



## A Skopos-based study on translation of interjections from English into Persian in drama

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at researching and investigating the translation of interjections from English into Persian in drama from a skopos-based view. To carry out this study, ten dramas were chosen. Five out of these ten dramas have not been performed on any stages in Iran, but the remaining five dramas were performed at least once. Twenty most commonly used interjections in current English were elicited from Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2009) with their meanings. These interjections were searched in the dramas by the aid of computer softwares (AntConc© And adobe acrobat reader™). Then, the obtained interjections were analyzed through the strategies proposed by Cuenca (2002b). The statistical calculations showed that there is a significant difference between the literal translation and other strategies. This significant difference proved the main hypothesis of the study which was that the most common strategy used for translating interjections by the Persian translators is literal translation. The second hypothesis was proven too in that many interjections used in the Current Persian are the results of interference from English language.

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### Introduction

This study deals with interjections in the translation of English dramas. It compares the use of interjections in original English dramas and their translations. Taking into account the principles of Skopos theory of Vermeer (1984), the researchers have analyzed differences in translation of interjections in two categories of dramas. The first category is the dramas which are not performed on the stage, and the second one is that of dramas which have been performed on the stage by some actors. In fact, the researchers analyzed the translation of interjections regarding the purpose of translation. This topic was chosen because though interjections are a quite important means of expression, no direct attention has been paid to them in linguistics or translation theory. Toury (1995) states that "in translation, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text" (p. 275). So interference is a translation universal, and it is therefore worthy investigating which language features are most liable or permeable to it. Interjections are characteristic features of language, and in this study, the researchers have investigated that to which extent, interjections are liable to interference.

### Skopos Theory

The Greek word Skopos that means aim or purpose was introduced by Vermeer (1984, p. 55). They believe that the translations vary alongside with the skopos of translation. So, for every work to be translated, the translator should at first, define a skopos in decision making process. Again they emphasize on the hierarchy of ST and the translator being knowledgeable enough for identifying these hierarchies. The importance of the different parts of the ST can be evaluated before translation, and the actual time of the changes either before,

during or after the process, is only a practical matter. Let me give an example, a translator who wants to translate a work of Shakespeare, must be familiar with the tiny puns which exist in his works, to be able to adapt the right strategies to translating the work for ordinary Persian readers. So, first of all, a translation must be coherent and understandable to the target language readers.

Coming back to the notion of adequacy, Vermeer adopted a different view about the terms of adequacy and equivalence (1984, p. 76). In their view, a translation is adequate only if its purpose is preserved in the target language. In fact, here the response of TT readers to the translation is important, and this response should be similar to that of ST readers, when they read the ST. here, the equivalent is defined with function. If the TT preserves the same function as the ST had in source language, the translation is said to be adequate and the ST and TT are equivalent. (Vermeer, 1984)

### What is an Interjection?

Interjections are a part of language which is so ambiguous. This is a peculiar word class. Several scholars such as Ameka(1992); Cuenca(2000, 2002a) and Goffman(1981) argue that this class is peripheral to language and actually show non-linguistic characteristics, just like gestures and vocal paralinguistic devices. Some other scholars such as Wharton (2000), Jovanovich (2004) and Fraser(1990) put emphasis on the linguistic features of interjections and argue that interjections have been often collapsed with other phenomena such as exclamations, discourse markers, or inserts. So, interjections are naturally a very controversial word class.

The researchers provide you with different definitions of interjections by several scholars, just to clarify this controversial essence.

One definition of interjection given by Bruti and Pavesi (2008) is: "an outcry to express pain, surprise, anger, pleasure or some other emotion [...] interjections belong to the oldest forms of speech and represent the most primitive type of sentence" (p. 104) or "Interjections are generally uninflected function words and have sometimes been seen as sentence-words, since they can replace or be replaced by a whole sentence (they are holophrastic)" (p. 105).

Cuenca (2000) defines interjections as "communicative units (utterances) which can be syntactically autonomous, and intonationally and semantically complete" (p. 332).

So, as the definitions vary, it seems that interjections are both theoretically and descriptively challenging to language and translation. There are similar word forms or word-formation processes in all languages, regarding interjections, but conditions of use are not the same. Because of this grammaticalized nature, "interjections are taken as idiomatic units or routines, syntactically equivalent to a sentence." (Cuenca, 2002b, p. 21)

#### **On Translation of Drama**

In every genre of translation, when the notion of contrastive analysis is raised, one may consider about measurement and evaluation. In fact, the notions of equivalence and evaluation are inseparable parts of translation studies. Nevertheless, before the mid 1970's the translation were measured against some idealized notion of equivalence. In fact, the TTs were mere reproduction of the original texts, and the approach toward translation evaluation was so normative. It was selective too, in that most critiques tried to, by confronting individual STs and TTs, demonstrate the superiority of source text over target text (Ameka, 1992).

There were two trends. A more linguistic-oriented approach which puts its focus on literary translation and a retrospective oriented approach, which considered translation as a process of textual transfer of the ST. On the other hand, there was a tendency to deviate from reserved and sacred position of source text and traditional preoccupations of it, and move toward the acceptance of the target text as a product in its own right (Ameka, 1992). So, as you see, the focus is no longer on the textual transfer, but is on the acceptance of the translation in the target culture and cultural interchange which occurs during this process.

But what is the position of theatre and drama translation in this dichotomy. On the linguistic-oriented side, Jovanovic ((2004, p.517) states that "linguistic expressions in theatre is a structure of signs constituted not only as discourse signs, but also as other signs". Bassnet (1980) also provides some basic problems of drama translation, in that the translator sometimes alters the ideological basis of the source text, and over-emphasize the extra-linguistic criteria, in order to overcome linguistic and stylistic problems. She states that:

"in trying to formulate any theory of theatre translation, Jovanovic's description of linguistic expression must be taken into account, and the linguistic element must be translated bearing in mind its function in theatre discourse as a whole" (Bassnett, 1980, P.123)

In fact, she emphasizes on the linguistic elements at the prosodic level.

On the other hand and with regard to second trend, Aaltonen (2000, p.26) states about manipulation of otherness in translated drama that "the translator makes conscious or unconscious choices, which are not accidental by nature, but imposed on him/her by the system to which the completed translation will belong as an element". Indeed, she asserts that the survival of a translator as a drama translator highly depends on how far he or she can move away from the conventions of the translation, and how the system of translation tolerates his or her translational choices. Again she asserts that "in translation, foreign drama is transplanted into a new environment, and the receiving theatrical system sets the terms on which this is done. A play script must communicate and be intelligible at some level, even if it should deviate from existing norms and conventions" (Aaltonen, 2000, p.27)

By contrasting these two opposite trends, one cannot come to a clear decision, whether to follow the first trend or the second one. It is still the subject of many debates. Anyways, some scholars like Bassnett (1980) are of the first trend. They believe in textual transfer of ST, and intend to contrast STs and TTs in a way that shows the priority ST over TT. On the other hand, scholars like Aaltonen and Ladeuceur, focus on the second trend. They claim that acceptance of a drama translator depends on his/her deviation from translational norms and conventions. Indeed, they believe that in theatrical translation, some kind of adaptation or version which is adapted according to cultural, as well as social norms of the target culture is more accepted.

Of note is that, the researchers are not going to prescribe or suggest neither the first one, nor the second one. Instead, he leaves the conclusion to the respected reader, whether to trend the first approach or the other one. This discussion was mentioned here, because the researchers intended to see if the Persian drama translators directly transferred the interjection into Persian and in fact, transplanted them, or they adapted a version which is accepted in Persian language.

So, beside the mere transference of meaning, cultural elements and target language translational norms are also important, and the translations should be approached at the prosodic level.

Mateo, in her work (1995), again discusses the transfer of drama through different cultures and describes it as a travel which helps provide material for good plays in the target culture. She studies the factors which determine both insertion of a play in the target culture and the strategies that make the play accepted in different cultures.

#### **Research Questions**

The present study addresses the following two questions:

1. What are the strategies used by translators for translating interjections?
2. Do interjections cause any interference in Persian language?

#### **Methodology**

##### **Data Collection Procedures**

Drama is not a genre, so widespread in Persian translation. Searching the libraries and Persian electronic databases, the researchers could not find more than 30 to 35 dramas, translated in Persian. Most of these dramas were the works of Shakespeare who is an excellent playwright and a specialist. From among other playwrights whose works have been translated into Persian, the researchers could name Miller, Jonesko, O'neill, Strinderberg, Colts and Pinther .

Choosing all of these dramas was beyond the scope of this study, due to time limitations and huge corpus they make. As the

name of the study reveals, selection of the works was quite purposefully, regarding the skopos theory of Vermeer (1989).

The function the translation deserves is so important, because there was a skopos defined for the translations. Half of the selected works have not been performed on any stages in Iran, and the rest of the works have been performed at least once on the stage. So, the function is clear. The researchers sought to investigate the strategies and procedures through which, the Persian translator has translated the interjections. Besides, he sought to see if there are any differences in translating the interjections, regarding the function of translation (being performed on the stage or not).

The researchers should note that, there are currently more than 550 interjections, available in the English language, and there are new ones being introduced into this huge collection, daily. Investigating and identifying all of these interjections is not possible in a single study, since it is a very special and time consuming task. The researchers chose 20 most commonly used interjections in the current English language usage. This 20-interjection list is derived from Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English Dictionary and Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia of English.

Here is important of note that, after the researchers contacted the Iranian national TV (IRIB), they found out that there are only five dramas which have not been performed on any stages. This limitation forced the researchers to decrease the scope of the study to just ten dramas. In order to reserve the validity and reliability, and regarding the skopos theory, all of the dramas which were not performed on the stage were chosen, and also five dramas were chosen randomly from among the performed dramas, to make it ten.

The electronic versions of these dramas were downloaded both in PDF and TXT format. The PDF format was required for adobe acrobat reader™ and wordsmith® which are computer programs, used for word processing. The TXT format was required for AntConc© which is a concordancing software, and a big help to the study.

Firstly, the researchers loaded the downloaded files from the internet, in adobe acrobat reader™ and wordsmith®, in order to find the 20 most commonly used interjections. These interjections were typed in the search bar one by one and the programs did well in finding them in the whole text. About 700 interjections were found in these ten dramas. These samples were compared to their Persian equivalents which were either printed (in paper) or in electronic version, to see what strategies have been used for translating them.

To ensure that all of the interjections have been found, the TXT files were again loaded, this time in AntConc©. This software is a more comprehensive and advanced software for fulfilling the task, since it is able to search for case sensitive words and word clusters, providing the researchers with the page number and co-text (a couple of sentence before and after the highlighted word).

#### Data analysis procedures

Based on Baker's (1992, 2009) proposal, Cuenca (2002) proposes six strategies for translating interjections. These strategies are:

1. Literal translation.
2. Translation by using an interjection with dissimilar form, but the same meaning
3. Translation by using a non-interjective structure with similar meaning

4. Translation by an interjection with different meaning.

5. Omission.

6. Addition of elements. (p. 27)

The twenty most commonly used interjections in English and the meanings they express are provided in Table 1. The first ten interjections are of primary type, and the second ten interjections are of secondary type.

**Table1. Twenty Common Interjections in English and their Communicative Functions**

interjection	Communicative Function
Ah	Expressing pleasure Expressing realization Expressing resignation Expressing surprise
Dear	Expressing pity Expressing surprise
Hey	Calling attention Expressing surprise Expressing joy
Hi	Expressing greeting
Hmm	Expressing hesitation, Doubt, Or disagreement
Oh, o	Expressing surprise, Expressing pain, Expressing pleading
Well	Expressing surprise Expressing anger Expressing resignation Used when pausing in speech
Alas	Expressing sorrow Expressing regret Expressing concern Expressing pity
Eh	Asking for repetition, Expressing enquiry, Expressing surprise, Inviting agreement
Er	Expressing hesitation
Shit	Expressing anger Expressing annoyance Expressing disgust Expressing surprise Expressing impatience
Damn	Expressing anger, Expressing annoyance
God	Expressing anger Expressing surprise Expressing shock Expressing distress
Gosh	Expressing surprise, Expressing emphasis, Expressing annoyance, Strength of feeling
Christ	Expressing irritation Expressing surprise Expressing shock Expressing annoyance
Excellent	Expressing something extremely good Expressing pleasure
Great	Expressing anger Expressing annoyance Expressing pleasure Expressing enthusiasm
Absolutely	Expressing emphasis, Expressing agreement
Right	Expressing agreement, Calling for attention
All alright	Expressing agreement Used to show you understand sth Threatening Expressing challenge Checking agreement Showing you heard sth Calling for attention Admitting Saying hello

The meanings and equivalents of the interjections were elicited from some comprehensive and well-known dictionaries such as Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. The Persian equivalents were

looked up in Ariyanpour English-Persian Dictionary and Millennium English-Persian Dictionary which are both trusted and comprehensive dictionaries to the Persian language users. To ensure that all the meanings are suitable and satisfying, the researchers used a specialist dictionary about interjections, named a Dictionary of Onomatopoeia in Persian by Kamyar (1996). This dictionary is the benchmark for this study, since the equivalents provided for the interjections in this dictionary, are the most appropriate ones in Persian language.

The next step was close investigation and comparison between the original interjections and their equivalents. The researchers have taken into consideration both co-text and context of use of the special interjections, in order to reserve the greatest validity and reliability of the results of the study. It is of note that when the researchers were not sure about the meaning of the interjections, he either guessed the meaning based on the context or marked it as unspecified meaning.

The interjections elicited from the corpus (ten dramas), were compared to their translation in Persian, precisely. Then they were analyzed according to Cuenca's categories which were mentioned before. The frequency of their occurrence under each category were compared and investigated to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between these two.

#### Data Analysis

In this study, the strategies proposed by Cuenca (2002) were used as the yardstick and the criteria against which, the data were tested and analyzed.

The six categories proposed by Cuenca were categorized as follows:

- a. literal translation
- b. translation by using an interjection with dissimilar form, but the same meaning
- c. translation by using a non-interjective structure with similar meaning
- d. translation by an interjection with different meaning
- e. omission
- f. addition of elements

This categorization was for the ease of demonstration of these strategies in the tables and figures. After the categorization of the data under these categories, the Chi square value for each category was precisely calculated. Then, these values were compared to see if there is significant difference in the strategies used for the translation of interjections. Five examples for each category are provided, just to demonstrate how the data were analyzed.

The 20 most commonly used interjections in current English needed to be mentioned here, again. Here, each category in Cuenca's (2002) categorization is provided alongside with their frequency of occurrences. For more elaboration and clarification, one example is provided for each category. Although this study was of qualitative type and sought to just describe the quality of translation, but the researchers deemed it helpful to provide suggestions, wherever the meaning is rendered into Persian, incorrectly or inappropriately.

#### a. Literal translation:

This strategy was the most frequent strategy, used by the Persian translators. It constituted about 44% of the samples selected. As its name reveals, literal translation is direct rendering of the original word, transferred with the closest equivalent in the target language. The occurrences are as follow:

**Table 2. Strategy a and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Literal translation	136

Here is an example from the texts:

1. Hey, big Larry

- hey lari kolofte

DISCUSSION: in this example, the context is a chat room, and the girl is calling for attention, shouting "hey, big Larry". In Persian, when people want to call for attention, they use the words ahay or ohoy. So, here hey is a complete instance of literal translation, transferring the original form.

#### b) Translation by using an interjection with dissimilar form but the same meaning:

Sometimes, the exact interjection which is the exact equivalent of the original does not exist in the target language. In such cases the translator has to find an interjection which conveys same meaning, but with dissimilar form. (e.g., translating a primary interjection by a secondary interjection as in God which can be translated as xoda rahm kon-e. This strategy constitutes about 10% of all the samples.

**Table 3. Strategy b and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Translation by using an interjection with dissimilar form but the same meaning	33

Example is:

1. Ah me, what act?

- Vaay bar man in kodamin amal ast

DISCUSSION: in this example, the interjection ah is used for expressing surprise. Vaay bar man is exactly the Persian interjection, used in such situations.

#### c) Translation by using a non-interjective structure with similar meaning:

In some cases, the translator cannot find any suitable interjection to convey the meaning. Here, he or she has to translate the interjection by using a non-interjective structure, just to compensate this loss of meaning. It constitutes about 8% of the samples.

**Table 4. Strategy c and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Translation by using a non-interjective structure with similar meaning	25

An example is provided:

1. Alas! You see how tis- a little o'erparted

- Motaasefan-e didid cheqadr bi tajrob-e bud

DISCUSSION: as you see, motaasefan-e is not an interjection, but conveys the same meaning.

#### d) Translation by using an interjection with a different meaning:

Sometimes, the translator erroneously insists on translating an interjection by an interjection in the target language, just to keep the original form reserved. This strategy only constitutes only about 4% of the samples.

**Table 5. Strategy d and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Translation by using an interjection with a different meaning	11

Here is an example:

1. Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how de ye both?

- Ha rezencratz? Pesarhay-e xub chetorid har dotan?

DISCUSSION: here the interjection ah expresses surprise, while the Persian ha has been used in an interrogative way.

### e) Omission

Sometimes, the translator simply ignores the interjection, thinking that it doesn't harm the meaning. So, he or she omits it. This was a prevalent strategy used by the Persian translators, constituting about 30% of the samples.

**Table 6. Strategy e and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Omission	92

1. Well, it was proclaimed damocel

- Dushize ham mashmul-e hamam elamiy-e bud

DISCUSSION: the translator has not translated the interjection well. He could use the interjection xub .

### f) Addition of elements:

Sometimes, the translator, in order to convey the meaning, adds some elements to the meaning of an interjection, just to make it understandable. This strategy was the least frequently used strategy by the Persian translators, consisting only about 3% of the samples.

**Table 7 Strategy f and its Frequency**

Strategy	Number of occurrences
Addition of elements	9

An example is provided:

1. Shit, look like rain

- Aah, kesafat, mixad barun biad

Chi-Square is employed to see if there are any significant differences between the mentioned strategies and to see which category has the greatest statistical value, which is directly related to the hypothesis. The results obtained from the data analysis are presented in the next section, alongside with the discussions.

### Results and Discussions

The results obtained from the whole analysis of all of the data used in this study are presented in table 4.8. In this table are presented the strategy, the observed frequency, the expected frequency and the Chi-Square value for each category.

**Table 8. The Statistical Values of the Study**

Strategy	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Chi-Square
a	136	51	141.6
b	33	51	6.3
c	25	51	13.2
d	11	51	31.3
e	92	51	32.9
f	9	51	34.5

As the Table above shows, and regarding the Chi-Square calculated, there is a significant difference between the first strategy (which was literal translation) and the remaining five strategies which stand approximately level, with  $\Sigma a=141.6$  which is far more greater than strategy (f), which is the second greatest value with  $\Sigma f= 34.5$ .

This huge difference in Chi-Square value indicates that the strategy a (literal translation) is the most frequently used strategy the Persian translators for translating interjections. This proves the hypothesis raised by the researchers. The hypothesis was that, in order to translate the interjections, Persian translators use literal translation, more than any other strategies.

Regarding Toury's law of interference (1995), interference from ST to TT is default and inevitable. In fact, it is a translation universal. This transference usually occurs in the linguistic levels (lexical and syntactical patterning), where these items are directly copied into the target text system. Where this copying seems non-normal in TT patterns, it is said that the transfer has been negative. On the other hand, if the transferred pattern is accepted and used by TT system, it's said to be positive.

According to Toury (1995), the tolerance of interference depends on the sociocultural factors and the prestige of the ST language. The more prestigious ST language is, the more it will be tolerated by the TL system.

The second hypothesis raised by the researchers was that, interference occurs during the process of translation in a way or the other, and this interference is more of linguistic type. This hypothesis was proven too. The ST patterns are directly copied into the TL (here Persian) patterns. How does this interference occur? The answer is clear; by literal translation, which as the results showed, turned out to be the most frequently used strategy used for translating the interjections. This interference occurred mostly in linguistic level (i.e., syntactic and lexical levels) rather than the pragmatic level.

### Conclusion

While doing the present study, the researchers came across some interesting facts. Firstly, the researchers found out that the Persian language is developing actively. If you take a look at Persian archaic texts, or even the texts from 70 years ago, you will see that interjections are not a routine usage of Persian language. In fact, now interjections have been transferred from a more prestigious language (in this case English) through translation of literary works of the great English writers such as Shakespeare, Miller, Doyle and etc. These interjections have been imported into Persian language usage in the daily conversations. Interjections such as goh, ooh, aah, kesafat and hey, which are quite new to the Persian language.

This new trend has been powered and promoted by the growing number of translations from English into Persian, which is a rich language regarding interjections. There are more than 550 interjections in English and there are still new once introduced daily into this language. As was mentioned in the previous chapters, the most frequent strategy used by Persian translators, is the literal translation. This could lead to transfer of ST pattern into linguistic levels of TL, both in syntactic and lexical patterns. So, more and more new interjections are introduced into Persian. As we may hear a Persian language user, saying, aah, laanati bazam dir kard or ox,didi pash chejuri shekast!.

There has occurred a domestication process about interjections in Persian language. These interjections transferred through literal translation are now represented in Persian dictionaries, convincing Persian language users to accept these form as correct and clear. Interjections like aah,oh,aah and laanati are now commonly used by Persian language users.

Four of the ten dramas chosen for this study, were the works of Shakespeare. This means that most of the works studied, were written between 1584 to 1613 A.D, which is at least 400 years earlier than the time of the present study. While on the other hand, the 20 most commonly used interjections studied, pertain to the current English usage.

The researchers found out that some interjections such as ah, oh, and alas, have been more common in old English rather than current English. On the other hand, some interjections such as er, hmm , absolutely ,great and gosh are widely used in current English rather than old English. So, that is why the researchers could not find any interjection er in the works of Shakespeare.

During the search for the interjections and by close reading of the Shakespeare's dramas, the researchers came across some interjection which are now archaic and are not used any more in the current English. Interjections such as ay, alack, hillo, and ho.

This is again the dichotomy of synchronic/diachronic translation studies which matters.

Of course, this study was of synchronic type, although it could be viewed diachronically in one way or another, because it concerns the interjections from old English texts. This study shows that some interjections disappeared from the lexicon of a given language and some other new interjection have been introduced, over the time.

The matter of drama translation is a highly context bound matter. It means that the translator should be completely aware of contextual and pragmatic nuances, involved in a drama. The translator should take it in his mind that drama translation is not an only intellectual task, but the drama is going to be seen and performed on a stage. In fact, he should be careful about the interchange between theatrical and literary systems. The researchers observed two of the studied dramas, namely King Lear and Madam Julie, in city theatre in Tehran. The translations of interjections were specially observed. The results were interesting. The words uttered by the actors didn't conform to the meanings given on the paper translation, in 40% of the cases. This could be because of the de-contextual nature of the texts, which lead to the misinterpretation by the translator.

This study aimed at researching the translation of the interjections from a skopos-based view.

As the results of the study showed, the most commonly used strategy used by Persian translator, was literal translation. The Chi-Square value for this strategy was 141.6, which was for larger than other strategies studied. This statistical value proved the first hypothesis of the study, which was the most common used strategy, used by Persian translators for translation of English interjections is literal translation.

The second hypothesis which was interrelated to the first one was also proven. Because interference is a translation universal and inevitable, it was also correct for interjections, which were transferred from English to Persian.

The last hypothesis was there is no difference in translation strategies, taken for translating interjections in the works which were performed on a stage and those which were not.

#### **Implications**

The results of this study are useful for professional and freelance translators. They could get acquainted to the strategies and procedures Used for translating interjections. English language teachers can also be granted from the results of this study. They can teach interjections regarding the secondary literature represented in this study. Linguists can also use the highlights of this study, researching and investigating the development of interjections both in English and Persian, synchronically and diachronically.

#### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Due to the time limitations and other limitations, this study is not a completely comprehensive and perfect work. This study needs to be supplemented by other similar studies, especially in this case, in which this study is the first one in Iran. The researchers could do researches, considering other aspects of interjections such as their development. Studying the interjections from a synchronic\diachronic view can also be a good subject for research in this field. The researchers can also study about teaching of interjections to foreign language learners.

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