



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Translating a title: On other terms

Chernysheva, L.; Dányi, E.; de la Cadena, M.; Farquhar, J.; Joks, S.; Kondo, S.; Lai, L.; Law, J.; Lin, W-y.; Magelhães, B.; Martínez Medina, S.; M'charek, A.; Mol, A.; Sezneva, O.; Swanson, H.; Østmo, L.

**DOI**

[10.1177/0038026120905470](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120905470)

**Publication date**

2020

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

The Sociological Review

**License**

CC BY-NC

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Chernysheva, L., Dányi, E., de la Cadena, M., Farquhar, J., Joks, S., Kondo, S., Lai, L., Law, J., Lin, W., Magelhães, B., Martínez Medina, S., M'charek, A., Mol, A., Sezneva, O., Swanson, H., & Østmo, L. (2020). Translating a title: On other terms. *The Sociological Review*, 68(2), 283-286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120905470>

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)*

# Translating a title: On other terms

The Sociological Review Monographs  
2020, Vol. 68(2) 283–286  
© The Author(s) 2020



Article reuse guidelines:  
sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/0038026120905470  
journals.sagepub.com/home/sor



**Liubov Chernysheva, Endre Dányi,  
Marisol de la Cadena, Judith Farquhar,  
Solveig Joks, Shiaki Kondo,  
Lili Lai, John Law, Wen-yuan Lin,  
Bruno Magelhães,  
Santiago Martínez Medina,  
Amade M'charek, Annemarie Mol,  
Olga Sezneva, Heather Swanson,  
Liv Østmo**

Present-day academic work is mostly done in English. What happens, or so the contributions to this monograph ask, when we open a few windows, let in some air, and invite elements drawn from other linguistic traditions into our texts? Doing so does not simply mean welcoming other *words*. Along with this it also changes the conditions, the *terms*, that stipulate what is, and what is not, good – proper, interesting, international, academic – writing.

To exemplify the way in which the traffic between languages is rarely smooth, here we briefly present some of the conundrums that have arisen as we, the authors, have picked up the phrase that figures as our title – *on other terms* – and tried to translate it – rewrite it – into the *other* languages that we introduce in the articles in this monograph.

In Hungarian, the first phrase that comes to mind is *más szóval*, which literally means ‘with other word’ (singular!). This is often used in everyday language, when someone wants to find a better way of saying something. Then there is *más feltételrel*, which means ‘under other conditions’. This sounds more like a legal expression, specifying under what circumstances something can be used. On the cover, you will find *más szóval* because this captures an interesting tension between sameness and difference. It suggests that by using a *different* word it becomes possible to say the *same* thing, but better.

---

**Corresponding author:**

Annemarie Mol, Department of Anthropology, Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Postbus 15509, Amsterdam, 1001 NA, The Netherlands.  
Email: a.mol@uva.nl

Interestingly, this in turn suggests a melancholy kind of perseverance. When we say ‘in other words’, we acknowledge that our first attempt to express something was not quite right, and our second attempt might not work all that well, either. At the same time, we think it is still worth trying.

‘On other terms’ may translate into Spanish as *en otros términos*, which can indicate a new agreement – or a new goal – to be settled after discussion. But while everybody would understand *en otros términos* (and would also ‘get’ that it originated in translation) the more comfortable translation of our title is *en otras palabras*. This often means ‘different but the same’ and it is used in conversations to clarify, and in a sense impose, the main message of the speaker. They each have their own valence, so which to go for? We are lucky, here, in that we have a Portuguese contribution as well – and this, give or take a few letters and a different pronunciation (invisible in written form), presents options that are ‘different but the same’. So, in the end, for the Spanish we went for *en otros términos* – along with the linguistic discomfort this produces. The new agreement is yet to happen, the new goal to follow – and the hope is that the present volume gets us started as it discloses differences between *terms* and acknowledges the analytical inspiration of *other words*. Other words, indeed – or, as the Portuguese has it: *outras palavras*. This translation has the added advantage that *palavras* are first and foremost spoken words (like the French *paroles*). Having those in our title suggests that our texts might not contribute to theories so much as weave stories. That their point is not to reveal structures and systems and solid boundaries, but to move about and discover new versions and variants, different ways of wording and living.

Translating ‘On other terms’ word by word into the Sámi language would yield: *nuppiin sániiguin daddjon*. This is a phrase commonly used when a person has said something and wants to make it more explicit, and therefore uses other words, repeating the same thing differently. But the use of this phrase disguises the difficulties of translating between different languages. Since that is our concern, since we focus on differences in understanding things, we prefer as our Sámi title *eará áddejumi*. Which means: different understanding. Not the same thing repeated to make it clearer or to insist on it. But something else instead.

Finding a good Russian analogue wasn’t easy. In the end, we had two variants: Иным языком and При ином раскладе. The first lays emphasis on language – языком – and uses the instrumental case, one of the six cases available in Russian. (In Latin this would be the comitative.) It denotes a tool, an instrument, by which one agent affects another. It sounds nice and organic in Russian. But, it singles out the linguistic as a tool. This is why we prefer the other option, При ином раскладе. The word расклад dictionaries translate into English as either ‘deal’ or ‘scenario’. It has a very clear sense of spatiality and complexity and it is also conditional: things could be different under different circumstances – different расклад. Circumstances that we hope to contribute to with this monograph.

Other circumstances are also implied in the Arabic version of our title. Read from right to left, the words that compose it are في قرأتين اخر. Transposed into the Roman alphabet this makes: *fi qaraatin akhra*. This phrase has a fitting double meaning. It translates back into English as ‘in another context’ – the circumstances also mentioned in the Russian version of our title. But then, second, it also translates in a way that foregrounds one of

the activities implied in, or required for, the otherness at stake here. More particularly, the activity of reading: ‘in another reading’.

Then there is Chinese. To indicate that there are many ways of translating ‘On other terms’ into idiomatic Chinese, on our cover you find two Chinese titles. The first, in complex characters, traditional script, is 議約 (*yi yuē*). This translation underscores our concern that, as English is dominant in international exchanges, we are somehow squeezed into English ways of understanding each other. English terms have become the major conditions of possibility for expressing worlds that themselves have different linguistic legacies. They organise our cross-linguistic (mis)translations. But could things be done on other terms, negotiated differently? Hence 議約: the first word, 議 (*yi*), means negotiate or discuss, and the second word, 約 (*yuē*), means an agreement or ‘terms and conditions’.

The second translation we propose is 易言之 (*yi yan zhi*). This works in both traditional and simplified characters. Translated back into English, 易言之 (*yi yan zhi*) would, literally glossed, present itself as ‘changing the words to speak of the thing’. Here, then, ‘the thing’ at issue is transformed as language shifts. The insistence, this time, is not on the conditions that English sets for international exchanges. It is, instead, on the ontologies that are embedded in words that are spoken.

The Japanese version of the title is 別の言葉で. Transliterated into Latin script this becomes: *bet-su-no-kotoba-de*. If, throughout, this book had dealt with academic discourse, we might have used 用語 (*yougo*) instead of 言葉 (*kotoba*) as *yougo* is the word for ‘word’ that tends to be used in grammars and other academic and professional contexts. But since quite a few articles deal with vernacular terms, we chose *kotoba*. This translation misses the connotation of ‘terms’ as ‘contract’ and also that of ‘relation’, of being ‘on good terms with’ another person. But it also adds something. For in ancient times *koto* 言 used to mean event or happening (事 which also reads as *koto*). Hence, ‘saying’ was an event, it was ‘happening’. ‘*Koto-no-ha*’ or ‘*kotoba*’ (the edge of the words) was a weaker variant. Present-day *kotoba* is rendered in Japanese as 言葉, which literally means ‘leaves of words’. This calls up multiplicity and richness in meaning.

A rich story that is. The next is a lot simpler. For in Dutch our title is: *Op andere termen*. This illustrates the fact that ‘languages’ are not tightly closed off from one another. For the English *other* and the Dutch *ander* may sound a bit different, but it is still apparent that they had a common ancestor. Like the English *terms*, the Dutch *termen* means both ‘conditions’ and ‘words’. *Op andere termen* – like *on other terms* – means under other conditions and suggests the possibility of other rules to go by. While a second reading suggests that otherness might have to do with words.

In English, finally, our title makes trouble from the start. It is not everyday English in any of the sites we know of. But there are traces in it of legal English: contracts are framed by ‘terms and conditions’. As a contract is drafted there may be negotiations about that framing, while if there is breakdown the question arises as to whether one or more of its ‘terms and conditions’ have been breached. In more daily settings, if one is concerned about the way one’s life is taking shape, one may be encouraged ‘not to live on someone else’s terms’ but rather ‘on one’s own terms’. However, when asked to translate back *outras palavras*, or *más szóval*, a speaker of English would more likely come up with ‘in other words’ or (more emphatically) ‘to put it differently’. At the same time,

this idea, that ‘it’ may be put differently resonates in ‘other terms’. Our title, then, juxtaposes conditions, framings, ‘your own terms’ and words. This combination of concerns has been our fractal focus from the start. As a title, *On other terms* opens up questions to do with practices and their implicit rules; questions to do with words and the worlds they help to verbalise and form a part of.

### **Note**

The affiliations for the authors are as follows: University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Liubov Chernysheva, Amade M’charek, Annemarie Mol and Olga Sezneva); Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany (Endre Dányi); University of California Davis, USA (Marisol de la Cadena); University of Chicago, USA (Judith Farquhar); Sami University of Applied Sciences, Norway (Solveig Joks, John Law, Liv Østmo); Hokkaido University, Japan (Shiaki Kondo); Peking University, China (Lili Lai), The Open University, UK (John Law); National Tsing-Hua University, Taiwan/R.O.C (Wen-yuan Lin); Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Bruno Magelhães); Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute, Colombia (Santiago Martínez Medina); Aarhus University, Denmark (Heather Swanson).

### **Funding**

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.