

Le Petit Prince et les amis au pays des traductions. Études dédiées à Urszula Dąmbska-Prokop
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*French Le petit Nicolas and
Iranian Nikolâ-kučulu
– Five Essays*

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/2004-5.¹

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.

Nicolâ'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-

¹ The first Persian translation of *Le petit Nicolas* was made by Ğamšid Arġmand published in 1363hš (1984/85). Other translation were made by Amir-Hoseyn Mehdi-zâde, Faribâ Sa'âdat, Âfâq Hâmed-Hâsemi 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-Nikolâ describes one of his classmates and close friends – Alceste (Persian: Âlsest), 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).

Âlsest dust-e man ast. heyli čâq ast va dâ'em čiz mi-hor-ad. u dâšt yek gâz be nân-o morabbâ-š mi-zad ke akkâs be-heš goft ke čiz na-hor-ad. vali Âlsest ġavâb dâd ke lâzem ast ke čiz bo-hor-ad (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 7).²

Nicolas-Nikolâ 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-Âlsest. The main stylistic feature of the above mentioned fragment is frequent repetition of verb *hordan* '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-Nikolâ'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

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 *heyli 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 heyli 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 construction *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 Âlsest *nân-o morabbâ* 'bread and jam'.

(4) Alceste says that *il fallait bien qu'il se nourrisse*, while Âlsest – *lâzem ast ke čiz bo-hor-as* 'it is important him to eat something', French verb *se nourrir* was translated as *hordan*, 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 belong 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-Âlsest 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 (Sempé, Gosciny 2011: 30).

Âlsest dust-e man ast. bačče-ye čâq-i ast va dust dâr-ad dâ’em čiz bo-*hor*-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 Âl-e 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 Âl-e Ahmad’s main character depicts his classmate named Močul this way:

ke ân mard-e eynaki raft birun va bâ yek pesar-e češm-dorošt bar-gašt. češm-hâ-yaš ân 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 dâq šod-am (Âl-e 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 looses/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 (literary: to eat something)’), we have also *zamin hordan* ‘to tumble, to fall down (literally: to eat the ground)’ and *kotak hordan* ‘to be bitten (literary: 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-*hor*-ad* ‘he likes always to eat something’ with the adverb *dâ’em* ‘constant, continual, permanent’, that emphasises Alcestes-Âlsest’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’adat 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 Âl-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).

heyf ast ke be 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 kardé-am (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 1).⁷

The Agnan-Ânyân’s language reminds literary and not simple childish Persian; even if he is called *aziz karde hânôm-e mo’allem* ‘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:

heyf e ke dars-e hesâb na-res-im. heyli dust-eš dâr-am va hamme-ye masale-hâ-m-o ham doross 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, Gosciny 2011: 9)

vây, šomâ ke sar tâ pâ siyâh šode-id (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 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, Gosciny 2011 : 11).

mi-rav-i sar-e ġâ-t yâ na! (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 7)¹⁰

he shouts:

mi-r-i sar-e ġâ-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 *ġâ-t* 'your place' – to spoken (it replaces literary form *ġâ-yat*). 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 Geofroy (Persian: Žufravâ) and the mentioned above photographer:

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

(Geofroy) 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, Gosciny 2011: 10)

(the photographer) in yek ġab'e ast, âqâ-kučulu. hâlâ az-aš parande-ye kučulu-yi dar mi-â-yad.

finally disappears, that remains only *a*. Since the final vowel *a* always changes into *e*, instead of *ast* we have a simple *e* (*ast* → *ass* → *as* → *a* → *e*).

(2) The postposition of the definite direct object *-râ* changes into *-o* or *-ro* after the vowel.

(3) Reduction of the 1st sing. possessive pronoun *-am* (and all others) after the vowel to *-m*.

(4) The forms of present perfect, like *hal kardé-am*, reduced in colloquial Persian to *hal kard-âm* 'I have solved'; only the accent put on the ending of the 1st sing. *-am* distinguishes this form *hal kârd-am* 'I solved'.

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.

(Žufravâ) in durbin-e šomâ kohne ast. bâbâ-m yek durbin barâ-m *haride* ke zedd-e nur ast, bâ obžektiv-e kânon-e kutâh va teleobžektiv va, albatte, bâ ekrân... (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 6)¹¹

where the forms: *az-aš* ‘(here:) from inside’, *bâbâ-m* ‘my dad’, *barâ-m haride* ‘he has bought for me’ belongs to the spoken Persian, not written; their classical written forms are: *az ân*, *bâbâ-yam* or *bâbâ-ye man* and *barâ-yam* or *barâ-ye man haride-ast*. If we want to change the dialog into spoken tongue, it should be written as follows:

(the photographer) in ye ġabe-yi-s, âqâ-kučulu, ke az-aš hâlâ parande-yi kučulu dar miy-â-d.

(Žufravâ) durbin-etun kohn as. bâbâ-m ye durbin-i barâ-m *haride* ke zedd-e nur e, bâ obžektiv-e kânon-e kutâh va teleobžektiv va, albatte, bâ ekrân...

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’âdat, 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 Persian should Nikolâ and *hânom-e mo’allem* ‘Mrs. Teacher’ talk, she could look into the short story by Âl-e Ahmad mentioned above. When boys were playing during the break on the school playground, their director was constantly shouting:

age âftâb mi-hây in var, age sâye mi-hây un var (Âl-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’âdat was asked to translate this sentence into Persian from an made-up English-original text, she would use the literary language:

¹¹ 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, âqâ-kučulu* ‘it is a box, little mister’ and

(2) *hâlâ az-aš parande-ye kučulu-yi dar mi-â-yad* ‘and now flies a tiny bird from inside’, where the connection was expressed by the possessive pronoun *-aš* ‘his, her, its’ added to the preposition *az* ‘from’ and representing in the second sentence the noun *ġa’be* ‘box’ from the first one.

agar âftâb mi-hâh-i in var, agar sâye mi-hâh-i ân var.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-kučulu 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?

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 *Un souvenir qu'on va chérir* as *Aks-e yâdegâri* ‘souvenir/memorial photography’. Although Gosciny does not determine the form of *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.¹³ There is no trace of French *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 *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 (Sempé, Gosciny 2011: 22).

¹² Linguistic comment:

(1) *agar* ‘if’ → **aga* → *age*: *r* weakens and disappears, final *a* always changes into *e*;

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

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

¹³ The French indefinite article *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*.

Nikolâ slightly changes the content, calls *bouillon-buyun* as *âbgušt*¹⁴ and builds a new picture:

mâ be nâzem mi-guy-im “buyun”. albatte vaqt-i ke hod-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).

Nikolâ 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 hâl-am heyli bad bud, dalil-aš 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 čerâ, hâl-am heyli bad šod (Sâmpe, Gusini 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 *na* ‘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 hâme-mân raftam* can be translated as 'I quitted 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*.¹⁷ 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.

Nicolas-Nikolâ seems to be quite an emotional boy, who easily expresses his joy, but much more easily his irritation; just like some of his class-mates who announce their angriness (and not only) with some "strong words".

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).

be kelâs ke bar gašt-im, hânom-e mo'allem az Ğoĝo pors-id: «*ħub tafrih kard-i?*» Ânyân boland šod va goft: «*hânom-e mo'allem, bačče-hâ be-heš kalame-hâ-ye zešt yâd mi-deh-and!*» Kelotar ke zang-e tafrih birun na-rafte bud dâd zad: «*doruq mi-guy-i, doruqu-ye kasif!*» Ğoĝo goft: «*ħol, dalqak, doruqu-ye kasif*» (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 54).

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:

¹⁷ 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 mi-kon-ad?» Žofravâ ke dâšt damâq-aš-râ mi-mâlid, goft: «Ahmaq-ğân, mi-hâh-ad bâ to boks bâzi kon-ad» (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 53).

Žofravâ's expression *ahmaq-ğân* 'dear fool'¹⁸ 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 ex-pressions, 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',¹⁹ (2) *costaud* 'tough' and *t'es costaud*,²⁰ and three naïve and unsophisticated expressions (3) *vilain cafard* 'ugly, nasty, naughty cockroach', (4) *espèce (de) guignol* 'you damned puppet',²¹ 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'²² and for *espèce (de) guignol* – *dalqak* 'clown, fool, jester'.²³ And adds two other expressions: *vahši* 'savage, wild, rude, barbarian' and *bitarbiyat* 'ill-bred, rude, impolite'.²⁴

All of Sa'âdat's proposition keeps the same, childish register. Even if they do not fit the French pseudo-invectives,²⁵ they clearly refer to the Persian spoken by children like Nikolâ. What is more, *hol*, *ğâsus-e kasif* and *dalqak* bring the Iranian

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).

az madrese ke âmad-am birun, dombâl-e yek sag-e kučulu râh oftâd-am. engâr sag-e kučulu gom šode bud. del-am be hâl-aš suht. fekr kard-am ke sag-e kučulu hošhâl mi-šav-ad agar dust-i peydâ kon-ad. heyli zahmat kešid-am tâ hod-am-râ be-heš resând-am. čun ziyâd meyl na-dâšt ke bâ man biy-ây-ad, va lâbad be man e'temâd nemi-kard, man nesf-e nun-e šokolâti-am-râ be-heš dâd-am, va tâ nân-e šokolâti-râ horad, benâ kard dom-aš-râ be in taraf-o ân taraf tekân dâdan, va man esmaš-râ gozâšt-am reks, mesl-e ân film-e polisi ke panğamše-ye gozašte dide budam (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 43).

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 Sâdeq-e Hedâyat (1281–1330hš/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 baker's it was bitten with a baker-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 1342hš: 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,²⁶ the dog is recognised as a *heyvân-e nağes* ‘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 Mu^cizza 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 Hedâyat we can read that:

Every time when someone is frightened of a dog, he (or she) should say this passage from the *Qur’ân*: *wa kalbuhum bāsitu zirā’ayhe bi-ālwāsīdi*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 (Hedâyat 1342hš: 139 – trans. MK).²⁸

Ĝâ-yi na-rou age nemi-hây sag gâz-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?):

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 ashâb-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 Ummayyad 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 kept 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 kuče* (*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 mâdarbozorge* 'Grandmother's houses'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 life 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 (1348-/1969-) 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 mâdarbozorge* 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 *hâp-hâp* 'bow-bow' and noun *hâpu* – a childish word for 'dog'. Its surname Kumâr refers to popular Hindu surname Kumâr.

man nemi-fahm-am čerâ âqâ-ye burdnâv mi-guy-ad ke xoš-eš nemi-ây-ad havâ âftâbi be-šav-ad. âxar magar bârân ke mi-ây-ad xub ast? (Sâmpe, Gusini 1383hš: 133).

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.³² 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:

attalavo mattalo / ey hodâ ba-ru ko
 ba ru-ye ovšâlu ko / taliye mâ tošna šode
 var kuho var pošte šode / âbe qadreš ma-ye
 čomče-ye šir-eš ma-ye gandom / de zire hâke
 az tošnegi halâke / ey hodâ 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 want (...) (trans. MK)

Nicolas does not have to like when it rains, but Nikulâ should have some other 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'nâ-ye šab* (*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).

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³² Of course, expect the southern regions of Iran.

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Résumé

Le petit Nicolas français et *Nikulâ-kučulu* iranien – cinq essais

Le présent article constitue un recueil assez hétéroclite de différentes remarques et commentaires culturels, linguistiques et traductologiques à propos de la traduction persane du *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 démontrer précisément le texte pour montrer chaque piège possible tendu au traducteur.

Streszczenie

Francuski *Le petit Nicolas* i irański *Nikulâ-kučulu* – pięć szkiców

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi dość luźny zbiór różnych uwag i komentarzy kulturo-, języko- i przekładowych do perskiego przekładu *Le petit Nicolas*. Pięć poszczególnych części poświęconych odpowiednio językowi tego dzieła, wybranym tytułom jego rozdziałów, zastosowanym przekleństwom, psu imieniem Rex oraz deszczowi łączy postać głównego bohatera Mikołajka, czyli francuskiego Nicolasa i irańskiego Nikulâ. Moim celem było nie tyle dokładne rozmontowanie tekstu, po to, by wskazać każdą możliwą pułapkę czyhającą na tłumacza, ile wskazanie takich miejsc, które luźno umieszczają dzieło w innych ramach kulturowych.

