

# ***DOUBLETS IN TRANSLATION***

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## **Abstract:**

*This paper reviews the literature on the translation of 'doublets' and reports a product-oriented descriptive study on the translation of doublets in the corpus of study, three Persian books translated into English: Bizhan & Manizha (an epic poetry), Selected Poems Divan-e from Shams-e Tabrizi and Man and his Destiny (a religious text). These books vary in genre and cover a time span of over one thousand years. The frequency of doublets are compared to those of other conjoint phrases in the original texts, the relevant adjustments made in their translation are surveyed, and different types of doublets and their equivalents are compared and analysed.*

## Introduction

This study intends to survey the problem of doublets in translation. An assumption stimulated this study: the author believes that Persian prefers the frequent use of doublets; so much so that the use of doublets is now a 'feature of naturalness' in the Persian language. One reason for this was the compromise between two styles of writing, one tending to use Arabic words and the other preferring to use only 'pure' Persian words. As a result of this compromise, doublets like 'عدل و داد' and 'ظلم و ستم' coordinating an Arabic word with a Persian word became common in most Persian literature.

## Definition

'A doublet consists of two near synonymous words or phrases which occur as a unit, for example, **spots and blemishes, holy and righteous, and strangers and foreigners.**'<sup>1</sup>

Gideon Toury (1995) uses the term 'conjoint phrase of (near-) synonyms' instead of 'doublets', and quoting from Quirk et al. 1985: 955, he defines it as follows:

Conjoint phrases of synonyms or (near-) synonyms consist in two (occasionally more than two) (near-) synonymous items of the same part of speech, combined to form a single functional unit. For instance, English **able and talented, law and order, harmless**

**and inoffensive.** [...] When the constitutive elements are nouns, the conjoint phrase may well refer to a single object ( $x+y=x$ ).<sup>2</sup>

Discussing synonyms, Beekman and Callow (1974) define a 'doublet' as follows:

One particular area of the use of synonyms may be of special difficulty to the translator. This is the use of two (or more) synonymous words or expressions together in what they may be termed a 'doublet' or a 'rhetorical parallelism'. In the particular context, there is no focal difference in meaning between the terms used; rather they represent a single concept.<sup>3</sup>

Beekman and Callow give three reasons for the use of doublets as follows:

- (a) to emphasize the idea, or
- (b) to modify the area of meaning slightly, or it may be
- (c) a type of stylistic redundancy.<sup>4</sup>

This study has revealed another reason for the use of doublets:  
(d) a means of defining terms, functioning as an apposition; that is, the second phrase defines the first one in a doublet.

### **Views on the Translation of Doublets**

How is the translator to handle such doublets? According to

Beekman and Callow the basic principle to apply is that the meaning of the doublet is to be preserved faithfully, even if the form cannot be. In fact, the translator should use a doublet form only in those ways and contexts in which it is naturally used in the RL [receptor language]. In practice, this means that a synonymous doublet is often handled by one of the equivalent forms.<sup>5</sup>

Following Beekman and Callow, Mildred L. Larson (1984) expands their view:

If this is characteristic of the source language but not of the receptor language, the translator should not retain the doublet but use the natural [equivalent]. **It may be that, for some receptor languages, doublets will need to be used when the source language does not use them, in order to follow the natural style of the receptor language.** The meaning of the doublet is to be translated faithfully, using whatever form is most natural in the receptor language.<sup>6</sup>

Javad Kamali (1993) agrees with Larson on the statement italicised<sup>3</sup> above (not in the original). Under the subtitle 'افزودن یک یا' (the addition of one or more synonymous words'), he says,

زبان فارسی این امکان را به مترجم می‌دهد که گاهی صرفاً به منظور زیباتر نمودن عبارت یا کاستن از خشکی کلام یک یا چند مترادف برای برخی کلمات جمله بیاورد. کاربرد این شیوه تقریباً نزد همه مترجمان زبردست و نیز مترجمان چند دهه پیش متداول بوده و هست.<sup>7</sup>

Then he provides some instances of such doublets as natural Persian equivalents of French single words, for example:

’عقل و فراست، زبان آوری و فصاحت، ساکت و صامت، التفات و رحمت، بلا و عذاب، مصون و محفوظ، تند و خشن، وقیح و زنده و...’<sup>8</sup>

However, Hassan Lahuti (1997), in a ‘prescriptive’ judgement criticises the rendering of single words into Persian doublets. Under the subtitle ” (‘the necessity of avoiding synonyms’), he says,

به طور معمول رسم بر این است که مترجم در برابر هر یک واحد ترجمه یک معادل فارسی انتخاب کند. استفاده از کلمات مترادف، یا حداقل دو کلمه در برابر یک واحد ترجمه، اگر از حد بگذرد بر حجم کتاب می‌افزاید و علاوه بر آن بیانگر این واقعیت است که مترجم در انتخاب یکی از دو واژه مترادف سرگردان مانده است. وقتی می‌توانیم در برابر هر واحد یک کلمه‌ای ترجمه تنها یک کلمه فارسی اختیار کنیم مجاز نیستیم کلام را طولانی کنیم مگر به واقع یک کلمه فارسی رساننده معنای کامل نباشد که در این صورت از دو کلمه به صورت مترادف مکمل معنا می‌توانیم استفاده کنیم. با کمال تأسف استفاده از واژه‌های مترادف در ترجمه فارسی این کتاب بیش از حد مجازست که برخی از آنها را برای نمونه نقل می‌کنم؟<sup>9</sup>

Then he gives some instances of such doublets which he thinks

the translator should have avoided; for example,

Source Language (English)	Target Language (Persian)
broad	وسیع و گسترده
appearance	ظهور و نمود
proud	فخر و مباهات
inflated	بزرگ و متورم

### Doublets and Conjoint Phrases: A Descriptive Study Order

As Larson says, 'Certain combinations which commonly occur together often do so in a fixed order. If the order is changed, the result will sound unnatural to the native speaker of the language. In English, some examples are **bread and butter**, **day and night**, **knife and fork**, **black and blue**, **ladies and gentlemen**, and **rant and rave**.'<sup>10</sup>

This implies that the order of words in conjoint phrases may change in translation from one language into another. For example, the English fixed combinations, **husband and wife** and **you and I**, are expressed in the opposite order 'زن و شوهر' ('wife and husband') and 'من و تو' ('I and you') in Persian.

### Conjunctions

'And' is the usual conjunction used to join the two parts of a conjoint phrase. Other conjunctions are also used. However,

English and Persian may differ in using certain conjunctions to make conjoint phrases.

*Table 1. Conjoint phrases in Bizhan and Manizha*

	doublets	antonyms	hyponyms	proper names	person-thing	total
No change	5	4	69	16	6	100
Change in the order	--	8	12	1	--	21
Change of the conjunction	--	6	35	4	1	46
One word as equivalent	6	1	9	--	1	17
	0.545	0.054	0.072		0.125	
Number & Percentage of cases	11	19	125	21	8	184
	0.059	0.103	0.679	0.114	0.043	

*Table 2. Conjoint phrases in Selected Poems from the  
Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*

	doublets	antonyms	hyponyms	proper names	person- thing	total
No change	45	18	97	10	6	176
Change in the order	---	3	8	---	2	13
Change of the conjunction	4	3	8	---	---	15
One word as equivalent	12 0.0196	1 0.04	2 0.017	---	---	15
Number & Percentage of cases	61 0.278	25 0.114	115 0.525	10 0.045	8 0.036	219



*Table 3. Conjoint phrases in 30 pages of Man and His Destiny*

	doublets	antonyms	hyponyms	proper names	person-thing	total
No change	80	17	70	5	3	176
Change in the order	---	1	9	2	---	12
Change of the conjunction	11	9	20	---	2	42
One word as equivalent	84	3	6	---	---	93
	0.48	0.10	0.057			
Number & Percentage of cases	175 0.543	30 0.093	115 0.525	7 0.21	5 0.015	322

Bruce R. Moore (1972) distinguishes the following semantic categories of doublets: synonymous, near-synonymous, repetitive, generic-specific, positive-negative, figurative-non-figurative.<sup>11</sup> During this study, another category is discovered in Persian: singular-plural.

**Table 4. Comparison of types of doublets in the three books studied**

	synonymous			near synonym	repetitive	generic- specific	positive negative	Figurative non- figurative	singular plural
B/M		5		1	1	4	--	--	--
sh/Tab	6	10	11	11	21	2	--	--	--
M/D	25	1	30	96	5	4	6	3	4

### Notes

1. A/A= Arabic+Arabic; P/P= Persian+Persian; A/P=Arabic+Persian; B/M=Bizhan and Manizha; Sh/Tab=Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi; M/D=Man and his Destiny
2. No instance of 'passive-active' type of doublet was found in this study.
3. One instance of 'Arabic-English synonymous doublet', 'سیاست و پولیتیک', was found in *Man and his Destiny*. The translator has used 'the government's policy' as its equivalent.

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### Examples of Doublets in Translation

The following examples have been taken from the three books studied: **Bizhan and Manizha (B/M)**, **Selected Poems from Shams-e Tabrizi (Sh/Tab)** and **Man and his Destiny (M/D)**. Page numbers are mentioned in parantheses.

**A. Synonymous****Arabic+Arabic:**

necessary and binding (Sh/Tab, p. 42)	واجب و لازم
destiny (M/D, 39, 46)	قضا و قدر (25, 26)
certitude (M/D, 44)	تحتّم و قطعیت (23)
God's will (M/D, 41)	اراده و مشیت الهی (28)
His eternal knowledge (M/D, 35)	علم سابق و ماضی او (18)

**Persian+Persian:**

carouse and revelry (Sh/Tab, 146)	رندی و قلاشی
true (M/D, 37)	راست و درست (22)
honesty (M/D, 37)	راستی و درستی (21)
terrifying (M/D, 38)	رعب آور و هراس انگیز (23)

**Arabic+Persian:**

Eden and Rizwan (Sh/Tab, 14)	فردوس و رضوان
mercy and love (Sh/Tab, 82)	رحمت و مهر
without any possibility (M/D, 40)	ممتنع و ناشدنی (26)
any distinction (M/D, 39)	فرقی و تفاوتی (25)
oppressors and tyrants (M/D, 36)	ظالم و ستمگر (19)
the oppressed (M/D, 36)	مظلوم و ستمکش (20)
mischief (M/D, 31)	فساد و تباهی (12)
free (M/D, 26)	حر و آزاد (5)

**B. Near-synonymous**

thy pinions (Sh/Tab, 136)	پر و بال
views (M/D, 42)	نظر و عقیده (30)
expressions (M/D, 43)	اصطلاحات و بیانات (32)
related to (M/D, 44)	مربوط و متکی (32)
doomed to failure (M/D, 45)	محکوم و مردود (34)
how (M/D, 40)	چگونه و از چه راه (27)

**C. Repetitive**

O take heed (Sh/Tab, 120)	هان و هان
every atom (Sh/Tab, 26)	ذره ذره
wailing (Sh/Tab, 86)	های و هوی
a sea of wealth (M/D, 35)	دریا دریا نعمت (19)
ships of misfortunes (M/D, 35)	کشتی کشتی محنت (19)

**D. Generic--Specific**

said (B/M, 222)	پرسید و گفت
approached (B/M, 142)	خرامید و رفت
death on the gibet (B/M, 184)	دار و کشتن

**E. Positive--Negative**

directly (M/D, 44)	مستقیم و بلاواسطه (33)
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determination, lack of freedom (M/D, 38)

جبر و عدم آزادی (23)

#### *F. Figurative--Non-figurative*

silenced (M/D, 37)

ساکت و خاموش (22)

depressed (M/D, 25)

فشرده و افسرده (3)

#### *G. Singular--Plural*

one or a number of the preceding affairs (M/D, 44)

امری یا اموری مقدم بر خود (33)

cause or causes (M/D, 40)

علت یا عللی (26)

### **Conclusion**

The tendency towards the use of doublets has increased since Firdausi's time to a large extent. The ratio of doublets (to the total conjoint phrases) has increased from 0.059% in **Bizhan and Manizha** to 0.54% in **Man and his Destiny** (see tables 1-4). Another tendency is the dominance of 'Arabic+Persian synonymous doublets' over 'Arabic+Arabic' and 'Persian+Persian' types in the modern Persian language. 'Repetitive doublets' seem to be of more use in poetry due to their sound effect. A third observation is the tendency to give one word/phrase as the English equivalent of a Persian doublet,

though R. Nicholson, the translator of **Selected Poems from Shams-e Tabrizi**, does not follow this procedure frequently.

### Notes

1. Mildred L. Larson, **Meaning-base Translation** (Lanham, USA: University Press of America, 1984), p. 156.
2. Gideon Toury, **Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond** (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), p. 103.
3. John Beekman and John Callow, **Translating the Word of God** (USA: The Zondervan Corporation, 1974), p. 181.
4. Ibid., p. 181.
5. Ibid., p. 182.
6. Larson, p. 156.
7. جواد کمالی، 'حذف و اضاف در ترجمه'، مترجم، ۱۱-۱۲ (۱۳۷۲)، ۱۶-۳۰ (۱۷-۱۸).
8. Ibid., p. 18.
9. لاهوتی، حسن، 'ای اوج پیشگویی'، مترجم، ۲۳-۲۴ (۱۳۷۶)، ۴۶-۵۰ (۴۹).
10. Larson, p. 142.
11. See Bruce R. Moore, 'Doublets', **Notes on Translation**, 43 (1972), 3-34.

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