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Terms of Address in The Second-Person Singular and Their Translation from French into Hebrew Subtitles in Two Movies “Entre les Murs” and “La Journée de la Jupe”

M.A. Thesis

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Abstract

This paper examines the terms of address in the second-person singular and their translation from French to Hebrew subtitles in two movies: ‘Entre les Murs’ (2008) and ‘La Journée de la Jupe’ (2009). The two movies share the general school framework and, in particular, the one of the classroom, where the plots take place in Paris in the first decade of the 21st century. The main points differing them are the students' age where those in the first are in middle school and in the latter are in high school, and the presence of a gun in ‘La Journée de la Jupe’.

This study focuses on the characteristics of power balance structuring, using terms of address in the second-person singular, especially when the speakers are engaged on power conflict — either within conventions or by breaching them. It is based on examination of the terms of address as a lingual means with two main layers: it reflects power balance present in the discourse on the one side, and restructures them on the other side. In French, the terms of address to a singular appellant are characterized by usage of the Tu personal pronoun (second person singular pronoun) or Vous (second person plural pronoun, also used as address to a singular appellant), hereunder the T/V system. Usually, a mutual T-address reflects and structures a symmetric relation, whereas a V-address reflects and structures an asymmetric relation if it is not mutual, or maintains a distance between the speakers if it is mutual. In this latter case, it is not marked. An exception of this rule

is the common T-address of an adult to a child (up to puberty at around 15) that is unmarked. Hebrew does not support such distinction and any second personal pronoun requires only a distinction of sex and quantity. The T/V system is a lingual means for positioning the speakers in French and does not exist in Hebrew. Therefore, this is **a culture-related pragmatic void** (Weizman, 2010.)

Symmetric and asymmetric power balances exist within the school system and it is dictated by an agreed hierarchy from the pyramid's top – the principal, to its base – the students. Abiding to the conventions maintains the hierarchal order and preserves the initial positioning of every functionary in this pyramid. In the pyramid's top layers, teacher and principal apply to one another using a mutual V, while the teachers apply to one another with a mutual T. In the lower layers, as a matter of norm in both movies, the students use the V-address towards the teacher as part of the discourse within the classroom. However, the address of the teacher towards a student differs between the movies due to the difference of students' ages. In the movie 'Entre les Murs', students are 13 to 14 and are still regarded as children, therefore the teacher uses the T-address; in 'La Journée de la Jupe', students are 15 to 17, an age that is in between childhood and adulthood, hence the teacher choses to use the V-address as a matter of norm. Thus, the first movie features **an asymmetric classroom T/V system**, while in the second movie (prior to revelation of the gun), **we witness an asymmetric classroom V/V system**. After the discovery of the gun, the classroom turns into a delinquency zone where the T/V system undergoes fluctuations, affecting the power structuring due to the empowerment of the holder of the gun.

The study examines in both movies the way the translator faces **the pragmatic void**, especially looking for compensation strategies able to convey the impacts of the T/V system and deviations from it, on the power balance structuring in the discourse. In addition, translation of a movie into

subtitles is characterized by shifting from the spoken to the written channel and the necessitated content reduction (Weissbrod, 2007) leading to **selective translation**. Therefore, although the study focuses on the lingual aspect, subject to the limitations of research, it also refers to partial aspects of the audio-visual part (image and intonation) if those contribute the analysis of the power balance in the discourse. The movies are analyzed in separate chapters due to the influence the gun has on the discourse in 'La Journée de la Jupe'.

After demonstrating the school norm in 'Entre les Murs', confrontational scenes were presented in which a student is making an attempt to structure an equalitarian relation with the teacher, or condescend him without violating conventions. These cases demonstrate the **bipolarity of the V-address**, structuring the speaker's second-order positioning. Such a negotiation held as part of the T/V system provides the teacher a fundamental protection over his first-order positioning. Due to the void, Hebrew does not convey this distinction between first-order and second-order positioning. **Violation of conventions** (a student addressing a teacher with T) creates a totally equalitarian power balance, hence a destabilization of the hierarchy and a threat on the teacher's first-order positioning, constituting a crossing of a Rubicon. It should be regarded as the discourse's **breaking point**. Therefore, a case of violation of the conventions is handed for treatment by the top tiers of the school pyramid (principal or disciplinary board.) Due to the void, the translation does not convey such defiance and the resulting power balance structuring (restructuring), but by compensation: e.g. a shift such as the consistent Hebrew equivalent translation of the verb להתחצף (to be impudent) of the French verb *tutoyer* (to address someone with T) ensures a sequence in the attitude of the school to the defying student. The problem of the void stands out also when comparing the punishment imposed on a student that structures a second-order positioning while deviating from the conventions, for which he is sent to the principal's office, to the one imposed

on a student that structures a second-order positioning while maintaining the conventions, for which she is summoned for a talking at the end of class, leaving treatment within the confinement of the classroom.

The severity of the violation is also emphasized at the beginning of 'La Journée de la Jupe' prior to the discovery of the gun. This initial and brief part allowed to extract and highlight the classroom norm and the mutual asymmetric teacher/student V-address.

In the case of a violation in such early stage of the movie, the translator uses an expression with further derogatory nature than the original student's words, ensuring continuity with the teacher's reaction, ordering the student to go to the principal's office. The main body of the analysis focuses on the scenes that take place under the threat of the gun that is in the stage's background or foreground. In this part of the movie, the violation does not hold the same importance given to it by the school as reflecting and structuring a hierarchy, but as structuring a power balance enforced by a gun. As a result of this constant threat, the bipolarity of the T-address is so salient in conversations among students. When the gun is pointed at no one, the address may be shifted to its positive pole of identification as well as to its negative one of alienation, whereas when the conversation is conducted under the threat of the gun, the T-address is shifted to its negative pole of posing a threat. This power balance is translated, using a compensation strategy that relies mainly on the visual part. The teacher's addresses are characterized by fluctuation of the use of the T/V system, and her norm-breaching T-address is then marked. The teacher uses it to structure a circumstantial power balance of affinity, compassion or caring when the T-address leans towards its positive pole, or threat when leaning to the negative one. The students maintain the V-address towards the teacher. Standing out of this rule are a couple of students who are later revealed as delinquents. Analysis of the scenes bring up interesting findings of the need to structure a threat

within the discourse to execute the threat of the gun, and the recurring attempt by the delinquent to structure lingual power against the power of the gun in order to undermine the self-confidence of the holder of the gun.

The Israeli viewer who does not master French has the visual context and the selective information conveyed by subtitles. The subtleties referring to the fluctuations in the T/V addresses are lost in translation. There are compensations that convey the structured power balance in the discourse for as long as the norm-breaching T-address is not cardinal in the movie.

The study indicates that the translation norm of omitting pragmatic elements of the discourse relies on the movie's multimodal nature, from which the spectator takes in information that usually compensates for such omissions. In the event of a violation, a strategy of lingual compensation was devised to ensure a continuity of the plot by way of shifting, based on the textual and visual ambiance enveloping the violation. Comparing the two situations of power confrontations shows that there are instances in which the void is left unsolved, if comparing a conflict case when the student maintains the T/V norm and another when he breaches it.