Male-female opposition in translating (pro)nouns of address.
A case study: *Adela* by Garabet Ibrăileanu

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Abstract: *The paper aims at pointing out differences in using (pro)nouns of address in Romanian and English, and at discussing difficulties in transferring them across linguistic and cultural borders.*

Key words: *(pro)nouns of address, linguistic borders, cultural borders.*

1. Both research and professional work in translation studies have to take into account the interculturalism of contemporary life and its altered identities. This is because the idea has been gaining ground that the losses and gains of the transcultural encounter may constitute "a challenge to any conception of culture as monolithic, bound and independent" (Gonzales, in Gonzales & Tolron 2006: vii). Furthermore, intercultural and transcultural exchanges are context dependent and provide pathways along a winding road through the ups and downs of the complex process of translation. That is to say, this foregrounds translation "not merely as a transfer between cultures, but also as a form of linguistic and cultural practice which produces and fixes the identity of the 'Other' ". Such a facet of translation reminds of Benjamin's (1970: 72, apud Bontilă 2006: 144) idea that languages are interrelated. In addition, Bontilă (2006: 144) argues that the idea of 'untranslatability' in Nabokov's view, i.e. "what languages both deplore and cry out for" (ibidem), resonates with Benjamin's statement that languages "are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express" (Bontilă in Gonzales and Tolron 2006: 145).

1.1. Since the impact of translation studies on other academic disciplines focused on globalization has been limited, questions may arise about reconfiguring the representation of the translator.

In this respect, Cronin's (2003: 64) opinion is worth mentioning: "Translators are generally accorded the grace of *invisibility*, but whether this is necessarily sanctifying is a question that translators and theorists have asked more and more insistently in recent decades."

The professional translator's task seems to be extremely difficult because (s)he has to make the text flow although (s)he cannot take too many liberties and is not allowed to change any meaning. The greatest problem is how to re-create the source-text (ST) cultural background for the target readers (TRs). Thus, the problem of identity is of utmost importance, since the translator is at the centre of the relationship between the text, the author and the reader.

The translational relationship is one of interdependence. However, we agree with Cronin (2006: 36) that "[A]s translation by definition involves a form of dependency on the source language and culture, the translational relationship is an interdependent one but is a form of dependency which is potentially enabling rather than confining or disabling."

1.2. Moreover, one may ask such questions as: "Is it possible or even desirable to attempt to transcend cultural barriers through translation and/or adaptation […]? When we attempt to transfer meaning from one medium or language to another what are the challenges and pitfalls facing the cultural interpreter or translator? In an era of globalization of culture has homogenisation replaced local specificity […]?" (Gonzales, in Gonzales and Tolron 2006: vii).

A possible answer is that transcultural *flows* do not refer only to the movement of cultural forms across boundaries and communities "but also to the local take-up, appropriation and reconceptualization of these forms. Consequently, linguistic identity and cultural identity are seen in terms of fluidity, i.e. the movement and flows across borders, and

in terms of fixity, i.e. traditions, customs and local cultural expression. Thus, they are at the same time fluid and fixed, since they move across communities, nations and borders, on the one hand, and are rethought, remade, re-created in the local, i.e. localized and reconceptualized, on the other" (Croitoru 2010)

Besides, the linguistic flows across borders do not imply homogenization "but reorganization of the local. Our suggestion is to label them as *translinguistic flows*" (ibidem). On the other hand, mention should be made that further linguistic insight into translation can only be gained by contextualizing translation, not by isolating it. Contextualizing translation consists in exploring the limits of translation and in establishing its position in relation with other fields concerned with multilingualism such as contrastive analysis, comparative linguistics and typological linguistics. This will be all the more necessary as 'linguistics can learn a good deal from translation'.

One way of contextualizing translation is to contextualize it in the lexicogrammar of English. Venuti (1995) considers that the translator is anchored in the lexico-grammatical construction of translation. This is one of his striking arguments in favour of the translator's invisibility.

2. Considering the basic idea of the use of style in language, there is always a distinctive manner of expression through whatever means this expression is realized, language being defined as distinctive linguistic expression.

Besides, it is very important to be aware of what makes an expression distinctive, why it is used and, above all, what effect it will have in the source language culture (SLC), on the one hand, and in the target language culture (TLC), on the other, which is most difficult to obtain. Thus, the fact should be mentioned that, in the translating process, all the devices used by the translator in order to create an attention catching and efficient equivalent are the result of the choice of certain forms, words and structures thought to stylistically match the linguistic and cultural context. They are, of course, a matter of choice among other possibilities. Hence, the choices made by the author, on the one hand, and by the translator, on the other, are considered to be the stylistic design of the source text (ST) and of target text (TT), respectively.

2.1. Readers understand linguistic expressions as *representations* of the people, places and time in the text and will act on them as cues to imagine themselves as participating in the situation of the fictional world of the discourse.

Such textual cues are *deictics*, the psycholinguistic phenomenon being called *deixis*. Deictics direct the reader's attention to the narrator's spatial and temporal context of situation. Of the three types of deictics (place deictics, time deictics and person deictics), special attention from the translation studies perspective can be paid to person deictics, given the great differences between English and Romanian in the use of the second person pronoun, singular and plural, especially in informal and vernacular language.

Basically, person deictics include the first person pronoun *I* (and its related forms *me*, *my*, *mine*) and the second person pronoun *you* (and its related forms *your* and *yours*). Unlike the English pronoun *you* and its related forms that are not at all troublesome in translation, the Romanian pronouns of politeness *dumneata, mata/dumitale matale* (for case opposition) may be considered a case of untranslatability, because there are no corresponding forms in English, their English equivalents being *you* and *your*, whatever the type of text, style and register may be. These Romanian second person pronouns of address express a minimum degree of politeness as compared to the pronoun *dumneavoastră*. In contemporary Romanian, distinction is drawn between the more informal *dumneavoastră* and the formal *Domnia Voastră*: „În limba actuală, se remarcă mobilitatea sistemului, care se deschide spre al iv-lea grad de politeţe, corelat cu o opoziţie de registru: formal, emfatic politicos vs informal, nonemfatic. Opoziţia se realizează prin atragerea în sistemul limbii actuale a unor forme vechi ale pronumelui de politeţe" (GLR: 216).

In addition, the following socio-discursive variables are grammaticalized by means of the pronoun of politeness: the asymmetrical 'discursive' power between the participants in the verbal interaction, and the 'discursive distance' (formal/informal, familiar/non-familiar relations): „Pronumele de politeţe gramaticalizează următoarele variabile socio-discursive: (a) 'puterea discursivă' asimetrică dintre participanţii la interacţiunea verbală (deferenţă/nondeferenţă faţă de interlocutor), sau (b) 'distanţa discursivă' (reflectând relaţii de familiaritate/nonfamiliaritate, relaţii formale/informale între interlocutori" (ibidem).

Furthermore, within the Romanian system of politeness, there are great socio-linguistic and regional variations. The use of the pronouns of address depends on a lot of extralinguistic factors and is the result of some implicit or explicit conventions between the participants in the verbal interaction, i.e. it is negotiable.

2.2. In analysing and comparing two parallel corpora, i.e. the novel *Adela* by Garabet Ibrăileanu and its corresponding English version belonging to Andrei Bantaş and Magda Bantaş Morait (2003), we tried to demonstrate how the examination of a specific linguistic feature of a text can help to enhance the awareness of its literary effect.

The source text readers' (STRs) awareness and perception of Garabet Ibrăileanu's particular use of language are much more cunning than in ordinary communication and give it a local significance. Therefore, they experience the use of the nouns and pronouns of address as elements of a dynamic communicative interaction in a particular speech community. The translator has to help the (TRs) feel the same way and be up to their expectations. Such nouns and pronouns are contextually motivated choices, considering the historical, social and cultural context of Garabet Ibrăileanu's work and his forceful and persuasive style. In addition, they represent another way of proving that linguistic expression works by its effect rather than by rational argument:

ST₁: "- ***Dumneata*** *nu crezi în Dumnezeu?*
- Prostie să crezi, prostie să nu crezi. Cine poate să ştie dacă este? Numai ...Dumnezeu ştie."
(p. 52)
TT₁: *"Don't **you** believe in God?"*
"Nonsense to believe, nonsense not to believe. Who knows if He exists? Only ... God knows!"
(p. 53)

ST₂: "- De ce mi-ai spus că-s filozof? Crezi că eu nu pot urî?
*- Cred. **Mata** dispreţuieşti, nu urăşti, te cunosc eu bine. Dispreţuieşti pe toată lumea şi n-ai dreptate..."* *(p .98)*
TT₂: *"Why did you call me a philosopher? Do you think I cannot hate?"*
*"I do. **You** can only scorn but not hate. I know you very well. You scorn everybody and it's not right to do so…"* *(p. 99)*

ST₃: *"-…Acu hai să-ţi cânt, ca răsplată pentru că …mă admiri...parcă aşa ai spus. Eşti foarte galant...**Mata** eşti foarte constant.*
*- Dar **mata**?"* *(p .100)*
TT₃: *"And now let me play something for you, as a reward for your… admiring me… I think that's how you put it, isn't it? You're very gallant…**You** are a very constant person."*
*"What about **you**?"(p. 101)*

ST₄: *"- Scumpul meu mentor (întâia oară îmi spunea acest cuvânt), prinţul e gelos pe Anatol? .**Mata** pricepi mai bine lucrurile astea."* *(p. 140)*
TT₄: *"My dear mentor" (it was the first time she was using this form of address), "is the prince jealous of Anatoly? **You** are certainly a better judge of this kind of things than I am."*
(p. 141)

ST₅: *"- Ce pot să fac Dar n-ai să pleci şi **mata** în curând de aici*
- Nu-i vorba de locul unde o să fiu şi nici de singurătatea materială." (p. 268)
TT₅: *"What can I do? But, after all, aren't **you** too going to leave soon?"(p.269)*

ST₆: *"- ...Şi să ştii că nu dispreţuiesc pe nimeni şi preţuiesc pe foarte puţini. Dar e adevărat că toate prietenele **matale** din şcoală erau evreice?" (p. 100)*
TT₆ *"...And you must know that I despise nobody but I value very few people. But is it true that all **your** friends at school were Jewesh" (p. 101)*

ST₇: *"- Pentru prudenţă, m-aş fi dat drept sora **matale**...De ce-ai renunţat la excursii?... Mata nu vrei niciodată ceea ce vrei..." (p. 270)*
TT₇: *"As a precaution, I would have pretended to be **your** sister"...."Why did you give up the excursions?... **You** never seem to want what you really want" (p. 271)*

ST₈: *"- Eşti sigură că o să te mai găsesc acolo la mama **matale**?..." (p. 38)*
TT₈: *"But are you sure I'm going to find you still there, with **your** mother?", I asked her. (p. 39)*

ST₉: *- Sunt încântată de grija **matale** dar nu o merit. (p. 252)*
TT₉: *"I'm delighted with **your** solicitude but I simply don't deserve it." (p.253)*

It is obvious that the two translators played the role of a very good 'filter'. We agree with those theorists who consider that the translator is permanently in the text as a 'constraining filter'. The two translators really created compatible attitudes in the TRs at the same time observing the constraints of the TLC. As a matter of fact, one of the most difficult things is that the subtleties in the ST expressed by such pronouns and nouns, among others, have to be exactly understood by the TRs who live in an entirely different area. It is by grasping these subtleties and by rendering the untranslatable that the TRs of a different geographical area can catch the 'spirit' of the ST.

The translators tried to find TL equivalents, satisfactory TL expressions adequate in the context. Generally speaking, the translator may modernize and domesticate a ST word or expression which will function semantically in the same way, but which will not be suggestive of the original atmosphere. For example, the nouns *duduie* and *cucoane* are difficult to understand by the TRs in the actual context, because they are no longer used in contemporary Romanian literature and seem to be clumsy even to the STRs:

ST₁₀: *"- **Duduie, mata** poţi urî?*
- Pot! Mie nu mi-i indiferent nimeni, eu nu-s filozoafă-ca alţii. Eu urăsc, iubesc, dispreţuiesc..." (p. 98)
TT₁₀: *"But are **you** capable of hatred, **young lady**?"*
"I am! I'm not indifferent to anybody, I'm no philosopher-like other people. I hate, I love, I despise"... (p. 99)

ST₁₁: *"- **Duduie**, să ştii că de asta te admir eu, pentru că urăşti, iubeşti, dispreţuieşti, eşti vie şi limpede..." (p. 100)*
TT₁₁: *"**Young lady,** you must know it is precisely for this reason that I admire you. Because you hate, you love, you despise, you're alive and clear" (p. 101)*

ST₁₂: *"- **Cucoane**, da-mi spurcă trăsura, să iertaţi! răsuflă birjarul, nemaiputând să rabde. (p .162)*

TT₁₂: *"Forgive me, **sir**, but it's spoiling my carriage forever!" the coachman breathed hard, unable to put up with it any more". (p. 163)*

ST₁₃: *"- De-acu ne-a hi, **cucoane**! Să plecăm.   (p. 190)*
TT₁₃: *"Now it's about time we left, **sir**! Let's go!" (p.191)*

ST₁₄: *"- Să plecăm, **cucoane** , că-i târziu!*
Badea Vasile avea dreptate. Uitasem că trebuia să plecăm (p.198)
TT₁₄: *"Let's leave, **sir**, cos it's getting late."*
Uncle Vasile was right. I had forgotten all about our trip. (p. 199)

2.3. All these aspects also reveal the intensity of the conflict between content and form which depends on the fulfilment of the four basic conditions: 1. being intelligible, or comprehensible; 2. being readable or fluent, i.e. having a natural and easy form of expression; 3. conveying the spirit or manner of the original; 4. producing a similar response or effect on the TRs.

In order to fulfil all these conditions, a compromise is always needed. It means that one of them (either content or form) must give way. If no compromise is possible, meaning must have priority over style (Venuti 2000: 134).

In addition, given the fact that content and form are inseparable, an "effective blend of matter and manner" (Venuti 2000: 135) is necessary. More than that, given the differences between languages, the form usually undergoes (very) many changes. To all this, it must have the same effect on the TRs, or, in terms of equivalence, it must be equivalent in its effect upon the receptors. Besides, meaning equivalence must have priority over equivalence of style. How this compromise is made depends on the translator's competence and talent in shaping the original and in re-creating it in the TLC.

We consider that above all, the degree of equivalence depends on the *linguistic* and *cultural differences* between the two texts. Generally speaking, when translation involves two *closely related languages and cultures,* it may only apparently seem easier. This is because the translator may be taken in by the surface similarities (for example, 'false friends', borrowed or cognate words which only seem to be equivalent but are not so), which will result in poor translations.

On the other hand, translation may involve *related cultures but different languages*, which makes a lot of translation shifts necessary. As Venuti (2000: 130) puts it, "[W]hen two cultures are related but the languages are quite different, the translator is called upon to make a good many formal shifts in the translation. However, the cultural similarities in such instances usually provide a series of parallelisms of content that make the translation proportionately much less difficult than when both languages and cultures are disparate. In fact, *differences between cultures* cause many *more severe complications* for the translator *than do differences in language structure*." (emphasis in the original).

Such is the case of the pronouns of address *dumneata, mata*, and of the nouns of address *duduie, cucoane* in the novel *Adela,* which once again makes it obvious that translation is not merely a transfer between two language cultures, but a form of linguistic and cultural practice that helps to fix the identity of the 'Other'. In this respect, we agree that "the experiences of inter- and transcultural exchange, each unique and context specific, resonate with each other in order to constitute a thought-provoking excursion into the pitfalls and triumphs of cultural translation" (Gonzales 2006: viii).

2.4. In analysing two parallel corpora, textual authority and fidelity are two very important coordinates. In this respect, negotiating between the TLC and the SLC may become (very) difficult because of the shifts of meaning from one language to another, but more often than not, because of the approximate equivalents with the untranslatable words and structures. Hence, one cannot but think about attaining the most important goal of translation, i.e. that of

bridging the 'gaps' between two (very) different language cultures and get over the untranslatable. Such debates will always remind of the large number of texts that stick to the SLT being prone to omissions, simplifications and misreadings, which will always be to the detriment of the TRs.

3. To conclude, the analysis proves the incontestable fact that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between the SLC and the TLC. This will generate 'gaps' between the two language cultures (LCs) that will have to be 'bridged' by the translator. The difficulty (s)he has to overcome will be even greater because all the negotiations will start from and go to cultural and linguistic identity. More than that, Eco (2003: 5) is right that "[T]the impact a translation has upon its own cultural milieu is more important than an impossible equivalence with the original."

To put it differently, no translation is entirely acceptable in the target culture (TC) because of the structural differences. Neither is it entirely adequate to the source culture (SC), because of the new cultural context to which it will belong. Then, the question arises: What is the position of the translated text between the two extremes, i.e. the ST and TT?

A possible answer could be given considering that cultural and linguistic flows are part of a reorganization of the local. Transcultural flows imply the local take-up of cultural forms rather than their movement across the globe. They are related to "the ways in which cultural forms change and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts. This is not, therefore, a question merely of cultural movement but of take-up, appropriation, change and refashioning" (Pennycook 2008: 6).

Consequently, the SLCmeans of expression are changed according to the characteristics of the TLC. In addition, the identity of the participants in the verbal interaction is reflected in the use of language.

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