

## Translation of Terms of Address from English into Persian: Strategies in Focus

Bahareh Lotfollahi

*M.A. student of translation studies Department of English,  
Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Iran*

Azizollah Dabbaghi

*Ph.D. in applied linguistics Department of English,  
Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Iran*

Doi: 10.5901/mjss.2012.v3n3p329

---

**Abstract** This paper investigates the kind of translation strategies and procedures used by translators in the translation of terms of address from English into Persian in three short stories, "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence, "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner, and "A Little Cloud" by James Joyce. The comparison of terms of address with their translation showed that there is a difference between the system of terms of address in English and Persian. In order to show the kind of relations exist between interlocutors in a more precise manner, translators should avoid a literal translation and pay more attention to cultural elements involved in the target language.

**Keywords:** Terms of Address, Persian, Translation, Strategies.

---

### 1. Introduction

Terms of address are "words and phrases used for addressing" (Braun, 1988, p. 7). They show the kind of relations exist between addresser and addressee. These are culture specific elements which worth being studied cross-culturally. "Terms of address constitute an important part of verbal behavior through which, the behavior, norms and practices of a society can be identified" (Afful, 2006a).

As Daher (1984, p. 144) mentions "terms of address are the best example of the interaction between language and society and the more we understand them, the more we understand language". Different languages use different systems of terms of address, therefore; translation of them has caused difficulties for translators. The translator should be aware of such differences between the two languages involved in order to show the kind of relationship exist between interlocutors as precisely as possible.

Terms of address have been studied from different viewpoints. Also, translation of terms of address has been the focus of attention by many researchers. In one study Shehab (2005) investigated the problems exist in the translation of terms of address between Arabic and English. In order to do so, she studied difficult honorifics in a novel. Her study showed that relational terms of address are more difficult to translate than absolute ones.

In another study Methven (2006) discussed the translation of terms of address in Chinese and English. His study showed that there is a huge lexical gap between Chinese family terms of address and honorifics in translating into English. He mentions it is because of the additional number of family address terms in Chinese that the translator is forced to use more general hyponyms in English when translating from Chinese into this language.

Translation of Vietnamese terms of address into English was also studied by Ngo (2006) who found two kinds of strategies and procedures: source language-oriented and target language-oriented. She showed that the frequent use of target language-oriented strategies has lead to a loss of socio-cultural and pragmatic implications of Vietnamese terms of address.

Address terms in Persian have been studied too. In one study conducted by Aliakbari and Toni (2008) ten categories for address terms were proposed which are used in present study too. They include: "personal names, titles, religious-oriented terms, occupation-bound terms, kinship or family/relative terms, honorifics and terms of formality, terms of intimacy, personal pronouns, descriptive phrases, and zero address terms" (p.6). They suggested that "the abundance and frequency of the application of honorifics in Persian language reveal the importance of courtesy in this language" (p. 11). They also showed that family relations are strong in Persian and this is important in using kinship terms for non-relatives.

And finally, Afzali (2011) investigated different terms of address spouses use in different social strata in Iran. Her findings showed that power and solidarity play an important role in the way spouses address each other in upper-middle, middle and lower-middle classes in Iran.

Although many have investigated the translation of address terms in different languages, the translation of address terms from English into Persian has received little attention. Therefore, the present study attempts to investigate the kind of strategies and procedures used by Persian translators to translate terms of address from English into Persian.

In order to analyze the strategies and procedures used, models present in descriptive translation studies are used as the theoretical framework of the study. One of such models is proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet who identified different translation 'procedures', (Munday, 2001, p. 56-58).

Each of these procedures is explained below.

**Borrowing:** It happens when the source language word is transferred directly to the target language.

**Calque:** It is "a special kind of borrowing" where the source language expression or structure is transferred literally.

**Literal translation:** It is "word-for-word" translation and is common between languages of the same family and culture.

**Transposition:** It happens when one part of speech changes for another without changing the sense.

**Modulation:** It changes the point of view and semantics of the source language.

**Equivalence:** This is used when "languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means" especially in translating proverbs and idioms.

**Adaptation:** Where a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture, adaptation happens by changing the cultural reference.

Other translation procedures which are used are that of Newmark. Some of them which are related to the present study are mentioned here (Newmark, 1988, p. 75-77).

**Transcription** (adoption, transfer, 'loan-words')

**Literal translation:** A 'coincidental' procedure when the SL term is transparent and semantically motivated and is in standardized language.

**Through-translation** ('loan-translation', calque)

**Cultural equivalent:** The SL word is replaced with the TL cultural word.

**Translation label:** An approximate equivalent or a new term, usually a collocation, for a feature peculiar to the SL.

**Translation couplets:** The transcription of an institutional term followed by its translation in brackets.

**Translation triplets:** A politically colored term may require a literal translation, a transcription, and the denotation.

**Deletion:** A term of little importance in the TL culture may be deleted in translation, provided it is marginal to the text, and some indication of function given where required.

**Naturalization:** The process of 'anglicizing' foreign names by supplying them with English suffixes.

## 2. Methodology

Three short stories and their translations including "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence, "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner, and "A Little Cloud" by James Joyce were selected as the corpus of the study. Terms of address and their translations were compared in order to find out the kind of translation strategies and procedures used by translators.

## 3. Results

Terms of address and their translations were analyzed according to Vinay and Darbelnet and Newmark's model. The results are summarized in the following tables.

Table 1 Personal Names

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Lancelot	لنسلات	Transcription
Bassett	بست	Transcription
Tommy	تامی	Transcription
Annie	آن	Transcription
Paul	پل	Transcription

Table 2 Occupation-Bound Terms

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Judge	آقای شهردار	Cultural equivalent + Addition
Garcon	گارسون	Borrowing

Table 3 Title Terms

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Miss Wilmet	خانم ویلمت	Literal translation+ Transcription
Miss Emily	میس امیلی	Borrowing + Transcription
Laddie		Deletion
Madam		Deletion
Madam	خانم	Literal translation

Table 4 Honorifics or Terms Formality

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Master paul	ارباب	Literal translation+ Deletion
Dammit Sir	آقا	Deletion+ Literal translation
Sir	قربان	Cultural equivalent

Table 5 Terms of Intimacy

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Dear	عزیزم	Literal translation+ Addition
love	عشق من	Literal translation+ Addition

Table 6 Kinship or Family/Relative Terms

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
Mother	مادر	Literal translation
Son	پسر	Literal translation+ Addition
Sonny	پسر	Literal translation+ Addition
Uncle	دایی جان	Literal translation+ Addition
My boy	پسر	Literal translation

Table 7 Personal Pronouns and Descriptive Phrases

Source language	Target language	Translation procedure
You young jockey	اسب سوار کوچولو	Deletion + Literal translation
You young romance	پسر خیالیاب من	Deletion+ Literal translation + Addition
You young Nat Gould		Deletion

Table 8 Descriptive Phrases

Mamma's little lamb of the world	کوچولو ترین بره دنیا	Literal translation+ Deletion
Old man	پسر	Cultural equivalent
Old hero	قهرمان قدیمی	Literal translation
Old chap	دوست قدیمی	Literal translation

#### 4. Discussion

The translation of address terms from English into Persian in the three mentioned short stories was investigated in the present study. The main purpose of the study was to examine the kind of translation strategies and procedures used in

their translations by Persian translators.

As table 1 shows transcription is the most common strategy used in the translation of personal names. This kind of translation strategy might lead to loss of meaning denoted in the name of some characters. Some phonological changes are observed in the translation of some personal names such as Annie which is translated as آن (Ann).

Occupation-bound terms in the present study are composed of job titles. Judge has been translated as آقای شهردار (Mr. Mayor) which is a combination of a generic title Mr. and a job title. According to Aliakbari and Toni (2008) addition of generic titles shows "the degree of respect" which is a common characteristic in Persian. Also, judge has been changed to mayor in order to show that the person in charge of a town who handles city matters is a mayor not a judge in Iran. Garçon is borrowed from French and is an accepted equivalent of waiter in Persian.

In translation of titles miss is borrowed and directly transferred to Persian. Because the main focus of the story is that Emily never got married, this borrowing might lead to a loss in meaning. Miss refers to a single female in English. The translation of miss is دوشیزه which is not common in addressing in Persian and is mostly used in formal texts. In another situation miss is translated as خانم which is used to refer to a female person regardless of her marital status.

Here there is a difference between Persian and English in that English which uses different terms to address women including miss, Mrs., Ms., and madam. The common translation for all of them in Persian is خانم.

Honorifics are according to Mehrotra (1981) a common characteristic of many oriental languages. They are used to show respect, politeness and power. Therefore, dammit is omitted in the translation in order not to violate courtesy in Persian. Master Paul is a combination of an honorific term and a first name which in translation, the first name is omitted to show more power relation between a worker and his master. For sir, which is used to address a man in a polite way, two different translations were observed: آقا which is a generic address terms means Mr. and قربان which is used to address someone who is higher in rank and shows the kind of power relation exists between interlocutors.

In the translation of terms of intimacy such as dear and love my is added so that عزیزم (my dear) and عشق من (my love) are more natural address terms in Persian and show the strong affection which exists in Persian society.

Cooke considers kinship terms as "nouns, most of which have a primary meaning denoting blood kin" (Cooke, 1968, p. 125). According to Aliakbari and Toni (2008) family relations are very strong in Persian. Therefore, Persian speakers use a wide range of address terms to refer to different family members and relatives. This is not the case with English which is according to Methven (2006) based on a nuclear family system. For example, the word uncle in English has two translations in Persian عمو which refers to one's father's brother and دایی which refers to one's mother's brother. This is another area which English and Persian show considerable cultural differences. Uncle is translated as دایی جان (dear uncle) which is first, based on the plot of the story it seems that he is the mother's brother of the protagonist and second, it conforms strong family relations and respect in Persian society. Son and sonny are translated as پسر (my son) which sounds more natural in Persian.

According to Gramley and Pätzold (2003) English uses second personal pronouns in addressing. However, second personal pronouns are avoided in Persian to address people. Therefore, in table 7 you is omitted and only the descriptive phrases are translated.

Old man is translated as پسر (my son) which show cultural differences exist in using descriptive phrases or "descriptors" which "contain an element of description" (Gramley & Pätzold, 2003, p. 197).

## 5. Conclusion

The comparison of terms of address in three short stories, "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence, "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner, and "A Little Cloud" by James Joyce, with their translations showed that there is a difference between the system of terms of address in English and Persian. In order to fill this gap translators have used different strategies such as deletion, addition, cultural equivalent and transcription. This is in line with Khani & Yousefi (2010). However, because terms of address are hard to translate, literal translation is the most common translation strategy observed in the translation of terms of address from English into Persian which could lead to a loss in meaning.

As the limitation of this study it should be mention that the corpus was too small to make safe conclusions. By increasing the size of the corpus and also, conducting similar studies using different genres more exact conclusions would be drawn.

To sum up, the findings of such research could be useful in translator training and translation courses at universities. Such research could help students of translation practice proper translation strategies for terms of address which are an area that languages show significant differences.

## References

- Afful, Joseph B. A. (2006a). Address terms among university students in Ghana. A case Study. *Journal of Language and Intercultural Communication* 6 (1), 76-91.
- Afzali, k. (2011). The address forms of spouses in different social strata in Iran and its sociolinguistic complications. *International journal of linguistics*, 3 (1), 1-9.
- Aliakbari, M., & Toni, A. (2008). The Realization of Address Terms in Modern Persian in Iran: A Sociolinguistic Study. *Linguistik online*, 35. Retrieved July 27, 2011. from <http://www.linguistik-online.de/impressum.html>.
- Braun, F. (1988). *Terms of Address: Problems of Patterns and Usage in Various Languages and Cultures*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. Retrieved July 28, 2011. from <http://www.books.google.com>.
- Cooke, J. R. (1968). The Pronominal Reference in Thai, Burmese, and Vietnamese. *American Anthropologist*. 72 (1), 190-191.
- Daher, N. (1987). Arabic Sociolinguistics: State of the Art. *Al-Arabiyya* 19 (1 & 2), 125-159.
- Gramley, S. & Pätzold, K.M. (2003). *A survey of modern English*. London: Routledge.
- Khani, S. & Yousefi, R. (2010). The study of address terms and their translation from Persian to English. Retrieved July 27, 2011. from <http://www.TranslationDirectory.com>.
- Mehrotra, R.R. (1981). Non-kin forms of address in Hindi. *International journal of the sociology of language*. 32, 121-138.
- Methwen, A. (2006). Discussion of the Difficulties in Translating Terms of Address in Chinese and English. [Electronic version].
- Munday, J. (2001). *Introducing translation studies theories and applications*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *Approaches to translation*. Prentice hall international (UK) Ltd.
- Ngo, T. (2006). Translation of Vietnamese Terms of Address and Reference. *Translation journal*, 10 (4). Retrieved July 27, 2011. from <http://www.translationjournal.net>.
- Shehab, E. (2005). The Translatability of Terms of Address in Najib Mahfouz's Ziqaq Al-Midaq into English. *An-Najah Univ. J. Res. (H. Sc.)*, 19(1), 315-327.

