

Annette Sabban

## The representation of the foreign

### Formulaic expression of cultural and linguistic difference in film and literature – and its translation

#### Abstract

The paper analyses some of the ways in which foreigners' speech is represented in film or literary dialogue, focussing on the use of *pragmatic*, or *communicative*, *formulae*. Examples are taken from the French film comedy *Les femmes du 6e étage*, which is set in the Paris of the 1960s when many Spanish migrant women went to Paris to work as housemaids. Examples of literary dialogue are taken from a novel by Matt Beynon Rees (2009) depicting Arab speakers through an imitation of formulaic speech in the work's basic language, which is English. The second question addressed is that of translating those elements which in the work itself belong to or indicate a different language and culture, using the same corpus. The focus is on the audiovisual translation of the French film into German, comparing the dubbed dialogue to the subtitling.

## 1 Introduction

In this paper,<sup>1</sup> I would like to identify and illustrate

- some techniques of the *representation of foreigners' speech*, mainly in film (and very briefly: in literature), and
- some techniques of dealing with foreigners' speech in *translation*.

Obviously, there are some major differences between film and literature as to the possibilities and modes of representing *speech*, due to the different channels and codes involved:

- *in a film*, characters are typically heard and seen, their voices and the entire person are present on the screen; in other words, both the audio and the visual channels

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: Annette Sabban passed away before finalizing this paper. An obituary is published in this issue of **trans-kom**. – Annette Sabban had planned to publish this paper in **trans-kom**. A first, shorter version was presented at the international symposium *Migrant Literature and Translation* at Aix-Marseille University in April 2014 and a second version at the *Europhras* conference at Sorbonne University in Paris in September 2014. The manuscript was prepared and cautiously brought into its present shape by the author's husband, Professor Wolfgang Christian Schneider, and Dr Sylvia Jaki.

can be exploited, with the verbal text being only one ingredient *interacting* with other semiotic modes;

- *in literature*, on the other hand, voice quality as well as facial expression et cetera are absent, and may only be *described* in the narrative; as to spoken *language*, literature has developed different ways of representing select features *in the written mode*, including dialects, sociolects and ... **foreigners' speech**.

For time reasons, I will mainly focus on *film* and *audiovisual translation*, that is, subtitling and dubbing. I will only occasionally make comparisons with literature and literary translation.

### 1.1 “Foreigners’ speech”

By *foreigners' speech*, I understand the language used by foreigners themselves, or rather, in our case, by foreign *characters*. The natural “place” for this is in the dialogues.

Basically, there are 2 ways in which *foreigners' speech* may appear in a *film*:

- (1) Firstly, characters may actually use their *native language* (= **L1**). The dialogue may then be subtitled, which allows the foreign language to remain present acoustically.
- (2) Secondly, characters may use a language *other* than their native language, which to them is an *acquired* language (= **L2**). This may occur, for example, when migrant workers interact with speakers of the host culture, using L2. In this case, characters may be presented as speaking the language with varying degrees of “imperfection”, or marks of foreignness. It is this mode of speaking which is sometimes referred to as a *xenlect*.
- (3) There may also be instances of “code-mixing” between L1 and L2.

I prefer the term **foreigners' speech** as the broader term, since it includes the use of the foreigners' native language. A different case, concerning the way of representation, is possible in literature: the representation or rather, suggestion of foreignness through another language, e. g. a novel's basic language, cf. the novel by Matt Beynon Rees, and correspondingly in the translated version. The term **xenlect**, strictly speaking, refers only to the speech which is *marked as foreign from the point of view of a dominant language*; by analogy with *dia-lect* and *socio-lect*, it is considered a *sort of variety*, characterised by features (2) and (3).

### 1.2 The representation of foreigners' speech

With regard to multilingual films, i. e. films in which foreign characters are present, it has been noted that “foreign languages are often recast into English” (spoken dialogue) (Hodson 2014: 62). According to Kozloff (2000: 81), this is the most prevalent tactic. It has also been noted that the – resulting – speech will typically be “spiced with some of the accent and idioms of the original language [the character's mother tongue] to

foreground the fact that the characters are foreign”,<sup>2</sup> which can be considered a type of “self dubbing” (Kozloff 2000: 81).

The representation of foreigners’ speech in a film (or in a work of literature) – must thus not be identified with “real life” speech. For the process of representation always involves imitation and stylisation, or stereotyping. Stereotyping, in turn, involves a *selection* of features, in particular of those with a high “**indexical quality**”, that is, features which are *considered* typical of foreigners’ way of speaking and may therefore be used as effective signals of otherness.

### 1.3 “Pragmatic formulae”: indexicality, intersemiotic properties

For the purpose of this paper I will focus on just one type of linguistic phenomena, that is, pragmatic formulae, and this for two reasons:

Firstly, due to their very nature, pragmatic formulae in themselves have a high degree of indexicality<sup>3</sup> and thus may be used as effective signals of foreignness. They are ready-made chunks of speech which serve to carry out a number of communicative routines and standard “tasks”, characteristic of a linguistic and cultural community (cf. Lüger 2007: 445). They include

(1) *routine formulae* in the narrower sense, which serve to perform speech acts, such as expressing an excuse and reacting to it:<sup>4</sup>

– *Pardon. – Il n’y a pas de quoi.*

or consoling someone:

– *Ne vous en faites pas!* (English ‘Don’t worry’; German ‘Kopf hoch’, ‘Machen Sie sich nichts draus’).

They also include

(2) formulae relating to the *expressive* or *emotive* functions of language, as defined by Karl Bühler; these serve to “make public” the speaker’s “inner state”, and this may also take the form of a comment or a value judgement. An example from the data is the French

– *Je t’en ficherais!* – “... s’emploie, accompagné de la reprise des paroles de l’interlocuteur pour montrer qu’on n’est pas d’accord avec ses propos” (Trésor de la Langue Française)

Another reason for focussing on formulae is that their “meaning” can often be supported or made visible on-screen, through the acting (body movement, facial expression, or gestures). These *intersemiotic properties* may enter into considerations of their audio-

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<sup>2</sup> *Idioms* here is most probably to be understood in a very broad sense, *including* that which I refer to as pragmatic formulae; idioms generally are part of prefabricated speech. It is unclear whether idioms remain in the original form or whether they are translated by the characters themselves (calque).

<sup>3</sup> By some authors termed “culture-specific(ity)”.

<sup>4</sup> Similarly: ways of thanking: – *Merci beaucoup. – De rien. // – Thank you. – Don’t mention it.*

visual translation. Because of their routine character, i. e. speakers resort to them automatically, formulae are readily available to the speaker and may easily be transferred into an L2- language, or even used in the L1-form. Some are also internationally known to speakers of another language. They constitute sources of interference when a person uses a language other than their native language, i. e. an L2. Due to their characteristic wording, they are liable to stand out, to be “noticeable”, if they “deviate” in some way from another culture’s/the host culture’s routines. This may occur if a) a foreign speaker uses a foreign formula, b) he words it differently in the language he uses, transferring native habits, c) he applies them in a peculiar way, or d) he transfers formula from his native language which are not used in the host culture at all. For the same reasons, any deviance from linguistic routines of a particular language is highly noticeable, it is perceptually salient – and may be employed for signalling foreignness.

## 2 Formulae in *Les femmes du 6<sup>e</sup> étage* (2011): Representational techniques and AV translation

### 2.1 Data: The film

I would now like to illustrate a number of representational techniques with regard to foreign formulae, taking one particular multilingual film as an example. The film is a French comedy directed by Philippe Le Guay, released in 2011: *Les Femmes du 6<sup>e</sup> étage*. It is set in the Paris of the 1960s when many Spanish migrant women came to Paris to work as housemaids.

### 2.2 Points to consider

With regard to formulae, I will consider

- the language (in this case: Spanish or French);
- the *functions* and the *exact wording* of the formula, if relevant; the wording may indeed be significant and have a particular function in the *texture* of the film;
- the way the verbal interacts with the non-verbal to signal the meaning of the formula.

In a second step, I will consider the *audiovisual translation* of the formulae:

- I will look at how formulae in L1 (in this case: Spanish) are treated in the *original* film, i. e. whether they are subtitled or not [= *AV translation within the original*];
- I will look at how the formulae are “dealt with” in the audiovisual translation into *another language* (this I will refer to as the *target language*, in this case German), i. e. I will look at the *subtitling* (in German, occasionally in English) and *dubbing* into German. The title of the dubbed version is *Nur für Personal!* ‘Staff only’.

Language choice in the film is rather complicated, and it does not seem to be systematic:

- Spanish characters speak *French*, the language of their host country (L2), and with varying degrees of fluency, sometimes interspersed with Spanish words and

expressions, or formulae. Sometimes they “burst into Spanish”, even when speaking to a Frenchman. This may occur, quite realistically, in emotionally charged situations.

- They use *Spanish*, as one might expect, when speaking among themselves.
- But they also speak *French* among *themselves*. This is improbable if we were to apply criteria of verisimilitude. It may be a concession to the French-speaking audience and their comprehensibility (= off-screen function).<sup>5</sup>

### 2.3 Techniques

Generally, there seem to be three major techniques for creating foreignness in film through the use of formulae:

- (A) formula in L1 as a conversational turn – or part of an exchange in L1
- (B) incorporation of a formula in L1 as part of an exchange in L2
- (C) literal transposition of an L1 formula into L2 (by the characters themselves)

The first two techniques are also characteristic of *Les femmes du 6<sup>e</sup> étage* and will be illustrated in the following paragraphs. (C), however, word-for-word translation of an L1 formula into L2 *by the characters themselves*, is absent from the film, but has to be assumed to be a further representational technique.<sup>6</sup>

#### (A) Formula in L1 as a conversational turn – or part of an exchange in L1

The first technique consists of using a Spanish formula, which may either be a conversational turn “on its own” or part of an exchange in Spanish (L1). In these cases, we have a strong visual support to disambiguate the situation. As a consequence, such foreign-language formulae are not always subtitled. An example occurs shortly after the beginning of the film: María – one of the 2 protagonists – has just arrived from Spain. Her Spanish aunt, Concepción, had met her at the bus-stop. When entering the house, there is, at first, a brief exchange *in French* with the concierge, who forbids them (in spite of their heavy suitcases) to use the lift to the 6th floor, pointing out that the lift is “pour les patrons” ‘for the master and mistress’. This incident is important for “setting the scene” with regard to the attitude towards the Spanish housemaids in general. Concepción then turns to her niece María and says the following, in Spanish:

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<sup>5</sup> For the distinction onscreen – offscreen, see e. g. Hodson (2014).

(1) *onscreen* concerns the interaction between the characters, and more generally, *within* the work; the choice of a particular formula may be “consonant” with other parts of the work; see also, on the “horizontal level” (Remael 2002/2004: 107, referring to Vanoye 1985: 116).

(2) *offscreen* concerns the interaction with the audience: = vertical level (Remael 2002/2004: 107, referring to Vanoye 1985: 116). This may mean, for example, considering the comprehensibility on the part of the audience; and this, again, may be influenced by the specific languages involved.

<sup>6</sup> Note that word-for-word translation did occur, but only as a *translational* technique of the film into a target language, adopting a foreignising strategy (example: German ‘Sie sind ein Heiliger’, ‘You’re a saint’).

(1a) Concepción, addressing María (in-group interaction):<sup>7</sup>

French original

<p>Vamos, hija.  “L’ascenseur (c’)est pour les patrons”  <i>(quoting the concierge in French)</i>  ?? + comment in L1, marking disapproval</p>	
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Switching into Spanish here has a structuring function (when thinking of different functions of a film dialogue): it serves to underline the distinct interaction situations. This is also communicated on the visual level, by the body movement (with Concepción turning towards María). Concepción’s reaction to the unfriendly words of the concierge – though incomprehensible for all viewers who do not have a good command of Spanish – can be gathered from her facial expression and body posture. The meaning of the audible words, then, is “reduplicated” on the visual level.

The incomprehensible bit still contributes to the foreign *sound*, which in other scenes, involving *groups* of speakers, may develop into a real foreign “soundscape” (by definition, these are the “environmental sounds created by [...] human activities, *including conversation*” – Asmervik 2014: 23, our italics). This possibility is exclusive to audio media.

In literature, sounds of foreign voices may be *described* verbally in the narrative, but they are not actually present. An example can be found in Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (cf. Tadié 2006). Let us now turn to the translation of the Spanish elements in the original (subtitling) and the German dubbed version:

(1b) Concepción, addressing María:

French original

German dubbing

<p>Vamos, hija.  Allons-y. <i>(subtitle)</i>    “(…) est pour les patrons”  <i>(quoting the concierge in French)</i>  ?? + comment in L1, marking disapproval  Je t’en ficherais, moi. <i>(subtitle)</i></p>	<p>Vamos, hija.  ---    “(…) ist für die Herrschaften”  <i>(quoting the concierge in German)</i>  ?? + comment in German, marking disapproval</p>
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In the French original, the Spanish words are subtitled with two formulae. The second subtitle has probably been translated from the written film script.<sup>8</sup>

In the German dubbed version, the Spanish *Vamos, hija* has been left in Spanish and is not subtitled. The incomprehensible passage is equally incomprehensible in

<sup>7</sup> The colours mark the functions of the passages.

<sup>8</sup> German subtitles of the French version: *Komm*. (repeating the French words +) *Wär ja noch schöner*.

German – relying on the non-verbal elements to communicate the message – a very special case of “equivalence”.

### (B) Incorporation of a formula in L1 as part of an exchange in L2

A second technique consists of incorporating a foreign formula (L1) into an exchange in L2.<sup>9</sup> This can be illustrated with a scene where a French maid from Brittany has just been fired. She is crying, and the Spanish housemaids are trying to console her. The exchange starts with a Spanish formula, and then continues in French:

(2a) Concepción, addressing French bonne (interaction with out-group):

French original

Anda, mujer!

Il faut pas être triste!  
Les patrons, on les oublie vite.  
Demain, vous allez retrouver une autre  
famille.

The formula means something like: ‘Come on...’. In this case, there is *no visual* support of the meaning of the formula. However, there is *verbal* support in the immediate context – and in another language – because the French *Il faut pas être triste* has a similar overall function in this particular dialogue. The meaning of the formula, then, is repeated on the *verbal* level, but in a different language, i. e. in L2, the *language of the audience*. The Spanish *Anda, mujer* in itself is not essential to the meaning; its major function is to signal foreignness.

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<sup>9</sup> This corresponds to that which Sternberg with regard to literary texts, calls “selective reproduction”, or direct incorporation, or quotation: “[an] intermittent quotation of the original heterolingual discourse as uttered by the speaker(s), or in literature, as supposed to have been uttered by the fictive speaker(s).” (Sternberg 1981: 225). He gives examples of expressive interjections such as *Parbleu!* or *Damn!*

As to the translation, the technique is similar to that of example (1):

(2b) Concepción:

French original	German dubbing
<p><b>Anda, mujer!</b>  Vous en faites pas. (<i>subtitle</i>)</p> <p>Il faut pas être triste!  Les patrons, on les oublie vite.  Demain, vous allez retrouver une autre  famille.</p>	<p><b>Anda, mujer!</b>  ---</p> <p>Nicht traurig sein!  Die Herrschaften vergisst man schnell.  Morgen finden Sie eine andere Familie.</p>

The French original – again – opts for subtitling the formula by a formula, imitating spoken language by the omission of the particle *ne*. In the German dubbed version, the Spanish formula is not translated, as in example (1); it is incorporated as a foreign element into the German exchange (which is the target language).<sup>10</sup>

The following example is more complex and interesting in several regards.

There is a whole *series* of formulae in L1, with some code-mixing, in an exchange between the Spanish maid Dolores and the Frenchman Monsieur Joubert, who does not speak Spanish. The scene takes place in M. Joubert’s luxurious bourgeois apartment. M. Joubert had let Dolores use his phone to call home to find out about her sister and her newly born baby. After putting down the receiver, Dolores is overwhelmed with joy and repeatedly thanks M. Joubert.

(3a) Dolores, addressing M. Joubert:

French original	
<p>Es una niña bendita!  Merci, Monsieur Joubert!  Merci, merci, merci.  <b>Es Vd. un santo!</b>  <b>Qué alegría, qué alegría!</b>  <b>Es Vd. un santo!</b>  Merci, Monsieur Jean-Louis.  <b>Muchísimas gracias!</b>  <b>Dios le bendiga!</b></p>	

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, there is verbal support only for a Spanish formula in the beginning of the film, where the Spanish housemaids introduce themselves to advertise their services, in “imperfect” French, including “code-mixing”, directed at the spectator, the main function being to introduce some of the characters as well as to characterise them (enthusiasm, liveliness). One of the “girls” praises her skills at cooking a particular dish in French and Spanish:  
(name of a dish). *Très bien. Muy rico. – Muy rico* is more specific than *très bien*; it is a typical formula used for commenting on (good) food (‘very tasty’, ‘delicious’). *Très bien* is very basic and a *partout* expression; it marks the beginner’s level of competence in French.

The entire exchange is made up almost exclusively of formulae, most of them in Spanish. There is both visual and verbal support: the meaning is communicated by the acting; French *Merci* is a near-synonym of *Muchísimas gracias!* In addition, this Spanish formula is probably “internationally known” and understood by most of the audience.

The function of the scene is *characterisation* in several regards:

- (1) It marks the emotional temperament of Dolores, her concern for the family and her warm-heartedness,<sup>11</sup> which are also typical of the Spanish maids generally. The sharp contrast to the sterility and stiffness of bourgeois life is a major element of the plot – and at times a source of humour.
- (2) The use of the very basic formula *Merci* is indicative of Dolores’s – rather limited – competence in French, and this is consistent with the rest of the film.
- (3) Two of the Spanish formulae have a religious base. In spite of the fact that the components of a formula do not have their full meaning, the wording, in this case, is important. *Es Vd. un santo!* literally means: ‘You’re a saint’, which is, actually, a formula in English, too, expressing gratitude and high esteem (i. e. a full equivalent). *Dios le bendiga* corresponds to ‘May God bless you’. Both formulae are old-fashioned in present-day Spain, but were certainly more common in the 1960s, which is when the film is set. Their use by Dolores is indicative of her pious character; in fact, all Spanish maids are represented as particularly pious: they go to church every Sunday (= “texture” of the film).

When it comes to translation, one of the formula is particularly interesting, and that is the expressive formula *Es Vd. un santo*.

(3b) Dolores, addressing M. Joubert:

French original	German dubbing
Es una niña bendita!	Es ist ein Mädchen!
Merci, Monsieur Joubert!	Vielen Dank, Monsieur Joubert!
Merci, merci, merci.	Danke, vielen Dank! Danke!
<b>Es Vd. un santo!</b>	<b>Sie sind ein Heiliger!</b>
<i>Vous êtes un saint!</i> (subtitle)	
<b>Qué alegría, qué alegría!</b>	Ich freu mich so. Ich freu mich so.
<b>Es Vd. un santo!</b>	<b>Ein Heiliger!</b>
Merci, Monsieur Jean-Louis.	Danke, Monsieur Jean-Louis.
<b>Muchísimas gracias!</b>	<b>Muchísimas gracias!</b>
<b>Dios le bendiga!</b>	Gott segne Sie!

First of all, in the French original, this is the *only* formula that is subtitled in the entire exchange; all the others are left untranslated. *Vous êtes un saint* is possibly a formula in French too, but the conditions of use seem to be slightly different. I have found instances

<sup>11</sup> An alternative interpretation is that the scene highlights her highly emotional and lively character.

in literature that have a non-literal meaning, expressing admiration, but not at the same time expressing gratitude. What is important is that the formulation is not particularly conspicuous in French; it is not a signal of foreignness.<sup>12</sup>

The German dubbing exhibits a different translation technique.<sup>13</sup> Most of the passage is translated into German, the only exception being *muchísimas gracias*, which remains in Spanish. This is another instance of technique A, direct incorporation of an L1 formula, this time into the target language.

As to the formula *Es Vd. un santo*, it is translated literally by *Sie sind ein Heiliger*. Unlike in German, the formula stands out as in the French original, it is “salient/prominent” because it is in Spanish; this is the way of marking difference/foreignness in the original; due to the similarity of the Romance languages, the foreign formula may be relatively easy to understand. In German, however, retaining the original Spanish would probably work less well as it will be understood most probably less well or not at all by the German audience unless they know enough Spanish; but by translating it literally, applying another technique, it is also *made* prominent, because the resulting wording is “unidiomatic” in German: *Sie sind ein Heiliger* is not an expressive formula in German, and this is clearly brought out by corpus research.<sup>14</sup> In respecting the exact wording of the Spanish formula, the translator has followed the principle of “foreignization” (Venuti 1995) – or rather: rendering, conserving foreignness in translation. But in spite of the wording being unfamiliar in German, the communicative function is still perfectly comprehensible from the context – all the more so since there does exist a formula from the religious domain in German with a similar communicative function, which is: *Sie sind ein Engel/du bist ein Engel!* (literally: ‘You’re an angel’). If the translator had used *this* formula, he would have followed the opposing principle of “domestication”, i. e. adapting the translation to linguistic habits of the target audience, but disregarding the exact wording. However, it seems to me that *Sie sind ein Engel* is mainly used when addressing women, which is somewhat confirmed by the corpus examples, see footnote 14.

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<sup>12</sup> ... as is the English *You’re a saint*, which is as well old-fashioned, a perfect match from a literal and stylistic point of view.

<sup>13</sup> German subtitle: *Sie sind ein Heiliger*.

<sup>14</sup> There is not a single occurrence (in the COSMAS corpus, Institute of the German language) of *Sie sind ein(e) Heiliger/du bist ein(e) Heilige(r)*, etc., i. e. in directly addressing the interlocutor. Most occurrences are in the third person: *He* (much less frequently: *She*) *is a saint*, and with a literal meaning: ‘He is a saint of the Catholic church’, etc. – On the other hand, there are 19 occurrences each (totalling 38) for: *Du bist ein Engel/Sie sind ein Engel* in the same corpus (searched on 19 May 2014). One of the newspaper corpus passages contains an explanation: “Du bist ein Engel!” – Das sagen wir zu Menschen, die im richtigen Moment da sind und das Richtige tun. Jeder hat solche Erlebnisse gehabt: Die Straßenbahn ist mir vor der Nase weggefahren, damit verpasse ich meinen Zug. Da kommt Frau X mit dem Auto vorbei, hält und fragt, ob sie mich mitnehmen kann. “Sie sind ein Engel”, seufze ich erleichtert und bin sicher: Es war kein Zufall, dass die Retterin just hier vorbeigefahren ist. Viel dramatischer sind oft die Situationen, in denen wir sagen: Da habe ich aber einen Schutzengel gehabt! Wenn wir knapp einem Unglück entgehen oder im letzten Moment davor bewahrt werden, eine Dummheit zu begehen. (M02/SEP.72782 Mannheimer Morgen, 28 September 2002; s. v. *Engel*.)

The unfamiliar wording stands out in German: it is a signal of foreignness. The audience can feel that the wording in the target language reflects a foreign way of speaking, and highlights the cultural values underlying it, in this case the pious character of the Spanish maids.

From the point of view of the target language, this expression may also be considered a xenolectal element: the character seems to be translating an expression literally, although in the original, Dolores speaks her own language, Spanish.

Excursus: Beyond the use and translation of formulae

Use of L1 in the original/source text, rendered by ‘foreigner talk’ in the target language  
A kind of “expansion” of the technique just observed – and going beyond the translation of formulae – can be found in the rendering of longer passages in Spanish in the target language with the intention to signal foreignness. The technique consists of using creatively made up “foreigner talk” in the target language. Thus, there may be a longer passage in Spanish in the original film, subtitled in French, and this passage is then dubbed into German by a stretch of “foreigner talk” (or “learner’s German”).

The difference, then, is the following: in the original, for the duration of a scene, the character is presented as a fluent speaker of his own native tongue. This is obvious acoustically, even if one does not understand the words. In the dubbed version, however, the character is presented as an imperfect speaker of the host language only. From the dubbed version, one cannot conclude whether the character spoke Spanish or “imperfect French”. This may be seen as a negative corollary of dubbing, with the effect of distorting the impression of the character. This effect might be compensated for by the overall knowledge, or assumption, on the part of the audience that “learner’s/imperfect German” is *meant* to render foreign L1 speech, generally. This is still difficult for the audience to maintain because of the acoustic presence of the voice.

(4) M. Joubert, la concierge, and Dolores:

French original	German dubbing
<p><i>M. Joubert:</i> Pardon. (Est-ce que je peux savoir) ce qui se passe? <i>Mme Triboulet, concierge:</i> M. Joubert, elle m'accuse que je lui pêche son courrier. <i>Dolores:</i> M. Joubert, <b>es que</b> ma soeur, elle a accouché. Et Madame Triboulet, elle donne pas la lettre <b>a nosotras</b>. Alors moi je ne sais pas <b>cómo está el bebé</b> et si elle va bien. <b>Y además yo estoy muy preocupada</b> porque mi hermana me juró que me iba a escribir cada semana y mi hermana aún se muera me escribe. <b>(Es) verdad! Es que no sé que hacer.</b></p>	<p><i>M. Joubert:</i> Verzeihung. Darf ich erfahren, was passiert ist? <i>Mme Triboulet, concierge:</i> Monsieur Joubert, sie denkt, ich klau ihre Post! <i>Dolores:</i> Monsieur Joubert, meine Schwester hat Kind gekriegt. Und Madame Triboulet, sie gibt Briefe nicht <b>an nosotras</b>. Und ich weiß jetzt nicht, wie geht es bébé. Ob es bébé gut geht. Ich mache mir große Sorge. Schwester hat versprochen, mir jede Woche zu schreiben. Habe aber nicht(s?) Briefe bekommen. Auch wenn meine Schwester tot ist, dann schreibt sie mir. Das ist Wahrheit. Was soll ich nur machen?</p>

The German passage is spoken very rapidly, corresponding to the speed of the Spanish original. The overall impression is that of a very fluent speaker, in spite of typical learner's errors.

### 3 Representation of foreign speech in written contexts

What looks like the same technique, literal transposition, may also be used as a technique for *representing*, or rather *suggesting*, foreignness *in a written work*, in and through the work's basic language. It is at this point that I would like to briefly turn to the novel and mention a technique which seems to be restricted to written contexts. It seems to be the same technique, but the media are different: a novel is purely visual, using the written code only. Following Sternberg (1981: 227),<sup>15</sup> I refer to it as "verbal transposition".

#### (D) Verbal transposition, *suggesting* foreign speech in a written work's basic language

I would like to give only one example, the novel *The Samaritan's Secret* by Matt Beynon Rees (2009), translated by Klaus Modick in 2010 (*Der Tote von Nablus*).

<sup>15</sup> According to Sternberg, "it [the technique of verbal transposition] suggests polylingual or heterolingual speech in and through an ostensibly unilingual medium rather than directly incorporates [sic] such speech into an openly mixed framework." (Sternberg 1981: 227)

The novel is written in one language only, English. It is set in Palestine, and the wording in some dialogues *suggests* that the characters actually speak a different language, Arabic. That other language is not present and not named explicitly.

With regard to pragmatic formulae – which are the focus of this paper –, this means two things: (1) The English wording of a formula “looks foreign”; it contrasts with the usual, “idiomatic” wording of a corresponding formula in English (more generally, in the basic language of the work). (2) Formulaic expressions are used in situations which are not normally handled by formulae in English. These expressions acquire the status of formulae by recurrent use within the microcosm of the literary work, reflecting a particular usage in the suggested foreign language.

In this case, the *author himself acts as a kind of translator*. Unlike in the case of translation, there does not exist a particular source text. The author must be assumed to have selected some expressions from the foreign language and transposed them into English. If they do not know the language, they transpose into English what they *think* is a typical way of speaking in the foreign language. Obviously, this is moving towards a *projection* of linguistic features, imagining them and ascribing them to the characters in the fictitious world of the novel. And it would be interesting to find out whether the basis of these projections are other literary works or the media.<sup>16</sup>

The first example (type 2) occurs in the following type of situation: Every time someone mentions that a person has died, there is a routine formula (expressing a wish) such as (5), even if the person uttering it is not immediately concerned by that person’s death.

(5)

“Allah will be <i>merciful</i> upon the <i>deceased</i> one”, Liana murmured. “May Allah preserve you”, Omar Yussef said. (p. 105)	“Allah wird dem <i>Verstorbenen gnädig sein</i> ”, flüsterte Liana. “Möge Allah Sie beschützen”, sagte Omar Jussuf. (p. 120)
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The ritual character of the formula is underlined by the choice of words: Engl. *merciful* as well as *the deceased* (in place of *the dead*) evoke a religious and a more formal context. The novel has been translated into German, and formulae of this kind again are mostly translated literally. That means that the German translation uses analogous means thus preserving one of the functions of the original text, which is to point to the Arabic context. These analogous means evoke religious discourse, such as *gnädig sein* (lexical level) as well as of the subjunctive mood of the modal verb *mögen*. The translation also conveys what are *presumably* typical means of expression in that language.

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<sup>16</sup> In her bachelor thesis on a German “ethnolect” (Kanaksprache), Liese (2013: 20) relates a distinction made by Auer (2002: 261): The tertiary ethnolect is conveyed by the media and is (also) used by other speakers who are not members of the ‘scene’.

The second example is a formula which is used to welcome a visitor at one's home.

(6)

"You're most welcome here, <i>ustaz</i> ", <sup>17</sup> she said to Omar Yussef. " <i>Consider it as your home and as if you were among your family.</i> " (p. 103)	"Sie sind hier höchst willkommen, Ustas", sagte sie zu Omar Jussuf. " <i>Fühlen Sie sich wie zu Hause.</i> " (p. 118)
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Again, the author seems to transpose the Arabic wording. The explicit comparison with the family (*as if you were among your family*) is indicative of this as there is more importance attached to the family in Arabic cultures.

The author does not use the English formula which may be used in similar situations: *Make yourself at home*. The German translation, in this case, proceeds as if the author had used precisely this English formula, *Make yourself at home*, substituting the functionally equivalent German formula, *Fühlen Sie sich wie zu Hause*, thereby *not* transferring the foreignness.

The translation is of the "domesticating" type, adapting the expression to German conventional usage. Thereby, the translation ignores the cultural markedness of the original wording and its suggestive qualities.

#### 4 By way of conclusion

The examples from the *novel* as well as the religiously based Spanish formula in the film are examples in which the precise wording, the *form of the expression*, gains significance in the text and contributes to its meaning. The form of the expression is therefore important to the translation of such works – if one wants to convey not only the referential aspects or the overall functions of speech acts, but also some of the *texture* of the source text and some ingredients of a different culture.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ustaz* is a frequent form of address in the source text which is not translated. In the target text only the spelling is changed: *Ustas*.

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