In this article I tried to collect the most important, and interesting in my view, comments and remarks I recorded while reading the Persian translation of Le petit Nicolas. This translation was made by Vidâ Sa’âdat and published for the first time in Tehran in 1383hš/2004â5.1

Since my comments and remarks are connected with different issues, the text presented below consists of five short quasi-essays loosely related to each other. Obviously, their shared element is the little Nicolas and his Iranian, Persian-speaking relative called Nikolâ-kučulu ‘small/tiny/wee Nicolas’; I intentionally emphasise the fact, that Nikolâ speaks Persian, since in multi-ethnic and -linguistic Iran not every pupil speaks this language.

Nikolâ’s language

A kind of specific and out-standing humour, which can be easily detected in the histories of little Nicolas, results from unique language and technique of story-telling. We should remember, that his quasi-memoir is a sort of parody of the story-

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1 The first Persian translation of Le petit Nicolas was made by Ğamšid Arğmand published in 1363hš (1984/85). Other translation were made by Amîr-Hoseyn Mehdî-zâde, Farîbâ Sa’âdat, Āfâq Hâmed-Hâšemi and mentioned Vidâ Sa’âdat.
telling habits typical for some little children. That is why, René Goscinny uses very often some stylistic features such as wordy sentences with some frequently repeated elements. That is why also, all Nicolas’s adventures are reported in the first person by himself.

Good example of such technique is a fragment in which Nicolas-Nikolá describes one of his classmates and close friends – Alceste (Persian: Ālsest), a boy who adores eating:

Alceste, c’est mon copain qui est très gros et qui mange tout le temps. Il était en train de mordre dans une tartine de confiture et le photographe lui a dit de cesser de manger, mais Alceste a répondu qu’il fallait bien qu’il se nourrisse (Sempé, Goscinny 2011 : 11).

Ālsest dust-e man ast. ġeyli čâq ast va dâ’em čiz mi-hor-ad. u dâšt yek gâz be nân-o morabbâš mi-zad ke akkâš be-heš goft ke čiz na-hor-ad. vali Ālsest ġavâb dâd ke lázem ast ke čiz bo-hor-ad (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 7).

Nicolas-Nikolá uses only a few simply constructed sentences and a few words to create a funny (according to the adults) or serious (according to himself) short and relevant picture of perpetually-hungry Alceste-Ālsest. The main stylistic feature of the above mentioned fragment is frequent repetition of verb ḥordan ‘to eat, to drink’ in three conjugated forms: (1) mi-hor-ad ‘he eats/is eating = il/elle mange’, (2) na-hor-ad ‘(here:) should not eat = cesser de manger’ and (3) bo-hor-ad ‘(here:) should eat = se nourrisse’. This repetition makes the whole description internally much more bound; as if we were just listening to the Nicolas-Nikolá’s report about some everyday school events. What is more, we cannot remove these forms,3 because of that internal harmony and, of course, a kind of parody of naïve childish tongue. In the case of Persian language, repetition of some elements is strengthened by, among other things, the fact, that the transitive verb very often

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2 Translation comment:
(1) French sentence c’est mon copain qui est très gros et qui mange tout le temps was translated as two Persian sentences dust-e man ast ‘he is my friend’ and ġeyli čâq ast va dâ’em čiz mi-hor-ad ‘he is very fat and still eats something’ – French conjunction qui was removed, whereas it could be preserved: dust-e man ast ke ġeyli čâq ast va ke dâ’em čiz mi-hor-ad ‘he is my friend who is fat, and who still eats something’.
(2) French grammar construction il était en train de mordre was translated as Persian con-struction dâšt yek gâz (...) mi-zad ‘he was chewing (...) (literary:) he had was chewing (...)’, which is typical for colloquial language, but, surprisingly, used only in the indicative.
(3) Alceste was eating une tartine de confiture, while Ālsest nân-o morabbâ ‘bread and jam’.
(4) Alceste says that il fallait bien qu’il se nourrisse, while Ālsest – lázem ast ke čiz bo-hor-as ‘it is important him to eat something’, French verb se nourrir was translated as ḥordan, and the accentuation was moved from nutrition on consumption.

3 Or replace them with some synonymous verbs like masraf kardan ‘to consume’ or taqziye kardan ‘to feed, to nourish, to eat’, because they belongs to an other stylistic level of Persian language.
needs the direct object to be expressed. That is why pronoun čiz ‘something’ accompanies hordan.\(^4\)

We must agree, that Sa’âdat manages to translate this short part of text quite properly. Her version expresses a general character and tone of Nicolas-Nikolâ’s vision of Alceste-Älsest as a boy who loves eating. Especially, since he describes his friend in a similar way through the entire book:

Alceste c’est mon ami, il est gros, il aime bien manger (Sempê, Goscinny 2011: 30).

Älsest dust-e man ast. bačče-ye čâq-i ast va dust dâr-ad dâ’em čiz bo-hör-ad (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 27).\(^5\)

The phenomenon of word-repetition, tolerated by Persian native speakers much more than for example by Polish ones, results from the structural and lexical characteristics of Persian language. This time, some linguistic features help the translator to re-build and re-construct the child’s language and its distinct marks, even if Nikolâ’s language differs from the tongue of hero of the Ğalâl Âlâe Ahmad’s famous story entitled Goldaste-hâ va falak (Minarets and stick). It is a story of two boys who climbed a tall minaret of a mosque near to their school one cold day.\(^6\)

The Âlâe Ahmad’s main character depicts his classmate named Močul this way:

ke ān mard-e eynaki raft birun va bâ yek pesar-e češm-hâ-yaš ān qadr dorošt bud ke na-gu. eyn-e češm-hâ-ye dohtar-e amme-am. ke eyd-e emsâl hamču ke lap-aš-râ busid-am dáq šod-am (Âlâe Ahmad 1356hš: 12).

The man who was wearing the glasses went out and came back with a boy with very big eyes. His eyes were son big, that it is impossible to depict them. Just like the eyes of my cousin (daughter of mother’s sister), who’s cheek I kissed this New Year’s eve and burnt (trans. MK = Mateusz Kłagisz).

\(^4\) One of features of Persian is quite big number of compound verbs which are built of two (sometimes more) elements: (1) noun/adjective (which specifies the meaning) and (2) auxiliary verb (which provides the verbalism, and usually loose/changes its original meaning). The verb hordan needs its direct object, because besides qazâ hordan ‘to eat (literally: to eat a meal)’ (~ čiz hordan ‘to eat (literally: to eat something)’), we have also zamin hordan ‘to tumble, to fall down (literally: to eat the ground)’ and kotak hordan ‘to be bitten (literally: to eat a blow/slap)’.

\(^5\) Translation comment:

(1) Sa’âdat translates il est gros as bačče-ye čâq-i ast ‘he is a fat child’, since this kind of sentence-building seems to be more natural in Persian.

(2) Sentence il aime bien manger — as dust dâr-ad dâ’em čiz bo-hör-ad ‘he likes always to eat something’ with the adverb dâ’em ‘constant, continual, permanent’, that emphasises Alcestes-Älsest’s passion for eating, and internally appeals us to some previous descriptions of his friend where this adverb was used.

(3) French ami was translated as dust ‘friend’, just like copain, but this not play any significant role in the whole text.

\(^6\) And were severely punished after that. But, the attraction of high minarets was to much and the vision of future punishment to weak to stop them to climb as high as it was possible.
Both descriptions were marked with repetition of some elements, since first of all it is the way to imitate childish technique of story-telling. As we said, little Nicolas is the only narrator of his adventures at school and at home. To relate them, he speaks with this characteristic for children emotional immersion. Obviously, Goscinny tries also to rebuilt a childish and (ego-)centric point of view of little Nicolas, who exposes some flaws and misunderstanding (according to his little Nicolas) of adults and their “normal” world, while Sa’âdat tries to re-built the same on the Persian ground. The question is, if she is successful or not, and if she is able to preserve this childish immersion or not. We should also remind here, that one of important characteristics of the Goscinny’s book is a distinct and clear emphasis of child’s experience. At the first blink we can see, that most of these elements were successfully preserved during translation and can be found in the presented Persian version. Nonetheless, Nikolâ’s Persian does not remind Persian of Ál-e Ahmad’s main character, because Nikolâ’s language resembles its literary and written form. Today’s Persian consists of a few stylistic levels, and its written-literary or spoken-literary form differs from its colloquial version. Since, Nikolâ is still a pupil and has already started to go to school, we could expect that his (and other pupils’) tongue reminds a spoken Persian called zabân-e mohâvere’i ‘colloquial/conversational language’ instead of zabân-e neveštâri ‘written tongue’.

For example, when a photographer comes to the Nikolâ’s school in order to take a picture of all children, Agnan (Persian: Ânyân) is afraid, that taking a picture could take too much time, and the arithmetic would not take place:

(...) ce serait dommage de ne pas avoir arithmétique, parce qu’il aimait ça et qu’il avait bien fait tous ses problèmes (Sempé, Goscinny 2011: 5).

hef e ke dars-e hesâb na-res-im. man dars-e hesâb-râ heyli dust dâr-am va hame-ye mas’ale-hâ-yam-râ ham dorost hal kardâám. (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 1).

The Agnan-Ânyân’s language reminds literary and not simple childish Persian; even if he is called aziz karde hânom-e mo’âlem ‘teacher’s pet’ it does not entitle us to suppose that Agnan-Ânyân and Nicolas-Nikolâ speak two different tongues: Agnan-Ânyân – literary Persian, and Nicolas-Nikolâ – colloquial Persian. We do expect him to speak colloquially:

hef e ke dars-e hesâb na-res-im. heyli dust-eš dâr-am va hamme-ye masale-hâ-m-o ham doros hal kard-âm.8

7 Translation comment: French indirect speech was translated into direct, since in Persian indirect speech does not exist. This time Agnan-Ânyân has been burdened with some additional characteristics, do not appear in the original text. He is boasts before the teacher and other pupils, that he managed to solve all the exercises in arithmetic properly, whereas in the book this is a statement of Nicolas.

8 Linguistic comment:

(1) in colloquial Persian the 3rd sing. form of verb budan ‘to be’ – ast ‘(he/she/it) is’ changes into e, because the consonant cluster st at the end weakens to ss, later only s, and
Conversational Persian is everybody’s means of communication, also the elders. The teacher is angry, because all pupils became dirty, when they went to the school pavement to bring some chairs. Since she is angry, she should also express that in her tongue. Instead of literary way:

Mais vous êtes tout noirs (Sempé, Goscinny 2011: 9)

vây, šomâ ke sar tâ pâ siyâh šode-id (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hâş: 3)\(^9\)

she should shout in colloquial Persian:

ey vây, šomâ sar tâ pâ siyâh-in ke!

with the obligatory question mark at the end of sentence. Just like in the photographer’s sentence, when he is desperate and devastated by the roguish pupils. We suppose that it would sound better if instead of:

Pour la dernière fois, retourne à ta place! (Sempé, Goscinny 2011 : 11).

miâravâi sarâe ğâât yâ na! (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hâş: 7)\(^10\)

he shouts:

mi-r-i sar-e ğâ-t yâ na?!

This sentence is semi-formal and semi-colloquial, because the verb mi-rav-i ‘you go/are going’ belongs to literary Persian, and ğâ-t ‘your place’ – to spoken (it replaces literary form ğâîyat). In the whole book we can trace much more of this kind of mixed formal-and-informal sentences. A good example is the conversation between Geoffroy (Persian: Žufravâ) and the mentioned above photographer:

(the photographer) C’est une boîte d’où va sortir un petit oiseau, bonhomme.

(Geoffroy) Il est vieux votre engin (...) mon papa il m’en a donné un avec parasoleil, objectif à courte focale, téléobjectif, et, bien sûr, des écrans... (Sempé, Goscinny 2011: 10)

(the photographer) in yek ğab’e ast, āqâ-kučulu. hâlâ az-âš parande-ye kučulu-yi dar mi-â-yad.

\(^9\) Sa’âdat strengthens the comment of Nicolas-Nikolâ’s teacher with the interjection vây ‘woe! ah! oh!’; the particle ke ‘but’ and the adverb sar tâ pâ ‘from head to foot’ as the equivalent of French tout.

\(^10\) This time Sa’âdat skips the French adverb pour la dernière fois ‘for the last time’, which he changes into the particle na ‘no’ as a sort of question tag.
where the forms: az-āš ‘(here:) from inside’, bābā-m ‘my dad’, barā-m ġaride ‘he has bought for me’ belongs to the spoken Persian, not written; their classical written forms are: az ān, bābā-yam or bābā-ye man and barā-yam or barā-ye man ġaride-ast. If we want to change the dialog into spoken tongue, it should be written as follows:

(Žufravâ) durbin-ē šomā kohn star. bābām ye durbin barā-ē ġaride ke zedd-e nur ast, bā obţektiv-e kānōn-e kūțiā va televbţektiv va, albatte, bā ekran...

We have not mentioned yet, that the Iranian translators have to solve a serious problem of noticing of colloquial language. Most of the Persian orthographical rules were composed when the literary form of language was still being developed (10th–14th AD). Later, when the differences between written and spoken Persian were becoming deeper, for centuries the only written form of language was its literary form, while the colloquial one existed only in oral communication. The problem of proper and clear noticing of spoken Persian was faced with the first Persian drama writers and novelists; dialogs should represent alive and not artificial language of everyday communication. Some rules have been proposed that time and widely (or not) accepted, but still this part of Persian orthography needs to be finally standardized.

Sa’ādat, the translator of Le petit Nicolas into Persian, should not have been afraid of language spoken by pupils and teachers. Spoken Persian does not mean that the person is simple or badly educated. If she was not sure, what sort of Nikolā and hānom-e mo‘āllem ‘Mrs. Teacher’ talk, she could look into the short story by Āl-e Ahmad mentioned above. When boys were playing during the break on the school playground, their director was constantly shouting:

age āftāb miāh āy in var, age sāye miāh āy un var (Āl-e Ahmad 1356hš: 9).

If you want the sun go here, and if you want the shadow – there (trans. MK).

We can assume, that if Sa’ādat was asked to translate this sentence into Persian from an made-up English-origin text, she would use the literary language:

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Translation comment: French c’est une boîte d’où va sortir un petit oiseau, bon-homme was broken into two sentences:

(1) in yek ġab’e ast, āqā-kūčulu ‘it is a box, little mister’ and
(2) hālā az-āš parande-ye kūčulu-ye dar mi-ā-yād ‘and now flies a tiny bird from inside’, where the connection was expressed by the possessive pronoun -āš ‘his, her, its’ added to the preposition az ‘from’ and representing in the second sentence the noun ġabʾe ‘box’ from the first one.
agar əftāb mi-hâh-i in var, agar sâye mi-hâh-i ân var.\textsuperscript{12}

Why? Mostly because, as Marek Smurzyński states, the Iranians think about the translation not as a sort of full adaptation of a differently cultural text in to their Persian culture, but as a kind of quotation. And that is why, they do not feel any strong need to fully adopt the “Other” text; they allow it to keep a wealth of experience and knowledge about the non-Persian “Other”. What is more, they do not expect from the text, to explain all kinds of intricacy, enigmas or obscure elements of plot, since they put them, so to speak, aside. I suppose, that although Nikolâ-kuculu speaks a childish but quasi-natural Persian, it does not have to be a serious problem for the Iranian reader.

Well, Nikolâ is a French, isn’t he?

\textbf{Souvenir, bouillon and illness}

In the second part, I would like to elaborate three of nineteen titles of chapters that can cause some translation problems.

Sa’âdat translates the very first chapter \textit{Un souvenir qu’on va chérir} as Aks-e yâdegâri ‘souvenir/memorial photography’. Although Goscinny does not determine the form of \textit{un souvenir}, the translator writes clearly aks ‘photo’; the French reader can only suppose, what it could be, whereas the Iranian one knows it from the very beginning.\textsuperscript{13} There is no trace of French \textit{on va chérir} in his translation, because the photo will be a memorial (Persian: yâdegâri) picture, and not a favourite, nice or pleasant one in the future; of course, it could be but the stress is put only on the memory (Persian: yâd).

The second chapter entitled \textit{Le Bouillon} causes also a serious problem for Sa’âdat which she solves by an annotation. The translator copies French bouillon as Persian buyun, but when Nicolas explains, why he and his classmates call their caretaker bouillon-buyun:

Le surveillant, on l’appelle le Bouillon, quand il n’est pas là, bien sûr. On l’appelle comme ça, parce qu’il dit tout le temps : « Regardez-moi dans les yeux », et dans le bouillon il y a des yeux (Sempê, Goscinny 2011: 22).

\textbf{Linguistic comment:}

(1) \textit{agar ‘if’} → \*a\textit{gu} → \textit{age}: \textit{r} weakens and disappears, final \textit{a} always changes into \textit{e};

(2) \textit{mi-hâh-i ‘you (sing.) want’} → \textit{mi-hâ-y-i} → \textit{mi-hây}: \textit{h} weakens and disappears, hiatus between \textit{â} and \textit{i} needs \textit{y}, final \textit{i} weakens and disappears;

(3) \textit{ân ‘that; those’} → \textit{un}: vowel \textit{â} before consonant \textit{u} always changes into \textit{u}.

\textsuperscript{12} Linguistic comment:

\textsuperscript{13} The French indefinite article \textit{un} disappeared somewhere during translation, although in Persian exists the category of definite-neutral-indefinite noun. The lack of the category is apparent, since Persian aks-e yâdegâri should be understood as neutral. To emphasise the indefinite state the numeral yek ‘one’ should be added at the beginning: yek aks-e yâdegâri, or the suffix -i after the noun: aks-i yâdegâri.
Nikolà slightly changes the content, calls *bouillon-buyun* as *âbgušt* and builds a new picture:

mà be názem mi-guy-im “buyun”. albatte vaqt-i ke ḥod-eš na-bâš-ad. barâ-ye in be-heš buyun mi-guy-im ke hamiše mi-guy-ad: „tu-ye češm-hâ-ye man negâh kon-id” va tu-ye buyun (âbgušt) ham qol mi-zan-ad, vaqt-i ke negâh mi-kon-i, hobâb-hâ-yi mi-bin-i ke mesl-e češm ast (Sâmpe, Gosinni 1384hš: 19).15

We call the caretaker “buyun”. Of course, when he does not hear. We call him buyun, because he always says: “Look into my eyes!” And when the buyun (âbušt) is boiling if you look into, you can see some bubbles of air resembling eyes (trans. MK).

Nikolà must say a few words more, than Nicolas, because he must build an equivalent picture of soup-eyes. Surprisingly, Nicolas’ *des yeux*, which float on *bouillon* soup, becomes Persian *češm* made not of fat, but of *hobâb-hâ* ‘bubbles of air’. This proposition can be surprising, but, on the other hand it makes quite a good culinary equivalent.

Sa’âda translates the fifteenth chapter entitled *Je suis malade* as *Man mariz Šodam*. This time we can see the difference between French and Persian perception of time. French *je suis malade* ‘I am ill’ regards the present time, and the fact that ‘me’ is not in good health, whereas Persian *man mariz Šodam* ‘I became ill’ emphasises the fact of falling ill in the past. The Persian translation regards the situation, when an ill has caught ‘me’ and still keeps ‘me’. When Nicolas starts to narrate his story, he says:

Je me sentais très bien hier, la preuve, j’ai mangé des tas de caramels, de bonbons, de gâteaux, de frites et de glaces, et, dans la nuit, je me demande pourquoi, comme ça, j’ai été très malade (Sempé, Goscinny 2011: 118).

Diruz hâlâam h eyli bad bud, dalilâaš ham in bud ke yek âlam-e kârmel-o naql-o nân-e širini-vo sib-zamini-sorh-karde-vo bastani horde budam. vali šab, nemi-dân-am čerã, hâlâam h eyli bad Šod (Sâmpe, Gosini 1383hš: 7).16

Important thing is that, that Sa’âdat translates French *j’ai été très malade* as if there was the verb *tomber malade* and not *être malade*; Persian *hâl-am heyli bad Šod* means ‘I felt ill’. Sa’âdat chooses this version, which according to her is more natural and less artificial for the Iranian reader.

And the last chapter – *Je quitte la maison*, she translates as *Man az hâne-mân raftam*. At first glance, we can assume, that just like in the fifteenth chapter, the

14 Iranian *âbgušt* is a sort of soup cooked with some lamb, chickpeas, white beans, onion, potatoes, and tomatoes, turmeric, and dried lime. The ingredients are combined together and cooked until done, at which point the dish is strained. The solids are then mashed and served with the broth, but in a separate dish, along with flatbread.

15 Surprisingly, French neutral and impersonal *on l’appelle* was translated as un-neutral and personal *mi-guy-im* ‘we are saying/say’.

16 This time Sa’âdat skips the French adverb *pour la dernière fois* ‘for the last time’, which she changes into the particle *nà* ‘no’ as a sort of question tag.
sentence’s tense is moved from the present into the past, but in Persian the past simple tense can be also sometimes used in the meaning of the future (this kind of future tense is called âyande-ye mohaqqaq ‘certain/sure/verified future’). The sentence man az hâne-mân raftam can be translated as ‘I quit our home’ or ‘I intend to quit our home’ (right now). What is more, French la maison became Persian hâne-mân ‘our home/house’. From the other side, this chapter starts with an emotionally strong announcement: “Je suis parti de la maison!” (Sempé, Goscinny 2011: 149) expressed in the past tense le passé composé. This time the definite category expressed by French article la is expressed also in Persian, but by the suffix possessive pronoun -mân ‘our’, mostly because Persian uses the possessive pronouns very often as a kind of equivalent of non-existing definite articles.

Swearwords

En classe, quand nous sommes entrés, la maîtresse a demandé à Djodjo s’il s’était bien amusé, alors, Agnan s’est levé et il a dit : « Mademoiselle, ils lui apprennent des gros mots ! – C’est pas vrai, sale menteur ! » a crié Clotaire, qui n’était pas sorti en récréation. « Dingue, espèce guignol, sale menteur », a dit Djodjo tout fier (Sempé, Goscinny 2011 : 62).

It is something natural, that Nicolas-Nikolâ’s teacher is deeply surprised, hearing these “dirty” words, like dingue, espèce guignol, or sale menteur, mostly because she cannot not understand, how it is possible, that the boys know such “rude” expressions, and why they try to teach a new pupil some invectives. She seems to be deeply surprised also, because in her opinion the children should not talk to each other as the adults usually do. She has forgotten, that the childish invectives should not be understood only in the same categories like the insults of the adults. Their are of course a kind of impolite expressions focused on teasing other children and spoken to offend or hurt an enemy (Nicolas-Nikolâ’s quasi-enemy is of course Agnan-Ânyân), but they are sometimes spoken also to express a strong personal attitude toward a friend. They play a kind of double and internally contradictory role. Just like here:

It is quite possible, that Sa’âdat decides to replace in the title of chapter the French tense le présent with the past tense to smoothen the style.
« Qu’est-ce qui lui prend ? » a demandé Eudes. « Il veut faire de la boxe avec toi, gros malin ! » a répondu Goffroy qui se frottait le nez (Sempé, Goscinny 2011 : 61–62).

Od goft : «čerâ inğur miâkonâad?» Žofravâ ke dâšt damâq-äš-râ mi-mâlid, goft: «Ahmaq-ğân, mi-hâh-ad bâ to boks bâzí kon-ad» (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 53).

Žofravâ’s expression ahmaq-ğân ‘dear fool’ is a good examples of situation when the childish invectives cannot be understood as a sort of insults. One important thing, that should be reminded here, is that the Nikolâ’s and his classmates’ only pattern themselves on the behavior of their fathers and mothers by some rude and impolite words. But his beloved- and-heated daddy and mummy quarrel quite often about some quite ridiculous things. Adults’ arguments echo among children too. And there is no reason to suppose that among Iranian pupils similar situation does not appear.

Appearance of a new classmate – Georges MacIntosh, an English boy who does not speak French, and whom parents decided to send to a French school, because this would be the best way to learn the language, causes some troubles and funny accidents. Georges, while listening to the boys, learns some childish expressions, that he repeats during the lesson, causing some confusion of teacher.

As we can read, he learns only a few childish invectives like: (1) dingue ‘crazy, loony’, (2) costaud ‘tough’ and t’es costaud, and three naïve and unsophisticated expressions (3) vilain cafard ‘ugly, nasty, naughty cockroach’, (4) espèce (de) guignol ‘you damned puppet’, and (5) sale menteur ‘dirty liar’.

Sa’âdat proposes only there quite linguistically and stylistically good equivalents. For dingue and dingue-dingue – hol ‘haft-witted, crazy, crackpot, eccentric’, for sale menteur – ğâsus-e kasif ‘filthy, nasty spy’ and for espèce (de) guignol – dalqak ‘clown, fool, jester’. And adds two other expressions: vahši ‘savage, wild, rude, barbarian’ and bitarbiyat ‘ill-bred, rude, impolite’.

All of Sa’âdat’s proposition keeps the same, childish register. Even if they do not fit the French pseudo-invectives, they clearly refer to the Persian spoken by children like Nikolâ. What is more, hol, ğâsus-e kasif and dalqak bring the Iranian

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18 He could also say for example ağab xar-i ‘what a fool you are’, because there is a lot of synonymic and somewhat ironical Persian expressions; sometimes the significant role plays only the timbre of voice or the context that causes that aziz-am ‘my dear’ can be understood as an irony.

19 And repeated dingue-dingue to emphasise its meaning.

20 With t’es ‘you are’ – a spoken contraction of tu es.

21 This reminds us espèce d’imbécile ‘you damned idiot’.

22 This seems to be quite strong invective.

23 And in every class a kind of dalqak-clown can be easily found.

24 This one is quite strong too, mostly because Iranian society attach importance to the manners represented by the behaviour and tongue.

25 French cafard becomes Persian ğâsus, and is no more an animal. And French inanimate guignol becomes alive Persian dalqak – a man whose main work is to cheer other.
reader nearer to the French pupils’ world. One thing should be added at the end, in Persian there is a lot of different more or less spicy invectives. Some of them focus directly on the audience, like the already mentioned examples. Some other focus indirectly on the audience, because they concern his/her family members, mostly mother, father and sister, like strong and really rude expression *pedar-sag* ‘son of a dog’ or *tul-e sag* ‘puppy’. The dog plays in the Persian culture double and deeply ambivalent role.

**Dog**

En sortant de l’école, j’ai suivi un petit chien. Il avait l’air perdu, le petit chien, il était tout seul et ça m’a fait beaucoup de peine. J’ai pensé que le petit chien serait content de trouver un ami et j’ai eu du mal à le rattraper. Comme le petit chien n’avait pas l’air d’avoir tellement envie de venir avec moi, il devait se méfier, je lui ai offert la moitié de mon petit pain au chocolat et le petit chien a mangé le petit pain au chocolat et il s’est mis à remuer la queue dans tous les sens et moi je l’ai appelé Rex, comme dans un film policier que j’avais vu jeudi dernier (Sempé, Goscinny 1960 : 50).

This idyllic picture of Nicolas, who takes care of a stray dog called by him Rex, stands in opposition to the most popular image of the dog in the Islamic-Persian culture and literature represented by Pât — the dog-hero of short novel entitled *Sag-e velgard* (*The Stray Dog*) by Sādeqâe Hedâyat (1281–1330hs/1903–1951). On thirteen pages Hedâyat built a sort of strongly painful, moving vision of a few last tough, difficult days of life of tired, starving Pât, who does not know, why its owner had decided one day to get rid of it. Hedâyat created a completely different picture of dog-and-human relations:

In front of the backer’s it was bitten with a backer-shovel. In front of the butcher’s a young shop assistant threw a stone in its direction. When it was laying in the shadow of a car, a chauffer kicked it with his heavy shoe. But, when everyone got tired of tormenting it, some children who were selling cold drinks were taking pleasure in torturing it (Hedâyat 1342hs: 10–11 – trans. MK).

As we can see, there is no mercy in children’s relations with Pât. In the Hedâyat’s novel there is no escape, no safety place. What is more, there is also no hope and redeem for those who have been once thrown out to the dregs of society; Iranian dogs seems to occupy these „dregs” for a long time.
We should remember here, that in the Islamic-Persian culture, in contrary to the previous and elder Zoroastrian one, the dog is recognised as a *heyvān-e naĝes* ‘dirty/impure animal’, mostly because of some traditional opinion stemming from the Prophet Muhammad’s surroundings. According to the popular tradition, Muhammad was bitten by some rabid dogs and survived only thanks to his favourite she-cat named Muʻizza who was licking him (cf. Geyer 2004: 4, 28; Stall 2007: 40).

This unfavourable attitude toward the dog is, of course, preserved both in the folklore, and some popular statements repeated by the parents who want to frighten their child or children. In a classical ethnological work by Hedāyat we can read that:

> Every time when someone is frightened of a dog, he (or she) should say this passage from the *Qur’ān: wa kalbuhum bāsitu zirā' ayhe bi-âlwāsīd*27, since this line is about a seven youths’ dog that put its had on its two paws and felt asleep. That is why, every dog that hears this line, becomes quite and gentle (Hedāyat 1342hš: 139 – trans. MK).28

> **Gā-yi na-rou age nemi-hāy sag gāz-et be-gir-e** ‘Stay here if you don’t want to be bitten by a dog!’ cautions a mum her son or daughter with words that used her mother, even if it is not true. In this situation the tradition and traditional instilled fear toward the dog seems to be stronger than the reality. Fore sure, no Iranian mother or father will agree to keep a dog found in front to the child’s school at home. If it was a bird, or even a cat, it would be a different story, but any dog must stay out.

The dog is not perceived positively. Sometimes it is still connected with the death as its herald (maybe it is an echo of old Zoroastrian believes?):

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26 In Zoroastrianism dogs play a significant role during some religious ceremonies, mostly funeral like sag-did. As explains Modi (1922: 56–58) there are several different explanations why during the funeral ceremony a four-eyed dog (a dog with two eye-like spots just above the eyes) is made to see the corpse, but a similar custom can be trace also in some other cultures, e.g. Indian.

27 Their dog lay at the cave’s entrance with legs outstretched (Dawood 1983: 92).

28 This seven youths’ dog (New Persian: *sag-e ashab-e kahf* ‘dog of seven sleepers/dog of friend of cave’) derives from a legend about seven Christian youths who refused to worship some pagan deities. According to the Christian version prepared by Gregory of Tours (540–594) and presented in his *De gloria martyrum*, they hidden from the world and felt asleep in a cave near to Ephesus, during the reign of Decius (249–251), and waked up after two hundred years, during the reign of Theodosius I (379–395). According to the Islamic version, they were sleeping for three hundred and six years. All the time a sleeping dog accompanied them. This protective dimension of dog appears later in some prayers and religious sentences related to Hoseyn, Ali’s son who was killed in 680 in Karbala (today’s Iraq) by the forces of the second caliph of the Ummayad dynasty – Yazid I (680–683). Some very religious shi’a Muslims say: **Man sag-e dargâh-e Hoseyn-am** ‘I am a dog watching Husayn’s tomb’, to express their devotion toward savagely and cruelly killed Huseyn.
If a dog howls, in the neighborhood a notable will die (Šokurzâde 1346hš: 280 – trans. MK).

When a dog howls at night, it is a bad omen, because someone will die. And if it howls behind the door, a household member should move (Hedâyat 1342hš: 138 – trans. MK).

Surprisingly, the dog has also some magical or supernatural power, because, if a dog sees that a man is eating something, and will not receive any morsel, the man will become ill, or suffer a terrible pain (cf. Hedâyat 1342hš: 138–139). Even if some of today’s representatives of Iranian high and middle class living in some big cities (mostly Tehran) keep a dog at home,29 this animal is still welcomed as unpleasant and keep mostly only by shepherds (cf. Majd 2010: 31).

The Iranian reader would look at the whole Nicolas-Nikulâ’s story from an another point of view. Especially if he/she keeps in mind a short film by Abbas Kiyârostami entitled Nun-o kuće (Bread and alley). It is a simple story of a small boy who has bought some bread and is getting back home, when suddenly a hungry, dangerous (?), homeless dog appears in the middle of his way. Since there is no help and the boy is really afraid of the dog, the whole situation seems to be hopeless. The only way to escape is to throw some bread to the dog. At the end of the film, the boy closes the door of his house, while the dog decides to go away and find probably another boy who will give him some bread too. On the other hand, they can remember an animated Iranian serial for children entitled Hune-ye máдарbozorge ‘Grandmother’s house’30 which all heroes were animal puppets. Among different animals there was also a dog – Hâpu Kumâr.31 Just like Pât, Hâpu Kumâr, a Hindu, waits for its owner, whom it will go back home with. Contrary to Pât, its live is not miserable.

Rain

Moi, je ne comprends pas monsieur Bordenave quand il dit qu’il n’aime pas le beau temps. C’est vrai ça, la pluie ce n’est pas chouette (Sempé, Goscinny 2011 : 142).

29 Keeping a dog can be also recognised as a kind of objection toward the official policy. In the last film by Bahman Qobâdi (1348â/-1969â-) entitled Kas-i az gorbe-hâ-ye irâni habar na-dâr-ad (No-one knows about Persian cats) about two young Iranians – Aškan and Nagar, who are trying to establish a music band and get out of Iran, we can see a significant scene. Both are driving a car with a small dog, when they are suddenly stopped by the police, only because of the dog, which were called as sag-e nağes ‘dirty/impure dog’ and taken away by the law-watchmen. The whole movie offers quite good and interesting perspective of today’s Iran, mostly because it explores its underground music scene.

30 Hune-ye máдарbozorge directed by Marziye Barumand appeared in the second channel of Iranian television for the first time in 1366hš/1987.

31 Hâpu Kumâr’s name refers to a New Persian onomatopoeia ḥâp-ḥâp ‘bow-bow’ and noun hâpu – a childish word for ‘dog’. Its surname Kumâr refers to popular Hindu surname Kumâr.
The place and role of a rain in Persian and French cultures seems to be slightly different. Mostly because of some geographical and climatic questions. Only three small lowlands by the Caspian Sea – Gilân, Mazanderân and Gorgân placed in the northern Iran, are green regions with the pleasant climate reminding our Polish. Other regions are hotter and drier, even if in winter it snows there too. Maybe that is why, in the classical ethnological work by Šokurzâde on the folklore of east Iranian province – Horâsân, we can find a call-for-rain song composed in local dialect of Persian:

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attalavo mattalo / ey ʰodâ ba-ru ko
ba ru-ye ovšâlu ko / taliye mā tošna şode
var kuho var pošte şode / ʿabe qadreš ma-ye
čomče-ye šir-eš ma-ye gandom / de zire hâke
az tošnegi halâke / ey ʰodā ba ru-ye ko
ba ru-ye ovšâlu ko / var čo-ye čoppono ko
čoppo panir ma-ye / non-e patir ma-ye
bar-eš mi-aye gel ma-šu / gandom daro bidel ma-šu (...) (Šokurzâde 1349hš: 372)

Scarecrow, scarecrow / O God, give us some rain
Let it rain as a waterfall / our scarecrow is thirsty
Went to mountains and to valleys / water wants a pool
Milk scoop wants / wheat is under the dust
Is dying of thirst / O God,, give us some rain
Let it rain as a waterfall / let it rain on shepherds’ club
Shepherds want cheese / unleavened bread wants (...) (trans. MK)
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Nicolas does not have to like when it rains, but Nikulâ should have another vision of rain. He should, just like some students, which I saw during my stay in Tehran, and who were dancing in the rain, because it brought refreshment after some very hot days that summer. Rain seems to be a magical thing, a kind of salvation or re-birth, like for Tuba, the heroin of the Šahrnuš Pârsipur’s roman Tubâ va ma'ná-ye sab (Tuba and the meaning of night) who felt free from her former husband just in the moment when, after a few completely dry years, started to rain (cf. Pârsipur 2009: 9ff).

**Bibliography**


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32 Of course, expect the southern regions of Iran.
Le présent article constitue un recueil assez hétéroclite de différentes remarques et commentaires culturels, linguistiques et traductologiques à propos de la traduction persane du *Le petit Nicolas*. Les cinq parties sont consacrées respectivement : au langage de cette œuvre, aux titres de certains chapitres, aux injures utilisées, au chien appelé Rex et à la pluie. Leur pivot commun est le personnage principal du petit Nicolas français et de Nikulâ iranien. Mon but a été plutôt d’indiquer les endroits qui placent l’œuvre un peu dans un autre cadre culturel que de démonter précisément le texte pour montrer chaque piège possible tendu au traducteur.