, there are subtle indicators of English being only the secondary language in which extra-terrestrial beings communicate. For example, when Rick calls the Galactic Federation to surrender, an automated phone operator responds to the phone call first in indecipherable Alien, after which a voice in English says: “For English, press two.” (S2 E10 18:27). According to logic and general information regarding such automated responses, the first part of the turn in indecipherable Alien is likely “for Alien press one”, providing the alien language superior role as the first option. Even though Alien is featured to a great extent and many species of beings are portrayed speaking a variety of it, English is still more frequently featured, which provides the show with a distorted image of the language policies. Of course, the show is not an

exploration into the linguistics of space and neither the plot nor the lives of the characters revolve around who is competent in which language, but rather understandably the objective is to depict the life of this one family, instead of arguing for the superiority of English in space.

The language contact between Alien and English often emerges as events of code-mixing in predominantly English sentences. The seamless incorporation of Alien into English sentences can be seen either as talented code-mixing by the interlocutors producing these lines or as the result of the structural incompleteness of Alien as a language. Interestingly, albeit unsurprisingly, the code-mixing between the two languages always occurs with English as the base language regardless of who performs it with whichever linguistic background. As the roles regarding the division of power between the languages are not explored or explained in the show, all instances of code-mixing in *Rick and Morty* are argued to be **narratively motivated**, rather than linguistically, and will be addressed according to this notion in this study. The initial content analysis of the lines of dialogue involving code-mixing revealed firstly that of the four categories of narratively motivated code-mixing (situational, metaphorical, indexical, edited) metaphorical and edited did not appear in the data at all. All of the instances were partially indexical, situational, or belonged in a fifth category of a mixed contextual nature, not specified in the research literature. This phenomenon was rather expected as examining the concepts of language contact and code-mixing between English and Alien, among many other aspects of analysing an invented language in use, is not without its obstacles. Bleichenbacher (2008) explains the shortest instances of code alternation cannot always be accurately placed in one of the categories regarding code-mixing, which is a problem for the study at hand as the vast majority of code-mixing between the two languages occurs as very brief changes. This is understandably the case as one of the languages involved in the code alternation process is artificial and has no official rules of grammar or pronunciation. Not to discard code-mixing from the analysis and to solve this dilemma of the data not fitting the methodology, I decided to base the categorisation of the specific nature of the code-mixing events on Gumperz's (1982) theories and terminology, but also on two further categories I created based on these theories to be able to address the short instances too. I have decided to address code-mixing in *Rick and Morty* with two primary terms, not included as such in the research literature.

Many of the code-mixing turns in *Rick and Morty* consist of only single words or short phrases in Alien and most of them, according to Gumperz's (1982) theory, could be categorised as situational or indexical in nature; the need for the words in Alien emerge from a situational motive to use

another language, or the words further describe their producer, rendering the mix indexical. As code-mixing in *Rick and Morty* is predominantly narratively motivated situational or indexical mixing or something in between, I will refer to them as **contextual** and **structural** code-mixing; terms which in my opinion best describe the mixes in the context of an animated fiction show with a language that does not technically exist. Contextual code-mixing regards instances of changes into Alien which relate to or describe the immediate surroundings, characters present, and any relevant situational matters. The second type of mixing, now termed structural code-mixing, concerns instances of language change which have little or no relevance to the progression of the plot or the immediate context, but appear as sudden language changes reflecting a concept or an object which relates to or describes the world of *Rick and Morty*.

The following table contains examples of both types of code-mixing. To utilise these terms serves the purpose of this study more than adequately; as Alien is a fictional language depicting a fictional world which unravels to the viewer episode by episode, there is little information on which to base a comprehensive analysis. Utilising the concepts of structural and contextual code-mixing allowed me to examine Alien from both the external point of view of an artificial language presented in a created work of fiction depicting the world in question, as well as an internal one, as a legitimate linguistic system spoken by indigenous cultures in outer space. These two terms enabled me to include such concepts as foods and currencies in the analysis, as they are unfamiliar to the viewer for the lack of vocabulary and proper structure of Alien and concepts which otherwise would not necessarily be classified as variation in language use.

Table 7 Examples of structural and contextual code-mixing in Rick and Morty dialogue

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	LINE OF DIALOGUE	TYPE
S1 E1	14:22	(1) "I told him give me the blimfarx --"	Structural
S1 E11	19:00	(2) "My people have another saying: gabba nub nub doo rah kah ."	Contextual
S2 E3	16:46	(3) "--and sell the cure for billions of blemflarcks ."	Structural
S2 E10	06:43	(4) "In the name of the squanch , and the six rivers, the four squanches , and the nine balls, I unite these organisms in eternal squanch ."	Contextual
S3 E6	03:04	(5) "Steady, Morty. Five cetons ."	Structural
S3 E9	03:42	(6) "You have much to learn, my ooloo ."	Contextual
S3 E9	03:53	(7) "I know where Krootabulons are from. Chaimuntolo ."	Contextual

As discussed in length above and returned to below, many of the instances of Alien words are not translated, and the instances not addressed in or particularly connected to the specific scene in which they occur in any way are regarded as structural code-mixing. These instances can be considered linguistic fillers in terms of the narrative structure. For example, *ceton*, item (5) in the table above, can be interpreted to be a unit of measurement, though it is not addressed in more detail nor is it repeated after the beginning of the particular episode. Regardless of the anonymity the term is left to enjoy, it is an indicator of the existence of an entirely different system of measuring something and adds to the complexity of the show, and for this reason I considered it structural mixing. The more narratively meaningful words and phrases, still too short or vague to be categorised according to the classic conventions of motivation for code alternation in natural languages, are regarded as contextual mixing. These instances include examples such as item (4) in Table 7 above, which is an excerpt from a wedding ceremony officiated by a character with a distinct linguistic background, hence the excessive use of *squanch*, or item (7), in which Morty displays his preordained knowledge of extra-terrestrial cultures and provides proof of this by greeting a new character in their own language. These instances add to the complexity of the characters and the immediate situations, which is why they are considered contextual code-mixing.

Even though the language use regarding Alien is not defined or definable by the traditional conventions of language study, when in contact or mixed with English, the conversations feature the expected phenomena any multilingual conversation would. Considering the situations of language contact in more detail from the point of view of Sachdev and Giles' (2004) communication and accommodation theory, there are some instances of both strategies of language choice in such an event, convergence and divergence, detectably present in the show. As the theory involves the language choices of individuals in multilingual communicative events and is related to personality traits and behaviour, e.g. politeness, the data in this study provides more information about the characters than language policies in space.

Morty's character is depicted converging twice, which further represents the polite and compliant sides of his personality. In season 2 episode 6, Morty lives among a nation he refers to as the tree people. In a matter of months, Morty learns their language and speaks it to them in scenes involving other characters as well. For Morty to be immersed in their culture he learns their language instead of imposing English upon the primitive people, which can be considered a form of convergence.

Later, in season 3 episode 9, Morty greets his father's new alien girlfriend Kiara in her language. The characters present in the scene, including Kiara, converse in English and Morty's decision to change his language to suit the newcomer is both clear convergence, as well as a sign of welcoming politeness. This instance of convergence is reciprocated by Kiara, who repeats the greeting to Morty, addressing Morty's sister with her utterance as well. By doing this, Kiara not only accepts and reciprocates Morty's offered gesture of politeness, but practises rather important social inclusion as well, as both of her boyfriend's children are present.

A third, more obscure instance of converging, appears in season 2 episode 4, in which a restrained alien being yells in Alien to Beth and Jerry who cannot understand him. The alien resolves this problematic communicative obstacle by utilising a translation device in his reach and changing his language completely into English with the help of said device. While the alien is apparently unable to produce speech in English himself, he makes the conscious decision to switch languages for the other characters to understand him, which could be regarded as convergence. As the contrary strategy, divergence, the practice of maintaining one's own language despite the other interlocutors' linguistic competences, appears in the show as well. The most salient example of rather aggressive divergence from both parties in a communicative event appears in season 2 episode 2, when Jerry enters a travel station on a strange planet and attempts to buy a ticket to Earth. He approaches a worker in a booth and the alien worker addresses him in Alien, ending his turn with a slight rise in intonation, suggesting he posed a question to Jerry. As Jerry does not speak Alien, he diverges and continues the interaction in English for his own inability to speak Alien. The worker takes the turn and responds in Alien, visibly expressing frustration at Jerry's incompetence to behave appropriately in the strange environment. Both interlocutors maintained their own language in this conversation, in all probability for not speaking the other character's language.

All in all, Alien appears as both structural and conversational feature in Rick and Morty, functioning as an element of multilingualism as any language would, but understandably with some differences caused for its fictitious nature. The strange language is not, however, the only language deviating from the core language English, and next I will move on to the other natural languages that contribute to the ever-present language variation in the show. Because these other natural languages appear in the show in significantly fewer instances and information about their formation and specific structures already exist, I will not review them for these features, but rather

instantly move on to their roles as representatives of multilingualism; their perceived function in the show and their use in conversation.

4.1.2 Natural languages

In addition to the primary natural language in the show, English, there are altogether seven other natural languages appearing in the dialogue: Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, and Yiddish. Two of these languages, Arabic and Chinese, are also represented in writing, while the spoken versions of them appear as a simulated “mock” varieties. The five remaining languages appear only as oral instances either as units of code-mixing in otherwise English sentences or on their own. The languages and further information about the instances are compiled into Table 8 below. In this section, I will consider each instance of language use from the point of view of the utterance and the immediate dialogue. I will analyse the instances according to Gumperz’s (1982) and Bleichenbacher’s (2008) theories of motivations and functions of code-mixing, when applicable.

Table 8 Natural languages in Rick and Morty

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	LANGUAGE	INSTANCE	SOURCE
S1 E6	10:31 (1, 1a)	Arabic	(1) spoken (mock) (1a) written	(1) Insect newscaster (1a) TV news headline
S1 E6	10:53 (2) 14:14 (2a)	Chinese	(2) spoken (mock) (2a) written	(2) Monsters on TV (2a) signs around a city
S1 E11 (3) S2 E5 (4) S2 E9 (5) S3 E7 (6, 7)	06:09 (3) 08:46 (4) 00:38 (5) 07:20 (6) 14:27 (7)	Spanish	(3) “Mi casa es su casa, dog.” (4) Arboles Mentirosos (5) “Hey, muchacho.” (6, 7) Mortytown Locos	(3, 5) Rick (4) Alien TV commentator (6) Spray-painter Morty (7) Big Morty
S1 E11	13:50 (8)	German	(8) Mein	(8) Abradolf Lincler
S2 E10	09:21 (9)	Hebrew	(9) L’khaim	(9) Wedding guest
S3 E3	11:06 (10) 12:10 (11)	Russian	(10) spoken: full sentence (11) Solenya	(10) Russian agent (11) Another Russian agent
S3 E7	14:23 (12)	Yiddish	(12) Bubbala	(12) Big Morty

As already mentioned, the first two languages appear both in writing and spoken mock variety. I do not speak any Arabic or Chinese, but it is clear from the show the spoken varieties are simply strings of sounds formed according to the stereotypical phonetic structure of each language. For example, the mock Arabic consists largely of the alveolar trill /r/ and glottal /h/, and the simulated Chinese in the same episode is rich in vowels, diphthongs, and drastic changes in intonation. Both instances are only the length of a few seconds, which is likely why the mock versions were used; perhaps it was regarded unnecessary to create feasible and correct dialogue for mere seconds. The languages are presented to depict the wide spread of a virus with which Rick has infected Earth in the episode. The languages appear on television screens as international news from the Middle and Far East, either as commentary by news anchors, filmed conversations in the background, or as text on posters and the screen. These two languages appear on their own and not as parts of otherwise English dialogue. The instances are therefore monolingual in themselves as they do not come in contact with other languages, but they render the scenes multilingual because the televisions are watched by people who speak English. These instances are not discussed by any of the characters, yet the scope of the effects of the virus highlighted by these reports from around the world, sparks discussion and reactions. It seems the languages appear as reinforcement for the occurring tragedy, but do not serve a further purpose.

As evident from Table 8, the most prominent natural language in the show apart from English, is Spanish, which appears five times in four different episodes, produced by four different characters. Items (3) and (5) in the table above depict the same phrase, produced twice during the same episode. The use of Spanish manifests in two different ways: as clear code-mixing in conversation and as units in proper nouns. However, in all four cases the lines are produced with a salient foreign accent. First to examine Spanish in code-mixing, the primary Rick from Earth uses Spanish in his speech twice throughout the three seasons, both times as elements of conventional code-mixing. The first instance appears in season 1 episode 11, item (3) in Table 8, in which Rick invites his friend to relax and enjoy his party by saying: “You can squanch wherever you want, man. *Mi casa es su casa, dog.*”. This addition in Spanish, *mi casa es su casa* which pragmatically translates to *make yourself at home*, is an exemplary instance of code-mixing as Rick is changing the language of his utterance to intensify his earlier statement by restating it using a common Spanish expression. The addressee of his line, a character named Squanchy, replies with an affirmative

phrase “Alright, I like your squanch.” and disappears into the crowd. The switch to Spanish is not addressed by any of the characters and the scene continues.

Rick’s second interactive turn with a change of code from English into Spanish appears in season 2 episode 9, item (5) in Table 8 above, when Rick lands his flying vehicle to a planet and addresses the first being he and Morty encounter by saying: “Hey, *muchacho*.” By referring to the new character as *muchacho* Rick can be described to display harmlessness and a relaxed, friendly attitude. He could have used any English equivalent of the word, such as *pal* or *buddy*, but for an unspecified reason he is scripted to produce the word in Spanish. There is nothing suggesting the planet in question or the characters on it speak Spanish nor do they possess any stereotypically Hispanic features. This does not prevent Rick from using Spanish, though there is no salient motivation for this code alternation either. The addressee of Rick’s turn is not expected to reply to the use of Spanish, since the greeting is immediately followed by a question to which Rick expects an answer. To ensure the successful progression of the conversation, the addressee replies to the question posed to him rather than returning to the choice of words expressed earlier.

Both instances of Rick’s code-mixing into Spanish are examples of technically correct code-mixing, as the new language is introduced after a threshold in the utterance either starting a new sentence or used in reference to the addressee. There are no linguistic requirements in the scenes for Rick to switch languages nor is he clearly narratively motivated to do so. The change from what in this case is the high variety language, English, into the low variety language, Spanish, can be classified as metaphorically motivated, should one of the four narrative motivations for code-mixing (Gumperz 1982) be chosen. However, Bleichenbacher himself (2008: 13–14) notes that these classifications cannot be used to perfectly predict or analyse some of the faster-paced instances of code-mixing, in which case it does not matter what content is expressed and why, but what matters is why the character performs the code-mix in the first place. This added notion allows me to assume that the sudden introduction of Spanish is motivated by aesthetics if anything; the change offers Rick an opportunity to appear approachable and casual, which perhaps is more of a testament of the writers’ expectations of the audience’s perception of Spanish than the character himself. Using Spanish to establish an informal tone in a conversation may imply Spanish is considered more appropriate for relaxed discourse, whereas English is reserved for all official and formal interactions which guide the plot forward — Spanish in this case is a type of an atmosphere-modifying filler. While this does not directly portray Spanish in a negative light in

itself, it does reflect an ideology of its nature in relation to English.

The remaining instances of Spanish presented in the show cannot exactly be classified as code-mixing as the language appears as units in proper nouns, though these instances contribute to language variation and multilingualism. Season 2 episode 5 is an episode involving an intergalactic talent show in which one of the competing planets, exemplified as item (4) in Table 8 above, is called *Arboles Mentirosos* which in Spanish roughly translates to *lying trees*. A viewer without knowledge of Spanish is likely to miss this instance of language change, firstly because the name is pronounced with a heavy American accent as /ˌɑːbəʊləs məntɪˈɪəʊsəs/ and secondly, the language around the name of said planet is nonsensical; the planet is preceded in the competition by planet *Parblesnops* and the habitants of Arboles Mentirosos are referred to as *arbolian mentirososians*. The name is not discussed by any of the characters, though it adds an artistic, alien flare to the episode, but I argue it does not convey a deeper meaning. As the name of the planet is surrounded by nonsense and the connection Spanish is quite minimal, the creators' intention might have been to disguise the instance as Alien.

The final occurrences of Spanish in the show appear in season 3 episode 7. Presented as items (6) and (7) in Table 8 above, the instances are in fact the same; a name of a group repeated by different characters. The episode introduces the Citadel of Ricks which is a large city run by superior Ricks from alternate realities and inhabited by other Ricks and Mortys. The episode follows two law enforcement officers, a benevolent officer Rick and a corrupted officer Morty, who patrol the less economically fortunate side of the Citadel. The two are depicted solving a crime allegedly committed by a group called the Mortytown *Locos*. *Loco*, which is *crazy* in Spanish, is used as a modifier for a local gang who operate in an area called Mortytown. The first instance, item (6) in Table 8 above, is uttered by a graffiti-tagging Morty whose friend is violently questioned by the corrupted police officer Morty, and the second instance, item (7) in Table 8, is repeated by a local underworld authority figure Big Morty. This is another instance where there is no salient motivation, linguistic or narrative, for the change of language, though Spanish is once again used to create an atmosphere of authenticity and perhaps even danger. The name of the gang is divided into a locational determiner, Mortytown, and an adjective-based plural noun as a modifier for the members of said gang, *locos*. Arguably, the use of *locos* instead of crazies sounds more urban and harmlessly infamous to a speaker of English — as labelling members of a group *crazies* would suggest they are actually insane — but this unfortunately touches linguicism in that it implies a

relationship between the Latin community and crime-committing activities. This notion is likely based on some of the infamous Hispanic street gangs in the United States, such as the Latin Kings.

The next natural language, German, only makes an appearance of a single word in the data. This occurs in season 1 episode 11, item (8) in Table 8 above, produced by a character named Abradolf Lincler who, as his name suggests, is a hybrid character between Abraham Lincoln and Adolf Hitler. When fatally wounded, Lincler announces: “Mein journey is over, Morty.” replacing the English word *my* with the German equivalent *mein*, even though until this moment he has only spoken English. The German word resembles its English counterpart very closely and it is not an issue for Morty to understand what Lincler means by his statement. This code-mixing event into German is clearly narratively motivated indexical code-mixing: there is no linguistic requisite for it nor does it progress the scene, but it does remind the audience of Lincler’s origins. Another natural language appearing in the show as a single word is Hebrew, presented as item (9) in Table 8. In season 2 episode 10, as a bride reveals her true identity as an undercover agent at her own wedding, a guest raises their glass and exclaims *l’khaim* (Hebrew: לחיים) which is the Hebrew expression for *cheers*. This sudden appearance of Hebrew is likely a construct for humour, since there have been no prior references to the language nor is there a salient reason for the language to appear at the wedding — there are no visible elements suggesting it is a Jewish wedding. It could be that the particular, yet haphazard guest is Jewish and wishes to congratulate the couple, though it does seem improbable that the creators would have included such a segment just for this non-recurring character. The timing of the act is peculiar for it to be a sincere toast, as it has just been announced all criminal guests, i.e. most of the guests, will be arrested and detained by the Galactic Federation. This revelation of the true identity of the bride results in a cold-blooded battle killing many guests and agents alike, and extremely ironically the literal translation of the toast the guest makes only seconds before the beginning of the battle is “to life”. This line in Hebrew is not addressed to anyone specifically nor is it responded to by anyone; it occurs on its own and not as a part of an utterance. It appears to be equally misplaced temporally as well as linguistically, which I can only interpret as an intent for the situational humour it provides. It seems again, as with the German example, the language of the toast could have been English, yet it was changed seemingly arbitrarily to Hebrew. I argue the primary reason for this scene to be multilingual is to display humour, both by the unexpected introduction of a new language and the ironic juxtaposition of the exclamation and the events immediately thereafter.

The next natural language present in the show is Russian and according to my personal contact the lines of dialogue are produced incoherently with a strong American accent. The language appears in season 3 episode 3, items (10) and (11) in table 8, in which Rick transforms himself into a pickle and through a series of dangerous and challenging events finds himself in an official building occupied by Russian agents — possibly a political embassy. Most of the officials inside the building speak English with a stereotypical Eastern European accent, apart from a man who is depicted as a higher authority, who speaks with a British accent. Russian is first introduced as a series of cautionary cries by an agent in a three-person security detail who notice pickle-Rick and draw their weapons. As all three point their firearms at Rick, one of the men touches a communication device in his ear and yells aggressively in Russian. This gesture suggests he is reporting the observed intruder to someone on the other end of said device. My personal contact explained that the Russian spoken is somewhat incoherent and it seems as if the line of dialogue has been constructed with the help of an automatic translation service. Rick ignores the shouting and attempts to escape, most likely as a result of weapons drawn and directed at him rather than the sudden introduction of a different language. Soon after this incident, an agent watching Rick progress successfully through their ostensibly secure building refers to him in fear as *Solenya*. The executive officer informs Rick over the phone about the origins of this term, explaining it is “an old wives’ tale” in which a Pickle Man punishes children who waste food. I would argue that one of the functions of Russian as an element of multilingualism is to allow the viewer to experience Rick’s frantic attempt to escape from his point of view, and in a way with him. Relating the audience to one character or a specific group of characters is a common technique in multilingual telecinematic works, as Bleichenbacher (2008) discovered in his study. He describes the film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) to exemplify this notion by consisting of untranslated Czech dialogue neither the American characters nor the English-speaking viewers can understand. However, this is not perfectly comparable to the scene in *Rick and Morty* as it was discovered the Russian spoken is flawed in both grammar and pronunciation. In addition to the added sense of realism this untranslated language use arguably brings, the lines of dialogue in Russian clearly have an indexical function as well; this is how the audience discovers who occupies the building. As for the role of Russian as a conversational element, it is not clear whether the Russian the agents yell out after discovering Rick’s presence can be considered divergence, since I am not sure what exactly is said nor does anyone who does not speak Russian. If the line is addressed to Rick, it could be argued to be divergence, and if it is addressed to the other members of staff present in the

scene it is not. As there are no further instances of Russian in the episode, or the show for that matter, these few lines can be argued to carry little to no narrative significance and can be acknowledged for their existence alone; as brief indexical items of multilingualism.

The final natural language presented in the show, again only as a single word, is Yiddish. This occurs in a scene in season 3 episode 7, item (12) in Table 8 above, when the previously-mentioned underground authority figure Big Morty greets his acquaintance, corrupted police officer Morty. The officers Morty and his partner Rick, had recently solved a crime regarding a local gang, the Mortytown Locos, and presently arrive at a club to receive bribes from the criminal kingpin. At the sight of the two police officers Big Morty, from behind his two bodyguards, exclaims: “Ah, *bubbala*, how did it go with the Mortytown Locos?”. *Bubbala* is a term of endearment in Yiddish, which is a language predominantly spoken by Ashkenazi Jews – Jewish people of European descent (see for example Steinmetz 1986). I believe the character of Big Morty to be a representation of a Jewish leader of an organized crime syndicate in North America, especially in the city of New York, often featured in telecinematic works depicting the city in the 20th century. This fast-paced switch into Yiddish from English can be categorised as indexical code-mixing from a narrative point of view: the language is not a common one and it has clear ethnographical connotations as it is spoken primarily by Ashkenazi Jews. Moreover, as Big Morty converses fluently in English yet code-mixes into Yiddish, he bears a great resemblance to a second or third generation member of a Jewish immigrant family in, for example, New York. This code-mixing thus provides the viewer with further information about the source, Big Morty, and is therefore indexical in nature. The scene is multilingual, though this instance of Yiddish is a very secluded one, functioning as a feature of indexical description for a character rather than any symbol for a larger thematic construct. It is used as a way to address another character, similarly to the Spanish example *muchacho* above.

While employing all these different languages to be perform several functions for the structure of the show is arguably desirable from the point of view of realistic language use and linguistic inclusion, it does not come without its issues. Next, I will address the problems regarding the use of different languages, especially when the division of power is not equal and one language is exploited for the gain of another.

4.1.2.1 Linguicism

Even though the languages add a milder sense of otherness and realism to the show, a closer analysis reveals some issues regarding their use. Two of the languages are portrayed in offensive mock varieties, depriving them of their correct manifestation and consequently their linguistic dignity. Further, two others were used to establish a connection between the users of those languages and criminal activities. Irvine and Gal (2000) describe the unequally divided importance and prestige assigned to different languages as **iconization**: it is the practice of alternating between languages according to the level of importance the conveyed message is considered to have, branding one language less meaningful. Most important utterances in the dialogue in *Rick and Morty* are portrayed in English, while any narratively irrelevant turns can be uttered in other languages, often creating a jocular tone. The sense of inclusion and equality created by the portrayal of multilingualism can be attenuated by iconization as it evokes the opposite. The two languages exploited for the criminal connection, present in season 3 episode 7, were Spanish and Yiddish; the former as a unit in the name of a crime syndicate and the latter as an indexical element for the ethnographic background of a criminal leader. The name of the criminal group, Mortytown Locos, could have been anything from Mortytown thugs to Mortytown Mortys, and the kingpin Big Morty could have been portrayed greeting the police officers without the term *bubbala*. The use of colloquial Yiddish forms a clear image of this particular character as engaging in criminal activities in a leadership role as well as being Jewish.

However, linguicism is not limited to natural languages in the show. Another detectable form of linguicism in *Rick and Morty* is the concept of **erasure**, which Irvine and Gal (2000) describe as the obliteration of individual linguistic identities of speakers who are made to speak a different language than their own. As discussed above, the alien world seems to function in both Alien and English and since English originates from Earth, it may well be used as a foreign language in the *Rick and Morty* universe, perhaps even a lingua franca. However, as the alien beings are depicted speaking primarily English, it may be that their own linguistic identities are erased and replaced with English for the benefit of the protagonists and by extension the viewers. Of course, it must be noted that the dialogue and the characters performing it are all fictional, created and scripted to behave in the way they do by the creators of the show, and therefore all aspects of linguicism are attributable to them and them only.

To conclude this section, other natural languages are relatively scarcely present in the show,

appearing in different semiotic modes, performing a variety of functions as elements of multilingualism. There are in total seven different languages in seven different episodes, coinciding at times. Arabic and Chinese are present in what can be described as mock varieties, providing a visualisation of geographical distance — a scale of how far in the world a virus can spread. In the episode in which they appear, season 1 episode 6, the scale of the disaster is amplified by imagery from different parts of the world featuring the Middle and Far East, which allows me to conclude these two languages are of great narrative importance for the plot, though not essential for their linguistic value. Spanish, on the other hand, provides a selection of different functions. It brings an aesthetic change in Rick's perceived attitude and embellishes his speech turn rather than defines him as a character. Spanish also functions as an indicator of familiar difference; it adds a linguistic layer to the show which is intrinsically different from the core of the show, yet familiar enough for the audience to recognise it. The fundamental purpose of Russian, German, and Yiddish in the show can arguably be to function as narratively motivated indexical elements, some as units in code-mixing. They provide further reinforcing information about the characters who use them, primarily portraying their geographical, ethnographical, or socio-cultural backgrounds. Russian was also found to function as an expression of realism, enabling the audience to further relate to the English-speaking character involved. While Hebrew can be viewed to incorporate the same indexicality as the other languages, I argue the more prominent function of it is to provide humour on the two levels discussed above.

This section of the analysis focused on the language variation present in *Rick and Morty*, with the additional objective of further examining the extra-terrestrial language used in the show, termed Alien in this study. The variation in language use in *Rick and Morty*, as discussed and exemplified in the sections directly above, consists of two larger domains: Alien and natural languages. The levels of difficulty regarding the comprehension of the variation fluctuate due to the complexity of the language in question, and natural languages can be argued to provide the show with a milder alienating effect, whereas Alien contributes to the more drastic form of audience alienation. The show features incredible visual effects and inventions which embellish the universe depicted and allow the viewer to realise the show can literally go anywhere, both regarding the physical locations of the characters and the visual sphere which is more imaginative episode after episode, but linguistically as well, as the show features everything from strange science words, to talking animals, to entire incomprehensible languages. Without examining these subjects further, it could be argued there is almost a kind of a balance maintaining the audience drawn in with familiarity

and pushed away with otherness, though Alien and its frequent, difficult-to-interpret presence dominates the linguistic sphere to an extent. Next in the analysis, I will move on to the second half of interpreting and comprehending the discussed variation. The primary focus will be on Alien again and the interpretation strategies provided or required to successfully interpret its use, but deciphering natural languages will be discussed as well.

4.2 Understanding language variation

The second part of the analysis concerns interpreting the languages that appear on the show and the items and concepts they describe. In the present section, I will introduce the detectable comprehensibility strategies utilised in the first three seasons of *Rick and Morty*, focusing particularly on the instances which are left untranslated. This section is organised by language and I will begin by examining the previously introduced comprehension strategies from Bleichenbacher's (2008) dissertation. I will discuss each strategy with illustrative examples in regard to their prominence in the show apropos of the translation and interpretation of Alien. After this, I will progress to the issues of non-translation and the task of interpretation assigned for the audience. Following this, I will repeat the structure of this analysis, but consider natural languages and their interpretation.

4.2.1 Interpreting: Alien

Even though the audience is introduced to a new, fully fictitious invented language, Alien, this does not mean they will automatically not understand it. As has been previously mentioned and discussed in length, there are several different varieties of strategies implemented in telecinematic works by the inventors of such languages to aid the audience in understanding their creation. Interestingly, *Rick and Morty* does not feature the most common comprehension strategy nor are the other existing strategies fully salient. I argue the average viewer of the show does not even realise how much interpretation they subconsciously and continuously conduct themselves. I will now present and discuss the detected comprehension strategies, as well as analyse the interpretation process in which the audience members must participate to understand the messages conveyed in Alien.

Despite **subtitling** being the most prominent and popular form of translating a language that is deemed unfamiliar enough to require further interpretation in telecinematic works, the first three

seasons of *Rick and Morty* include only a single instance of open subtitles which are generally used with unknown language, e.g. in *Game of Thrones*. The subtitles translate the line of dialogue of a giant telepathic spider who produces a string of clicking sounds translated and superimposed on the screen as: “What wicked webs we un-weave.” (S2 E6 19:25), a line which is discarded by everyone involved and presumably provides the show with no narrative or structural value. Even though open subtitles are not a utilised strategy, the streaming service in this region, Finland, provides closed subtitles for the show in five languages, though none were used continuously during data collection. The closed subtitles in English were periodically activated for further aid in the event of uncertainty regarding the possible spelling of Alien words. It should be noted that the closed subtitles did not include translations or interpretations for Alien or for any of the other natural languages. Neither variety of Alien was translated by either type of subtitling and the temporarily activated closed subtitles referred to such turns of dialogue as “speaks alien language” or “gibberish”. This inconsistency in the contents of the closed subtitles can be a result of different providers of subtitling or different agents within a company providing such a service. Another common comprehension strategy, utilising **cognates** and familiar expressions, relates to words and phrases with roots that transcend languages or are familiar to speakers of different languages for other reasons. It is clear Alien may not include terms or concepts that could be classified as familiar, as it is an a priori invented language regarding its vocabulary and therefore the comprehensibility strategy of utilising cognates will be omitted here and instead discussed in relation to natural languages later below.

In the absence of familiar words and expressions in Alien, the show features some Alien phrases that are fully **translated** or **interpreted** for their specific meaning **by other characters** present in the scenes in question. In season 1 episode 11, a character named Birdperson translates Rick’s catchphrase and a consequent turn of phrase from his own language to Morty, in Rick’s absence. Firstly, he informs Morty Rick’s catchphrase “Wubba lubba dub dub.” to mean “I am in great pain, please help me.” (S1 E11 18:20), and as a direct response to Morty’s indifference in the narratively significant message delivered to him, Birdperson translates another phrase from his language, “Gabba nub nub doo rah kah.”, to mean “Whatever lets you sleep at night.”. In another episode, in season 2 episode 6, Rick and a scientist from a miniature universe deliver almost exactly identical lines as Rick utters: “Ooh la la, someone’s gonna get laid in college” (S2 E6 03:36) while Zeep the scientist says: “Eek barba dirkle, somebody’s gonna get laid in college.” (S2 E6 07:19). Rick translates the beginning of Zeep’s turn to Morty, after Morty confronts him about Zeep’s response

asking Rick: “What the hell was that?” to which Rick replies: “I know, ‘eek barba dirkle’? That’s a pretty fucked up ‘ooh la la’.” (S2 E6 07:29).

Later, in season 3 episode 8, the viewer is presented with a series of collected memories previously erased from Morty’s mind, each memory displayed on the screen without context. In one of these memories, Rick and Morty are depicted interrogating an alien being who is tied to a chair. The two demand the alien to reveal a set of codes, to which the alien responds by gurgling incomprehensibly. Rick interprets this as a refusal to co-operate as he informs Morty: “It’s pointless, he’s stonewalling.” (S3 E8 12:42). After some aggressive comments from Morty, the alien gurgles again and Rick takes the turn after him, as if to respond to the alien before addressing Morty: “Okay. See those fleshy sacs under his chin, Morty? Grab ‘em.” (12:57). The clear falling intonation in Rick’s initial “Okay.” suggests the first word could either be an indicator of compliance to Morty’s sinister suggestion about increasing the level of aggression in the interrogation or alternatively a response to the utterance of the alien, and only the succeeding line of dialogue is addressed directly to Morty. Rick interprets the alien’s speech one last time, after the being exclaims as a result of Morty twisting the above-mentioned sacs. Rick translates the alien’s message to Morty who seems unable to understand the alien himself. Rick says: “He wants to make a deal. Half the codes now, half after you finish.” (S3 E8 13:17). Morty’s understandably alarmed reaction implies he was indeed not able to understand the alien language the alien spoke and Rick interpreted, as he did not realise his actions were not physically injuring the alien as he had thought and intended.

There are also attempts by characters to decipher some of the Alien presented to them, for example, the rules governing the use of the word *squanch* as a morpheme in different words in varying word classes. However, despite the direct efforts by Morty: “What exactly is squanching?” (S1 E11 06:15) and Beth: “Your language has the word squanch in it a lot. Doesn’t that become tedious and worn out, like the Smurf thing?” (S2 E10 02:20), the exact meaning behind the morpheme is left unexplained. Rick is the first person to speak after both inquiries; he dismisses Morty’s question entirely and provides Beth with general instructions how to use *squanch* by saying: “Squanchy culture is more contextual than literal. You just say what’s in your squanch and people understand.” (S2 E10 02:26). This advice is quickly discovered unfounded, however, as Beth’s sentence “I squanch my family.” (S2 E10 02:33) is deemed “gross” by Squanchy, a character native to the language in question, and his comment is supported by Rick’s disgusted facial

expression which in turn is an indicator of his comprehension of the correct use of *squanch* and by extension the language as a whole. A list of examples of the use of *squanch* can be found in the Appendices as Appendix 3.

Even though there are several comprehension strategies in place in *Rick and Morty*, there remain many conversational events in the show that consist of words whose meaning is not instantly revealed to the viewer and in a majority of these cases the exact meaning has to be interpreted with the help of cues of different semiotic modes. Next, I analysed the instances of the lack of translation and the interpretation processes required for understanding the untranslated dialogue.

4.2.1.1 No translation: interpretation strategies

Most instances of Alien are not directly translated at all, which means the true meaning of the words is not revealed, only the suggestion of a meaning. This concerns both the shorter instances in transcribable Alien as well as full sentences in either of the spoken varieties. Meyers (1980: 8) notes this practice is admissible provided that the creators include some signifiers for the meanings; be it visual cues or other context-based information. More specifically, the members of audience are firstly expected to understand the designated word class for each word presented in a strange language to determine the precise nature and semantic role of the word, and secondly the meaning. This process of semantic de-coding is relatively simple in *Rick and Morty*, as many of the words in Alien are inserted into and seem to fit the semantic structure of English sentences. I argue the interpretation of Alien words and sentences to be divided into two separate processes. Firstly, a viewer should configure the word class to which the specific specimen of Alien belongs and decipher whether the word describes an action, an object, or whether it functions as a modifier. Beyond the semantic de-coding of Alien, the audience must interpret and define the pragmatic meaning of the utterances relying on the possible semantic classification of the unfamiliar words, information gathered from the immediate context, and any other relevant knowledge available to them.

Even though all instances of Alien are not translated to the viewers, this does not mean they cannot be understood, at least on a very basic level. By examining the different instances of untranslated Alien, I detected three different themes for audience interpretation: utilising **visual** cues, utilising **verbal** cues, as well as a **mixed** category which consisted of combining either or both of the former tactics with general knowledge and other contextual factors to interpret the unfamiliar words. Of

course, to form an adequate interpretation of semantic information presented in any mode one must generally consider more aspects than just one. This is to say I understand a comprehensive interpretation of untranslated Alien cannot necessarily be constructed only by, for example, listening to the dialogue. By visual cues, I refer to items or actions presented in the surrounding scenes to which Alien words refer or which they affect; although then the specific meaning might not be revealed, the interpretation is enough for the audience to receive the intended message conveyed. Verbal cues refer to information provided in lines of dialogue immediately preceding or succeeding interpretable Alien, as well as auditory information regarding the subject matter from different episodes. Finally, the mixed category consists of instances of Alien, which are interpretable by both visual and verbal cues, or general knowledge and other contextual information, such as norms of social conduct. Directly below, I will discuss each category of interpretation with examples from the show. The examples I provide are anglicised forms of transcribable Alien and they are not converted to their phonological forms relying on the conventions of the IPA, as the phonology is not specifically the target of inspection in this section.

Interpretation by visual cues

As the data were gathered from a telecinematic series, any meaning conveyed is expectedly carried or supported by highly visual cues. What is more, this particular series is animated, which means all visual items and scenery in it are included purposefully. The visual cues aiding the interpretation of Alien words were divided by category in the analysis: edible products, beings and items, and Alien sentences as imperative commands with visually detectable consequences.

Many of the items presented with an Alien description seem to be of the edible kind. The first visual cue for such a product appears in season 1 episode 8, in a scene in which Rick and Morty watch intergalactic cable television when a commercial is broadcast for what seems a type of breakfast cereal. The product is presented as “strawberry smiggles” (S1 E8 14:13) by a small, orange-haired character resembling a leprechaun with a mock Irish accent and this depiction as a whole has clear connotations of a particular brand of breakfast cereal with similar specifications. The character, who introduces himself as Tophat Jones, eats the *smiggles* himself, which further proves they are edible, and a final verbal cue proposing the edibility of *smiggles* is the fact that they are described with the pre-modifier “strawberry”, suggesting they are either made of or taste like strawberries. Later instances of edible objects presented in Alien include “chabos and flobos” (S2 E2 22:26) which are items shown to the viewer on display on dishes as a part of a television

advertisement for an arcade in space, and “a bag of bobbish” (S2 E8 08:09) which closely resembles a bag of crisps. These items are not discussed or explained any further, though there are grounds to presume they are edible.

In addition to food, many other objects and beings are labelled and described with Alien words in the show. In season 1 episode 11, three species of alien are referred to in the following manner: there is a swarm of small, turquoise beings rapidly entering the Smith house for a party and Rick greets them by saying: “What up, my glip glops!” (S1 E11 04:46). The succeeding scene portrays Morty cleaning the house and as he discovers an alien being dining on the carcass of another a bystander tells him: “That’s why you never invite a floopy doop and a shmoopy doop to the same party.” (S1 E11 04:56). Other creatures depicted in the show are “a gibble snake” and “a smooglite runner” (S3 E5 13:20) as Rick informs Jerry he needs *gibble snake* bile to lure and capture a *smooglite runner*, an ostrich-like creature, which they could subsequently use as a form of transportation. All of these beings are clearly pictured in the show as distinct, strange, colourful space animals. Additional beings and items are presented to the viewer in season 2 episode 8, in a commercial advertisement titled “How they do it”, which is a play on “How it’s made”, an actual feature on North American television depicting the manufacturing process of well-known items. In this particular section, the item under inspection is referred to as a *plumbus*, which, according to the broadcast on intergalactic television, everyone has in their home. The scene (S2 E8, beginning at 15:02) includes visibly inanimate objects described as: *dinglebop*, *schleem*, *grumbo*, *hizzards*, *chumble*, *ploobis*, and the final product *plumbus*; as well as animate beings: *fleeb*, *schlami*, and *blamf*. After watching the commercial, Morty is portrayed with a confused expression on his face which is likely comparable to that of the viewers’. These beings or items are not explained, only pictured, and the viewers of the commercial may draw their own conclusions about what they have just witnessed, only knowing they were watching how a certain item is manufactured, never knowing what the item is for or what the beings and other products in the manufacturing process are.

The final type of a visual comprehension aid is the depiction of action as a result of an Alien utterance. This is well exemplified in season 2 episode 6, in which Morty finds himself leading a primitive clan on a strange, artificial planet. In two particular scenes, the tree people perform an action as a direct result of Morty’s lines which are not translated. In the first scene, the tree people surround Rick and Zeep Xanflorp with their weapons drawn and Morty emerges from amidst them

exclaiming: “Kalu kada shala!” (S2 E6 15:09). This compels the tree people to lower their weapons and let Morty through the circle they have formed around the two other characters. At a later instance, Morty achieves the opposite action with his utterance “Roh roh danugah!” (S2 E6 16:09) which results in the tree people again drawing their weapons and swiftly surrounding Rick and Zeeb. Neither line is translated and the closed captions activated only read “speaks alien language” for both instances, yet the messages Morty conveys with his utterances become relatively clear.

Interpretation by auditory cues

There are also instances, in which the described item or concept is not pictured visually at all, but the meaning or an indication of the nature of the words can be inferred from the surrounding dialogue. Much like the previous visual examples, the Alien words interpretable from auditory cues can be divided into categories: there are two clear units of measurement (time and distance), five different currencies or value-establishing concepts, physical features, and a selection of various mixed items. The five different currencies are described differently throughout the show, though in each case it becomes clear to the viewers that the strange words represent concepts expressing monetary value. The five currencies and the two units of measurement are presented respectively in Table 10 and discussed below.

Table 9 Alien words for value-establishing concepts and units of measurement

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	TERM	SURROUNDING DIALOGUE	CONCEPT
S1 E5	12:10	shmeckle	“I’ll take you down there for 25 shmeckles.”	currency
S1 E7	00:10	smidgen	“I’m not going to pay 70 smidgens for--”	currency
S2 E2	03:12	flerbo	“Here you go, 3000 flerbos. Do you have the weapon?”	currency
S2 E3	16:46	blemflarck	“-- sell the cure for billions of blemflarcks.”	currency
S2 E8	08:09	rapple	“Bag of bobbish, that’s eight rapples!”	currency
S1 E4	03:36	quinton	“Well check every five quintons, and tell me--”	unit of measurement
S3 E6	01:04	ceton	“Steady Morty, five cetons!” “Steady, goddamn it, two cetons!”	unit of measurement

The lines of dialogue including the words for currencies also include constructs which are generally connected to a transaction of goods and currency, be it paying or selling or simply the numerical predetermination depicting the amount in the currency itself. These clues, which appear in the surrounding dialogue of the currencies and units of measurement, subsequently allowing speculation about the nature of the concepts, are highlighted in bold script in Table 10 above. One of the value concepts is explained to be a currency in an utterance by a panicked insect working for the Galactic Federation, who says: “Our single, centralised galactic currency went from being worth one of itself to zero of itself!” (S3 E1 18:16). The last two items in Table 10 can be interpreted to depict units of measurement; *quinton* measures time and *ceton* distance. Ordering his employees to “check every five quintons” (S1 E4 01:04), the Zigerion leader implies *quintons* are continuous, and waiting can be dissected into separate structures of said measurement, much like minutes. *Cetons*, on the other hand, seem to measure distance, as Rick uses the term to inform or warn Morty of the approaching target, at which they fire a weapon after sufficiently diminishing their distance to it. As they approach the target, Rick changes the numerical determination of the unit from five to two, which allows the viewer to presume he is describing the remaining distance which has now diminished. Neither of these two units are mentioned in the show outside these two scenes in which they occur, but they are provided with enough context for the viewer to interpret their meaning.

The final instances, a variety of different items, are presented in Table 11 below. All of the words are most likely objects, such as food or body parts, as they seem to be grammatically the objects of the sentences in which they occur and not, for example, verbs.

Table 10 Alien words explained in dialogue

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	SURROUNDING DIALOGUE
S1 E1	14:30	(1) flimflam	“I’m trying to eat a flimflam--”
S3 E6	05:36	(2) terrifold	“ Grab my terrifolds.”
S3 E7	11:25	(3) scabsquams (4) nibnibs	“You keep me peelin’ scabsquams and slippin’ nibnibs and I’ll lick whatever ain’t nailed down.”

Item (1) in the table above is clearly an edible item, as the alien describing it to another alien uses the word as a direct object after the verb to eat. Item (2) could be a body part as it is preceded by the possessive pronoun *my*, indicating it belongs to the interlocutor and the imperative action

suggested is grabbing, which implies *terrifolds* have a physical form. This word appears in a song on the radio in space and the tune of the song is mellow and the tone of voice of the singer seductive, which leads me to draw a final conclusion that *terrifolds* are indeed a physical part of the body of an alien. The specific meaning of items (3) and (4) in Table 11 remains unknown to the viewer, though the verbs used to describe the action regarding them, combined with the pragmatic message of the sentence, give the audience an indication of their nature. Both words, *scabsquams* and *nibnibs*, are uttered in the same sentence by an alternate Rick who is portrayed as a stereotypical methamphetamine addict: he is missing an alarming number of teeth, his hair is greasy, he is wearing stained clothes, and he speaks with an accent that could be traced to the rural areas of Southern USA. To examine the two Alien words in more detail, peeling is an action that describes the removal of the outer-most layer of an object, which implies *scabsquams* could possibly be a skinned edible item, such as a potato. Slipping used with the direct object *nibnibs*, could describe a swift placement of the object into a predetermined location, but since the sentence mentions no such location, in this context in my opinion the phrase “slipping nibnibs” may describe the action of consuming narcotics in, what is likely, a pill form. The Rick in question utters the line as a response to an indecent proposition offered by a street thug version of Morty, and essentially agrees to do anything (“lick whatever ain’t nailed down”) if he remains employed (“you keep me peelin’ scabsquams”) and continues to receive a type of narcotics to maintain his evident substance-abuse habit (“you keep me -- slippin’ nibnibs”).

The audience must remain alert to the visual and verbal cues presented to them at all times to be able to fully understand and follow the dialogue which often, as has been demonstrated in this study, consists of traces of an alien language. Occasionally these cues alone are not sufficient for the audience to form an adequate interpretation and must be conjoined by other pieces of information, either from the show or real life. This brings us to the last category, which I regard a mixed one, as it evidently consists of a mixed selection of cues and knowledge to be combined to form an interpretation of Alien.

Mixed interpretation

As the third and final category as the basis of forming an interpretation, I present the mixed category in which visual and auditory cues are combined with general and contextual knowledge. The following table provides examples of Alien words which can be interpreted with the help of a combination of the before-mentioned specifications.

Table 11 Mixed interpretation

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	SURROUNDING DIALOGUE	INFERRED MEANING/FUNCTION
S1 E1	14:20	(1a) glarp zone (1b) flarping (1c) unglarping	“The glarp zone is for flarping and unglarping only.”	Based on a common airport announcement
S1 E5	11:42	(2a) scarlog poppies (2b) flurflow (2c) halzingers	“What can I get you? We have scarlog poppies, flurflow, halzingers--”	Items on a menu
S3 E5	16:27	(3) smiggle	“They have sweet smiggle honey cookies and low petroleum flakes.”	Items on a menu
S3 E5	18:35	(4) ouf	“Ouf this.”	Based on an expression of frustration
S3 E9	03:42	(5) ooloo	“You have much to learn, my ooloo.”	Pet name
S3 E9	03:53	(6) chaimuntolo	“I know where Krootabulons are from. Chaimuntolo.” “Chaimuntolo, younglings.”	Greeting
S3 E9	22:32	(7) gorgon	“That’s gorgon shit.”	Based on a common expression when exposing a lie

Beginning with items (1a, b, c), the three words in Alien occurring in the same sentence can be interpreted as an announcement over the loudspeaker at an intergalactic travel station, closely resembling an airport. Knowing that such announcements are regularly produced at large travel stations is general knowledge for anyone who travels and this sentence reveals to the viewer there is an area on the premises of the station, reserved for two types of activity, though the meaning of these actions or the name of the zone are not translated. This sentence is essentially the Alien equivalent of “The white zone is for loading and unloading only.” which is a common announcement heard at various airports in the United States. Interpreting items (2) and (3) requires knowledge of another common phenomenon; eating at a culinary establishment. In season 2 episode 5, Rick and Morty enter a tavern and are approached by a waitress who inquires what she

could bring them. While the verb to eat is not included in any of the lines of dialogue, the context of a tavern and a waitress listing words allows the viewer to categorise these Alien words as something edible. There is a similar instance in season 3 episode 5, item (3) in Table 12, in which Jerry and Rick are on board of a public travelling vessel, and as Jerry holds open an item folded in the middle, similar to a menu, he informs Rick: “They have sweet smiggle honey cookies--”. Much as in example (2) in the table above, a public establishment **having** something implies it can be distributed to others, and as the viewer has previously found out *smiggles* are edible, which further suggests Jerry is reading a menu of edible items they may order.

Two of the instances in Table 12 represent an Alien word used with an English word to express an opinion towards the specific situation in which they occur. In season 3 episode 5, item (4) in Table 12, a character named Risotto Groupon experiences a hallucinogenic transportation through a wormhole with Rick and Jerry, and during the mind-bending scene he exclaims: “Ouf this!” as an Alien counterpart for such a phrase as “Screw this!” to indicate weariness towards the situation and willingness to leave it. In season 3 episode 9, presented as item (7) in Table 12, an ex-boyfriend of Jerry’s new alien girlfriend Kiara, offers the line: “That’s gorgon shit. Total gorgon shit.” as a response to her explanation about why she selected Earth as her location of choice for hunting. The two characters portray a reconnection of two former paramours and the viewers can interpret their body language and tones of voice to discover Kiara was in fact hoping to meet her former partner again. Trandor, the partner in question, notices this as well and his verdict “That’s gorgon shit.” resembles the common English colloquialism “bullshit” so closely, the viewer is likely to accept it to mean the same — an attempt to expose a lie.

The remaining examples, items (5) and (6) in Table 12, are from season 3 episode 9, spoken by the above-mentioned alien Kiara and Morty. Item (5) is Kiara’s turn of speech in which she affectionately addresses Jerry and his failed attempt to move an object telekinetically by saying: “You have much to learn, my ooloo.”. She appears on screen as she helps Jerry put down the object and the viewer realises she is addressing him with the Alien word. Next, as Jerry introduces Kiara as his new girlfriend, the audience can finally interpret *ooloo* to be Kiara’s adoring name to her new partner, especially as it is preceded by the possessive pronoun *my*. Jerry introduces her by the name of her species and the planet from which they originate, and Morty displays his geographical knowledge of space by informing his father he knows where her kind are from. After this Morty proceeds to address Kiara in what can be interpreted to be her language by saying: “Chaimuntolo.”,

presented as item (6) in the table above. Kiara replies to this by repeating the word, but addressing both Morty and Summer. *Chaimuntolo* can therefore be interpreted and understood as a greeting, by examining all pieces of contextual information present in the scene.

Regardless of the many strategies provided for comprehension and utilised in interpretation, not all Alien can be interpreted, as exemplified in season 2 episode 5 in which an announcer on an intergalactic talent show proclaims: “That was Chunkytunk with ‘Full mingmong, empty gorbork’” (S2 E5 16:25). From this line, the audience can gather the talent show announcer is presenting a group of performers, Chunkytunk, performing their production “Full mingmong, empty gorbork”, both instances of Alien that could mean anything. Much like this example, some instances of Alien in *Rick and Morty* are completely untranslatable. Cheyne (2008: 393) notes the decision to not translate something nor provide the viewer with any tools with which to interpret the strange language used, can be meaningful an act in itself – she refers to these instances as “empty signifiers”. Nevertheless, most of Alien is indeed interpretable, though the interpretation requires the viewer to really engage with the show, to note and consider visual and auditory cues, and at times form a connection between the real world and the show to understand the meanings conveyed. Attempting to translate and interpret Alien is only a part of comprehending the language variation in the show, though. Next, I will return to the different natural languages presented in the show and analyse the comprehension and interpretation processes understanding them requires.

4.2.2 Interpreting: Natural languages

Apart from English, other natural languages are far less frequently presented in the dialogue in *Rick and Morty*, though they do exist and contribute to language variation in the show. For this infrequency, the present section will be considerably shorter than the previous one, considering the vast difference in the quantities in which Alien and natural languages occur. All occurrences of natural languages were presented in section 4.1.2 above, and I will now discuss how the average viewer is expected to translate and interpret these instances. The following table below recapitulates all of the occurrences of other natural languages presented in the show. As the objective of the present section is to determine the comprehension and interpretation strategies used and required, the structure of this section will be divided according to the strategies, instead of the specific languages.

Table 12 Instances of other natural languages in *Rick and Morty*

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	LANGUAGE	INSTANCE
S1 E6	10:31 (1, 1a)	Arabic	spoken (mock) (1) written (1a)
S1 E6	10:53 (2) 14:14 (2a)	Chinese	spoken (mock) (2) written (2a)
S1 E11 (3)	06:09 (3)	Spanish	(3) “Mi casa es su casa, dog.”
S2 E5 (4)	08:46 (4)		(4) Arboles Mentirosos
S2 E9 (5)	00:38 (5)		(5) “Hey, muchacho.”
S3 E7 (6, 7)	07:20 (6) 14:27 (7)		(6, 7) Mortytown Locos
S1 E11	13:50 (8)	German	(8) Mein
S2 E10	09:21 (9)	Hebrew	(9) L’khaim
S3 E3	11:06 (10) 12:10 (11)	Russian	(10) spoken: full sentence
			(11) Solenya
S3 E7	14:23 (12)	Yiddish	(12) Bubbala

As already discussed above in regard to Alien, the show does not feature open subtitles for Alien or natural languages and for this reason, subtitles will not be featured in this section either. However, of the seven natural languages present in the show, three are introduced as familiar words or cognates, likely known by a majority of the audience. Firstly, Spanish is bar one instance introduced through very common phrases and words: item (3) in Table 13 above exemplifies Rick welcoming a guest to his party by saying: “Mi casa es su casa.” which is a very common Spanish equivalent for the phrase “make yourself at home”, used relatively frequently in the entertainment industry. In another episode, item (5) in the table above, Rick asks a stranger for directions and addresses him as *muchacho* which is a common word for addressing someone, again present in many telecinematic works. Finally, as items (6) and (7) in Table 13, the street gang Mortytown Locos, including the Spanish word *loco* for *crazy* after the locational determiner connecting the group to an area known as Mortytown. These examples are arguably familiar to a large audience especially in the West — and in the United States, where Spanish is a widely spoken language — and for this reason the terms do not require translation. Even if all members of the audience could not decipher the exact meaning of the words used, the meaning in the surrounding context is clear and a thorough translation in these cases could be considered redundant from a narrative point of

view, as none of the natural languages are a focal concept in the show. Another clear example of an untranslated cognate is the German word *mein*, item (8) in the table above, uttered by a character named Abradolf Lincler. The word resembles its English counterpart *my* to such an extent that the translation is absolutely unnecessary. What is more, Lincler produces this line of dialogue with strenuous effort as he is badly wounded, and for this reason the utterance is slightly mumbled, further decreasing the phonetic difference between *mein* and *my*. Finally, presented as item (9) in the table above, the exclamation for a toast in Hebrew by a wedding guest. *L'khaim* is a relatively well-known expression as it is a phrase for *cheers*. In this instance, the guest physically raises their glass, which can easily be interpreted by the audience, along with the expression, to mean the guest is in some way congratulating the newlyweds. These particular phrases and expressions are not necessarily familiar to all viewers of the show, but I argue they are in all probability known by the majority and at the very least their meanings can be deduced with little effort. In addition to cognates, there is an example of translation by another character, which occurs in season 3 episode 3, presented as item (11) in Table 13, in which an operative explains Rick why he is being referred to as *Solenya* by the Russian agents in the episode. The translation process is very simple and straightforward and it takes place over the phone between the two characters while the story progresses in the background. By translating the term, it is stripped of all mystique and intrigue, which allows me to assume the line of dialogue is not of great narrative significance.

In addition to the general comprehension strategies, the viewers must utilise the very same interpretation strategies as with *Alien* to understand some of the instances of natural languages. Again, the instances are fewer in number here, but interestingly the same strategies apply to both forms of language variation.

4.2.2.1 No translation: interpretation strategies

Much like *Alien*, not all lines of dialogue spoken in other natural languages are translated to the viewer and once again the viewer must rely on contextual information and particularly on general knowledge to interpret the instances. In all probability, the average viewer is not familiar with any form of *Alien*, though they may well be familiar with or even speak one or more of the natural languages featured in the show. The remaining, untranslated instances of natural languages fall into the final category of interpretation strategies, mixed, in which the viewers must use a selection of strategies to form an interpretation of what is presented to them.

As mentioned previously in the analysis, the instances of Chinese and Arabic, items (1, 1a) and (2, 2a) in Table 13 above, are presented as so-called mock varieties, which is to say they are not produced accurately following the rules governing the languages. These languages are represented in the dialogue by stereotypical phonemes as strings of sounds combined to resemble sentences, and the text, at least in Arabic, is likely constructed with the help of an automated translation service. A personal contact of mine assisted me by translating the Arabic text, revealing the structure grammatically so flawed, the likelihood is the creators composed it with a rather unprofessional online translation service or application. The message¹, a rather blunt demand for Morty, did however concord with the plot of the episode, implying that the attempt to include authentic Arabic text was sincere. The episode consists of a spreading virus affecting people with coercive desire to be with Morty and it can be argued these two languages are not to be understood but noticed, as it seems they exist as the creators' intention to depict the spread of the contagion.

The next instance of an untranslated language is item (10) in Table 13 above, in which security personnel encounter Rick who has transformed himself into a pickle. This scene is included to inform the audience of the level of danger Rick potentially is in, and with whom he is in contact, though the line produced by the agent is not addressed any further. According to my Russian-speaking source, the accent is heavily American and it is very possible the creators have used an automatic translation service again, since my contact could not quite make out what was said, but simply said that it was something about security or being secure. While this is not revealed to the audience, a combination of the environment, the produced line, and the action taken by the agents implies the situation is severe and Rick is considered an intruder in the building. This particular scene is not essential for any of the characters portrayed or even the episode itself, which is why the line in Russian is purely ornamental and the audience's interpretation of impending danger for Rick is sufficient.

The final untranslated, unaddressed use of a natural language, item (12) in the table above, is the word *bubbala* in Yiddish. As previously explained, this is a term of endearment among the Jewish community, used especially by Jewish people of Ashkenazi heritage, who are the primary speakers of Yiddish. It is probable that statistically this word is not understood by the majority of the viewers of *Rick and Morty*, but the contextual, visual, and auditory cues in the scene aid the viewers to interpret it as a way of addressing someone affectionately. The line of dialogue is produced by

¹ "We love a little white infidel [<3 <3] send MORTY to us and life."

someone who greets a police officer from behind two bodyguards in a darkly-lit club. The rest of his line is “How did it go with the Mortytown Locos?”, implying he is aware of current police activity as well as the existence of the named crime syndicate. This scenario alone allows the viewer to assume the character might not be a law-abiding citizen. Combined with the fact that the shift into another language is only the length of a single word, it can be argued the interpretation the audience makes of the Yiddish term is sufficient, whether they form the connection to crime or not.

Section 4.2 has been a broad examination of the comprehension strategies provided for the understanding of language variation in *Rick and Morty*, as well as the discovery and discussion of the specific interpretation strategies expected of the audience in understanding the remaining instances not translated or explained in the show. It has become clear the majority of language variation is indeed interpretable, though it does require attentive participation and incorporation of knowledge from different sources from the members of audience. However, the lines of dialogue in unfamiliar languages do not appear to be narratively crucial and not understanding their specific meaning will not prevent the viewers from watching the show beyond the instances. Next, I will present an extensive summary of the analysis presented above and discuss it further below in section 5, along with the current state and future of this particular field of study.

4.3 Summary

The present section of this thesis consisted of two primary themes: language variation in *Rick and Morty* and interpreting the variation. Both of these sections were further divided broadly into the consideration of Alien and natural languages, of which the former was examined in more detail, as it was a primary point of focus in this thesis as an invented language. The clearly fictional linguistic system, termed Alien in this study, was found to structurally exhibit the features of an **a priori** and a **mixed** invented language, as it was incomprehensible, though fit syntactically into English sentences and could be processed by English grammar structures; and functionally an **artistic** one, providing the show with an **elaborative** aspect as culturally enriching the world in which it appeared, representing primarily **realism** and **humour** as an element of multilingualism. As could be expected, Alien conveyed meaning on all four levels of an invented language (Cheyne 2008) marking it an acceptable and legitimate invented language according to Cheyne’s framework. As a conversational structure, Alien is mixed into English sentences as units of code-

mixing, which for their short and perplexing nature were defined as either **structural** or **contextual code-mixing** in this study. These terms enabled me to analyse all instances of code alternation into Alien regardless of their length. In addition to Alien, there were several natural languages presented in the show, all of which provided the show with additional air of multilingualism, though not to as extreme an extent as an entirely fictitious language. Natural languages performed a variety of functions: expressing humour and realism (Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese), identifying characters and their geo- and ethnographical backgrounds (Russian, German, and Yiddish), and functioning as a factor of embellishment for both characters and situations (Spanish). However, the jocular use occasionally reached the realm of linguicism.

Understanding any language deviating from English can be a challenging task for the viewer of the show, especially if the language in question does not technically exist. There are multiple comprehension strategies provided for the viewer by the creators of the show, of which the most common with Alien were translation by other characters and utilising familiar phrases and cognates with natural languages. Nevertheless, understanding a multitude of the occurrences of the variation was discovered to require further interpretation, expecting the audience to rely on **visual** or **auditory** cues, or **general knowledge** and **contextual information**. Understanding variation in other natural languages is much simpler a process, as these instances are intrinsically more familiar to the audience, even if they do not speak the languages fluently. The few occurrences of several natural languages were interpretable by customary comprehension strategies, though to fully understand some of the multilingual scenes the viewers must utilise the same strategies relying on presented cues of existing knowledge, as when interpreting Alien. Next, I will move on to discuss the findings further, as well as the future of studies regarding invented languages, drawing particular focus on the methodology and shortcomings in the conventions presently available.

5 DISCUSSION

This final section of the thesis will be a mixture of a discussion of the findings of this study and a discussion of the field of linguistics concerned with invented languages. The primary topics of the thesis, the language variation caused by the introduction of the fictional language termed Alien, and other natural languages, as well as understanding the variation are the first objects of inspection, from which I will move on to the obstacles and issues regarding this study, and from

there to the arena of language study regarding invented languages in general.

As recapitulated and illustrated with examples above, Alien can demonstrably be argued to be a classic invented language in fiction: a clear deviation from natural languages, spoken in exotic locations by exotic beings. While the primary function of Alien may be the expression of realism to accurately depict the lives of alien cultures and their respective linguistic systems, Alien does have an extensive role in portraying humour as well. As the genre of *Rick and Morty* is a science fiction comedy and the show is fully animated, it is not surprising to find humour in the language use, as physical comedy may be more problematic and arduous to achieve and convey through animation. Even though the strangeness of Alien as a signifier of otherness and the existence of alien beings could be structured in the most imaginative ways, it is primarily achieved through deviating phonology rather than other aspects of the language. Meyers (1980: 84) notes that the output of an alien language is almost shockingly common to be detected by human senses, which is a notion applicable to modern works of fiction too, and describes Alien perfectly. As discussed in length in this study, many inventors of fictional languages provide their audiences with interpretational aids or clues with which to decipher the meaning of the strange language presented. Alien is no exception, although there are considerably fewer strategies and aids provided, as exemplified for example by the complete absence of open subtitles — bar the one instance translating the line of dialogue produced by a spider — and the reduced number of other well-known strategies commonly present in a work of fiction. Instead of salient comprehension aids, the audience are offered cues in the dialogue and visual scenery, and they are invited to use their pre-existing knowledge of general concepts, such as travelling, and other relevant contextual information introduced in the show to form their interpretations. Employing such a suggestive method to allow the audience to form the interpretations themselves, leaves great space for error and uncertainty. This practice may on the one hand intrigue viewers by encouraging them to form their own visualisations of the universe depicted to further understand the intricate details of it, but on the other deter some, as the construction of such a visualisation may be deemed too laborious and not expected from a seemingly light-hearted animated comedy. To argue for the former notion, the show consists of detailed narrative structures with humane drama across the adventured universe, with themes of deception, devotion, and combatting social injustice, blended with immaculate humour and whimsical popular culture references. Therefore, whoever considers the show a “kind of funny cartoon” is right to dismiss the laborious process of fully interpreting all aspects of it.

The language variation in the show consists of both Alien, and seven natural languages all of which are presented in relatively small amounts, commonly as single words. The translation processes of natural languages are understandably different, as they actually exist and many viewers may either speak them to some extent or at the very least know some common terms in them, such as the Spanish word *loco* for *crazy*, or the Hebrew *l'khaim* for *cheers*, both appearing in the show. Natural languages likely seem easier to decipher for the sheer number of the instances, which was altogether ten, excluding the written forms of Arabic and Chinese. Alien appeared much frequently, and perhaps both its unknown nature and the prominence over the variation into other natural languages are further reasons for the apparent fluctuation in the level of difficulty in interpreting the two entities.

This area of research is not without its issues, most of which affect any study made in the discipline greatly. This study was affected by the shortage of specific methodology and for this reason I introduced a suggestion for a series of modifications to existing conventions to allow for the inclusion of artificial languages. As the conventions to study code-mixing events somewhat restricted the possibility to examine very short instances of language change, as they were often deemed insignificant in the research literature — which may well be the case with natural languages — I decided to extend the notions of narratively motivated indexical and situational mixing to include even the shortest mixes into Alien in this study. I termed these forms of code-mixing structural and contextual: the former describes the introduction of Alien vocabulary which appears irrelevant to the immediate situation and characters, yet is a clear change in language contributing to the conceptual and linguistic structure of the world of *Rick and Morty* and should therefore be included. This category is likely to introduce terms intended as structural linguistic fillers to reflect the universe and environment in which they occur, but without any narrative significance. Contextual code-mixing, in this study, concerns the occurrences of Alien vocabulary which relate to the characters or situational factors either present in the scene or relevant to the show in general. I consider the employment of these terms important in this study, as without I would have been forced to neglect many instances of code-mixing into Alien, simply for the short nature of the instances.

To consider the future of research in this area of study, I will begin with possible research topics regarding *Rick and Morty* and Alien and then move on to the field of research regarding invented languages in general. This present study has been a mere glimpse into the world and linguistic

reality of the universe of *Rick and Morty*, and there are countless topics that spring to mind when considering further research. Alien could be studied with a character-based approach; who speaks it with whom and to what extent; how much do they seem to know; and which planets and beings are depicted speaking or understanding Alien? Another possibility regarding Alien specifically would be to determine whether there is in fact more than one alien language spoken in the show and how many languages there are altogether in *Rick and Morty*, a study which could extend to examine the written forms of Alien in more detail and perhaps reach out to the creators for permission to collect and present visual evidence in the analysis. Finally, the narrative functions of Alien and their role in conversation could be studied in more detail to determine how exactly it affects its speakers and the show in general. A further, particularly interesting topic would be to examine the power distribution between English and Alien and to determine the active language policies in *Rick and Morty*.

To turn to the future of studying invented languages as a whole, there are several obstacles which must be overcome for researchers to effortlessly analyse and study fictional languages. The languages themselves are becoming increasingly popular and with the help of developed technology and the Internet they are easier to share among fans, who are generally the ones developing the languages further. For this reason, I argue the methodology will be developed too, for the high and constant demand and the fact that applying general language conventions is met with such disapproval by the academia. Cheyne's (2008) levels of communication conveyed by an invented language in a work of fiction has been one of the only new methods developed for this particular area of research in the recent years. For the halt in the development of more suitable research methodology, researchers must utilise and preferably modify the existing conventions of linguistics to suit their studies. In the present study, I adapted the conventions of the study of code-mixing to comply the nature of the present data for the lack of suitable methods. I argue that in the future of this area of study suggestions for modifications of existing conventions will likely be adopted from science fiction enthusiasts as well, as they are the ones providing the languages full sets of grammar and vocabularies and nothing suggests they could not help develop research methods. Of course, to remain academic the conventions must be approved by professional researchers, but since the enthusiasm towards fictional languages seems to stem from the audiences of the works in which they are featured, it might be reasonable to consider including them in the conversation. The specific area of linguistics concerning the communication of extra-terrestrial beings, xenolinguistics (see for example Slattery and Mathis 2006 for a discussion), does already

exist, though it is theoretical as we have yet to detect any form of communication from beings outside our planet. Xenolinguistics is therefore still a grey area, but one that has gained some recognition in the recent years. It was, for example, featured in the 2016 motion picture *Arrival*.

There is no language not worthy of an analysis of its inner workings, structures, its use, and its speakers and as this study has demonstrated, there are great many things to be discovered by examining a language which does not technically exist. The current state of the study of invented languages is problematic and without progress in the development of suitable methodology, I am afraid it will remain as such. However, not possessing the perfect methods of research does not mean research should not be conducted; as proven by this study and many others alike, it is simply a matter of adaptation. Alien as a language, or a web of different linguistic systems, provides an interesting glance into the fictitious world planned, scripted, and animated by humans and I look forward to encountering it in the future again. The fourth season of *Rick and Morty* is underway according to the creators and perhaps the intricacies and nature of the role of Alien will be revealed to us to a further extent in the seasons to come.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Alien words

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	EXAMPLE	SOURCE CHARACTER
S1 E1	14:20 (a)	glarp zone (a)	Travel station announcer (a, b, c) Alien traveller 1 (d) Alien traveller 2 (e)
	14:21 (b) (c)	flarping (b)	
	14:25 (c)	unglarping (c)	
	14:29 (d)	blimfarx (d)	
		flimflam (e)	
S1 E4	03:40	quintons	Zigerion leader
S1 E5	11:43 (a)	scarlog poppies (a)	Waitress at Thirsty Step (a, b, c, d) Slippery Stair (e)
	11:45 (b)	flurlow (b)	
	11:46 (c)	halzingers (c)	
	11:47 (d)	bloogies (d)	
	12:10 (e)	shmeckles (e)	
S1 E7	00:10 (a)	smidgens (a)	Rick
S1 E11	02:25 (a)	glip glops (a) (b) (c)	Summer (a)
	02:30 (b)	a floopy doop (d)	Rick (b, c)
	04:46 (c)	a shmoopy doop (e)	Alien party guest (d, e)
	04:56 (d) (e)	squanch-* (f)	Several (f)
	06:03* (f)	Wubba lubba dub dub (g)	*see section "Squanch" below
	18:18 (g)	Gabba nub nub doo rah kah (h)	Birdperson (g, h)
	19:00 (h)		
S2 E2	03:12 (a)	flerbos (a) (b)	Krombopulos Michael (a)
	22:31 (b)	chabos (c)	Commercial announcer (b, c, d)
	22:25 (c) (d)	flobos (d)	
S2 E3	16:46	blemflarcks	Blimblam the Korblok
S2 E5	06:01 (a)	schwifty (a)	Rick (a)
	16:20 (b,c)	ming mong (b)	Announcer (b, c)
		gorbdork (c)	
S2 E8	15:02 → (all)	bobbish rapples plumbus dinglepop schleem grumbo fleeb fleeb juice schlami	Commercial announcer (all)

		hizards blamfs chumbles ploobis	
S2 E10	02:13	squanch-	Squanchy
S3 E5	13:20 (a)	gibble snake (a)	Rick (a, b)
	13:21 (b)	smooglite runner (b)	Jerry (c)
	16:27 (c)	sweet smiggle honey cookies (c)	Risotto Groupon (d)
	18:36 (d)	ouf (d)	
S3 E6	01:05 (a)	cetons (a)	Rick (a)
	05:36 → (b, c)	terrifold (b) terriflap (c)	Singer on radio (b, c)
S3 E7	11:25 (a)	squabsquams (a)	Junkie Rick
	11:26 (b)	nib nibs (b)	
S3 E9	03:42 (a)	Ooloo (a)	Kiara (a)
	03:53 (b)	Chaimuntolo (b)	Morty (b)
	22:32 (c)	gorgon shit (c)	Trandor (c)

Appendix 2 Variations of Rick's catchphrases

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	INSTANCE	SOURCE
S1 E5	19:59 (a)	Wubba lubba dub dubs (a)	Rick
	20:05 (b)	Wubba goppa lop bops (b)	
S1 E7	03:04	Wubba lubba lub dub	Rick
S1 E9	10:31	Wubba lubba lub dub	Rick
S1 E10	21:42	Wubba dubba dub dub	Rick
S1 E11	14:34	Wubba lubba dub dub	Rick
S2 E4	13:16 (a)	Wubba lubba lub dub (a)	Rick
	13:17 (b)	Rikki Tikki Tavi beyotch (b)	
	13:29 (c)	Shum shum shlippedy dop (c)	
S2 E7	07:26	Luppy luppy loop do	(Tiny) Rick

Appendix 3 Examples of *squanch* as a morpheme

SEASON EPISODE	TIME	INSTANCE	WORD CLASS, FUNCTION
S1 E11	06:03→	Squanchy: Hey Rick! Squanchy (1) party, yo. Rick: Aw, Squanchy (2)! Squanchy: Is there a good place for me to squanch (3) around here? Rick: Squanchy (4), you can squanch (5) wherever you want, man.	(1) adjective (2) proper noun (3) verb (4) proper noun (5) verb
S1 E11	17:38→	Squanchy: Hey squanchers (6), the party's squanchin' (7) on at my place! Summer: Cool, I'm coming too. Squanchy: Ah, no. You're not squanchy (8) enough for a squanchy (9) party	(6) noun (7) verb (8) adjective (9) adjective
S2 E10	02:19	Squanchy: And you must be Beth. Ensquanché (10).	(10) Greeting