

In the name of God



SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**A CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF
SOCIOLOGICAL VARIABLE—POWER AND
SOCIAL DISTANCE—OF POLITENESS: A CASE
STUDY OF *JANE EYRE* AND ITS
TRANSLATIONS.**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL FULLFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis was composed by me, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| A | Advice |
| A.O | Acceptance of Offer |
| B&L | Brown & Levinson |
| C | Confession |
| Ch | Challenge |
| Co | Complaint |
| Cr | Criticism |
| D | Disagreement |
| DA | Dare |
| DCT | Discourse Completion Task |
| E.L | Emotion Leakage |
| EX | Excuse |
| EX.D | Expression of Disapproval |
| EX.s | Expression of strong emotion toward Hearer |
| EX.T | Expression of Thank |
| FTA | Face Threatening Act |
| H | Hearer |
| I | Insult |
| MP | Modal Person |
| O | Order |
| P | Promise |
| R | Request |
| Re | Reprimand |

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| S | Suggestion |
| S | Speaker |
| S-H | Self-Humiliation |
| ST | Source Text |
| TQS | Translation Quality Assessment |
| TT | Target Text |
| UN. | Unwilling Offer |
| W | Warning |

Dedication

To my caring parents

ABSTRACT

Even though, to date, a lot of studies have been conducted on the subject of politeness theory, there are very few studies regarding the applicability of this theory to translation between English and Persian which shows the reason behind conducting the present study. This study was carried out with the aim of highlighting whether there is any difference between English and Persian methods of using the politeness strategies that may lead to a difficulty of translation in the context of novel translation. Further, it attempted to assess the quality of three different translations of the same specified novel, i.e. *Jane Eyre*, from English into Persian. In order to answer the first question, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was utilized along with Farahzad's principles of translation quality assessment as the frameworks of analysis. To increase the consistency of the ratings, besides the researcher, two more raters were asked to assess the quality of translations. The data gathered, then, were put to SPSS software to calculate the inter-rater reliability. As to the first question, the results showed that there was relatively no difficulty in translating politeness strategies from English into Persian. As to the second question, the results showed that the three Persian translations of the novel were of different levels of quality. The results of this study can be used for different purposes such as translator training, literary translation courses, discourse analysis courses, and second language learning and teaching. The pragmatic results will also broaden the information as to the politeness theory in pragmatics.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

When we as readers look at a sentence, we may find out its superficial meaning at the first sight. Inferring the superficial meaning of an utterance has been regarded as the work of semantics while the other meaning inferred from a sentence in a certain context is considered as the job of pragmatics. Since the 1950s, linguists have regarded pragmatics as one of the significant areas in the field of linguistics. Some language scholars such as European scholars include some sociological concepts such as address terms in the area of pragmatics. However, the sub-discipline of pragmatics is generally divided into such sub-categories as discourse organization, conversational analysis, speech acts, conversational implicature, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use.

One of the subfields of pragmatics related to the present study is conversational implicature. To clarify the subject, it should be mentioned that Grice (1975) introduced the cooperative principles and four maxims including quantity, quality, manner, and relation. Grice's cooperative principles stimulated some scholars' interest such as Robin Lakoff and Leech. They were the forerunners who postulated the initial model and principle regarding the issue of politeness by using the conversational implicature as one of the subfields of pragmatics. Too many studies have been done by different linguists regarding politeness strategies since 1970. It is worth mentioning that politeness has always been discussed both by the linguists and the sociologists. It is worth mentioning that the European scholars included some sociological aspects, such as politeness, as part of pragmatics.

One of the recent comprehensive models in the realm of politeness has been proposed by Levinson and Brown (1987). They borrowed some concepts from Goffman (1967) and Grice (1975). One of the most significant concepts in Levinson and Brown's politeness model is the term *face* which has been borrowed from the work of Erving Goffman. They hold that the element of face should be protected by the

participants of every interaction. They further introduced some strategies to redress face which is lost through the interaction.

In their modal, Brown and Levinson (1987) worked on the universal concepts because of the fact that some linguists believed that some of the concepts of politeness are culture-bound. They introduced concepts such as face, politeness strategies, losing face, and saving face as the universal concepts. Brown and Levinson's model is somewhat based on the above-mentioned concepts.

To date, most of the studies done in the realm of politeness theory have mainly focused on cross-linguistic or cross-cultural analysis of the politeness strategies used in different languages. Nonetheless, there are a scant number of studies regarding translation of politeness strategies among different languages. This is also the case for translating politeness aspects of the language either from English to Persian or vice versa. Due to sparseness of research on this area of language, especially between Persian and English, the present study was carried out.

Whereas literary translation has always been regarded one of the most problematic areas of translation, this difficulty results from the nature of literary texts. Rather, the structure of some specific literary texts might be too complicated to translate resulting from such factors as complicated structure of the sentences and utterances; intentional ungrammaticality of the sentences; rhymes; rhythms; tone; atmosphere; puns; irony; different types of literary devices; different types of religious elements; and a variety of *cultural, social, and pragmatic* aspects.

This last element, i.e. the *cultural, social, and pragmatic* aspects of *literary texts*, is the focus of the present study. As stated by different scholars such as Brown and Levinson, one of the most important aspects of the world of pragmatics is that of politeness strategies and concepts used in different languages. These politeness strategies and concepts have also been reflected in different literary texts such as novels that must be properly and precisely rendered in the process of translation from ST to TT. However, as the results of the recent studies show, there might be some differences with regard to the politeness strategies utilized in different languages, leading to a difficulty in translating politeness strategies. This is due to the fact that Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies are not, as they claimed, universal as proved by some scholars.

Furthermore, due to the fact that there is an extensive relationship between the knowledge of language, language use, linguistic strategies, and pragmatic and sociocultural aspects of the language, on the one hand, and the practice of translation, on the other, a competent translator must have a full mastery of the abovementioned concepts. Moreover, translations of good quality and adequacy can lead to a better understanding and communication on the part of the addressee (either reader or hearer). This fact was another rationale for conducting the present study since most of the translators do not have a mastery of the abovementioned elements, which leads to delivering a poor translation resulting in a misunderstanding and miscommunication on the part of the addressee.

One of the aims of the study, in general, was to fill in the gap in this area of translation. To this end, the researcher of the present study utilized the Brown and Levinson's politeness to analyze the politeness strategies and concepts in the source text (English) alongside with their translations in the target text (Persian).

With reference to the abovementioned statements, another aim of the present study is to determine the elements that lead to the difficulty of translating politeness strategies in the context of literary texts focusing on translating novels.

1.2. Theoretical framework

In order to answer the research questions, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was utilized. To be more exact, some specific parts of this theory were used both to determine the politeness strategies used in ST and to assess the degree of adequacy of their renderings in TT. In effect, the elements of this theory were utilized as the criteria for both data gathering and data analysis. The rationale behind choosing this theory as the framework of the study was the fact that it was one of most comprehensive theories regarding politeness.

Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as "redressive action taken to counter-balance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts". By "redressive action" they mean action that gives face to the addressee. As mentioned earlier, they have taken the notion of face from Goffman (1967). According to Brown and Levinson (1987) face refers to the public self-image that everyone wants to claim for himself. This concept is divided up into two types as follows:

1. Negative face: the basic claims to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction i.e. to freedom of action and freedom of imposition (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p. 321).

2. Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or personality (including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by the interactants (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p. 321).

In general, people cooperate in maintaining face in interaction. Such cooperation is based on the mutual vulnerability of face. Rather, everyone's face normally depends on everyone else's face being maintained.

Although the content of face will differ across cultures (limits to personal territories, content of personality), Brown and Levinson (1987) assume that the mutual knowledge of members' public face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are *universal*.

They proposed some acts that threaten negative and positive face. These face threatening acts (FTA) are as follows (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p. 324-326):

- ∅ Acts threatening negative face of Hearer (H) such as order and request
- ∅ Acts threatening positive face of Hearer (H) such as complaints and reprimands
- ∅ Those acts that threaten negative face of Speaker (S) such as excuse
- ∅ Those acts that directly damage S's positive face such as apologies

There are some researches that show these face threatening acts may differ across different cultures and different languages (see chapter 2). The following tree diagram shows the summary of politeness theory and its strategies in borrowing a pen.

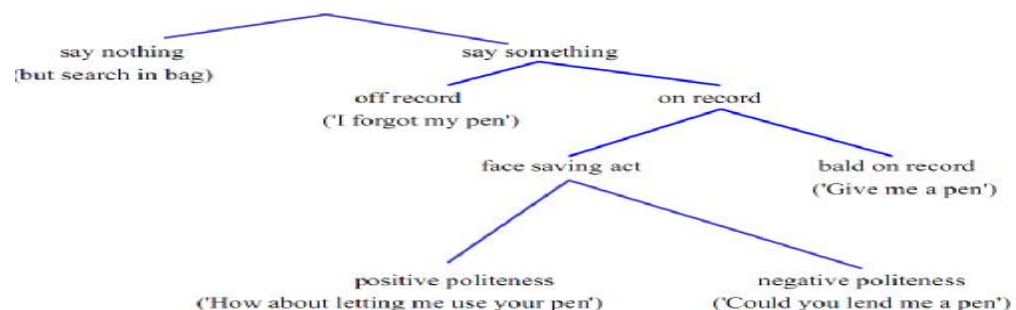


Figure 1. An example on politeness strategies.

Furthermore, for the purpose of translation quality assessment, Farahzad's (1992) principles were followed. Farahzad maintained that two main features should be checked in rating each unit of translation. Those features are as follows:

1. Accuracy: the translation should convey the information in the ST precisely i.e. the translation should be close to the ST.
2. Appropriateness: the sentences should sound fluent and native, and be correct in terms of structure.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Pragmatics and its subfields are utilized as fundamental tools in many fields. One of those fields that exploit the pragmatic devices is translation. Pragmatics entered the realm of translation in the 1990s. Baker was one of the translation scholars who considered various aspects of pragmatic in the realm of translation. Baker (1992) defined pragmatics as the study of language in use while translation is an instance of language in use. It is the study of meaning, not as generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by the participants in a communicative situation.

It should be noted that one of the pragmatic concepts that have been examined in the realm of translation is implicature or conversational implicature. As mentioned above, it refers to what the speaker implies rather than what he says in an interaction. Translation scholars regard Grice's cooperative principle and maxims as the core of implicature in the realm of translation. In addition, some scholars included politeness as the above-mentioned maxims (quantity, quality, manner, relation). Consideration of pragmatic concepts such as implicature in the realm of translation shows the significance of them for translators. Due to the significance of pragmatic concepts, Baker warned that the translators need to be fully aware of the different cooperative principles in operation in the respective language and culture to be translated. Politeness strategies are among these pragmatic aspects that a translator must be aware of in the process of translation.

As cited above, pragmatics is concerned with the meaning related to the context and the intention of the author. Since there might be some differences regarding the politeness strategies used in different languages and different cultures, there might be some difficulties with regard to translation of such strategies that must

be taken into account in the process of translation. This can be regarded as a problem in the realm of translation that justifies the conduction of the present study. Further, the scantiness of research on this area of translation can be considered as another rationale behind conducting this study.

1.4. Significance of the study

In this study, the researcher used some concepts of the politeness theory to demonstrate the significance of politeness strategies in the realm of translation. These concepts included sociological variables which exert influence on choosing politeness strategies for redressing FTA (face threatening act) and saving face. Each politeness strategy applied by the author, according to sociological variables, leads to different styles or registers and makes the task of translation difficult. Recognition of sociological variables and politeness strategies (in both SL and TL), through conducting this study, facilitates translating on the part of the translators and leads to a better understanding of the translation on the part of the readers.

Pragmatically speaking, politeness is an integral part of any language in use. Pragmatics and translation are inevitably interlinked. Today, pragmatics has become more significant in the realm of translation. As it is crystal clear pragmatics is specifically concerned with the study of language in use and the intention beyond the meaning. Therefore, in order to convey the appropriate and intended message from one language to another language precisely, the translator should be completely aware of the meaning beyond the source text as well as the intention of the author. This also can be regarded as a significance of the present study.

1.5. Aims of the study

To date, translation has occupied a high position in our culture and our life. One aim of the present study was to draw the translators' and linguistic scholars' attention to the influence of politeness strategies in their translations. Another aim was to see whether there existed any differences between English and Persian regarding the methods of using the politeness strategies that might make the translation of sociological variables difficult.

Today pragmatics has occupied a high position in translation studies because of the fact that it facilitates the task of translation. A further goal of the present study was to assess the quality of translation of the respective sociological variables (from English to Persian).

1.6. Research questions

In this study, the following questions were determined to be answered:

1) Do the translators of *JANE EYRE* written by Charlotte Bronte convey the sociological variables—power, and distance—appropriately from the source text to the target text (from English into Persian)?

2) Are there any differences between Persian and English regarding the methods of using the politeness strategies that might make the translation of sociological variables difficult?

1.8. Definition of key terms

Model person (MP)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), many different people can participate in social interaction, but evaluation standard of Brown and Levinson in their model is Model person (MP) who has mastery of natural language and enjoys two properties, rationality and face.

Rationality

Rationality is practical reasoning which allows one to pass from ends to means and perhaps further means, while preserving the satisfactoriness of those means. In other word, a person who wants to reach a particular end, mull over the various available means and chooses what he considers to be the most adequate means under the circumstances, (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 64-65, 87-91).

Face

Face is a key term in politeness theory proposed by Levinson and Brown. *Face is the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself (universal in lang.)*. Face is something that permanently participates in social interactions. In social

interactions, it can be lost, saved, or enhanced. It is divided into two aspects: negative face and positive face (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.321).

Negative face

The want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others. Every competent adult person need to be independent, to have freedom of action, not be imposed on by others(Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.321).

Positive face

The want of every member that his wants be desirable to some others. Member likes to be accepted, to be treated as a member of the same group, to know that wants are shared by others (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.321).

Face threatening act (FTA)

Act that threatens speaker and hearer's face is called face threatening act. The act can be both verbal and nonverbal communication (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.324).

Strategies for doing FTAs

Because of vulnerability of face, participants participated in social interactions try to avoid or to minimize FTAs by applying certain strategies. Participants according their wants decide whether do FTA or not. Strategies for doing FTA are classified under two categories: a) on record, and b) off record (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.326).

On record

The addressor or the speaker utters his wants or intentions explicitly and without any minimizing the threat to hearer's face. This kind of strategies occurs in interactions which are exchanged between those who have a close relationship (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.327). For instance: *pass me the salt*.

Off record

Contrary to on record, in off record strategies, the addressor or the speaker utters his wants or intentions indirectly. Therefore; for instance, if I say "*damn, I am*

out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today”, I may be intending to get you to lend me some cash, but I cannot be held to have committed myself to that intent (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.327).

Positive politeness

In positive strategies, the addressor or the speaker tries to minimize the threat to hearer’s positive face. They are used to make the hearer feel good about himself, his interests or possessions, and are most usually used in situations where the audience knows each other fairly well (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.328). For example: *What is wrong? Can I help you?*

Negative politeness

Negative politeness is somehow hearer’s negative face-oriented. It means that the addressor or the speaker tries to minimize the threat to hearer’s negative face (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.328). For example: *Would you please pass me the salt?*

Sociological variables

One of the factors that determine choosing the above-mentioned strategies is the sociological variable. Sociological variables are consisted of social distance, power, and rank of imposition (severity of acts). They require the participant to choose the certain strategies in social interaction (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.331). **Social distance (A symmetric relation)**

The relationship among individuals of a society is usually called social distance. The relationship between two individuals of a society may be close. In this situation, we claim that degree of social distance is low. The reverse is also the case. Rather, if the relationship between the same individuals is not close, the degree of social distance will be high (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.331).

Power (An asymmetric relation)

There is a difference among individuals of a society in terms of power. For example, there is an equal power relation between two colleagues of the same rank (Jaworski&Coupland, 2006, p.331).