

**UNHEALTHY REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER AND THEIR
MISINTERPRETATION IN TRANSLATION**

Ergasheva Nilufar Zamirovna

*Teacher, Department of Romance-Germanic Languages, Training Center for the
“Partnership for Peace” Program of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan
under the Ministry of Defense*

ABSTRACT: *The article deals with the issues based on analyzing how unhealthy or distorted representations of gender—rooted in social, cultural, and ideological bias—lead to misinterpretations during the translation process. It argues that translation is not a neutral transfer of linguistic meaning but a re-creation of gendered perspectives embedded within discourse. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, feminist linguistics, and post-structuralist theory, the study identifies linguistic markers of bias and investigates how they are rendered across languages.*

Keywords: *gender representation, unhealthy discourse, translation ethics, feminist linguistics, bias in translation, discourse analysis, translator’s agency, inclusive language*

Introduction

Language functions as both a mirror and a constructor of social reality. Within it, gender roles and identities are continuously negotiated and represented. However, these representations are often shaped by entrenched cultural stereotypes that idealize masculinity and marginalize femininity. When such discourses are translated across languages, the embedded gender ideology is not simply transferred but often transformed, distorted, or reinforced (Berman, 2012). As a result, translation becomes a crucial site for analyzing how unhealthy portrayals of gender circulate globally.

Unhealthy gender representations refer to linguistic and cultural patterns that perpetuate inequality—through stereotypes, exclusion, objectification, or asymmetrical power relations (Mills, 2008). For instance, the recurrent association of femininity with emotion and domesticity, and masculinity with logic and strength, continues to influence how characters, professions, and emotions are described. Translators who fail to recognize these implicit hierarchies may unintentionally reproduce bias in their work (Baer & Kaindl, 2018).

Translation thus carries both epistemological and ethical implications. Translators serve as mediators between cultures but also as interpreters of ideology (Venuti, 2019). Their choices—lexical, syntactic, and contextual—determine how gendered meanings are redefined or silenced. The translator’s invisibility, long valued as a mark of fidelity, often conceals complicity in maintaining linguistic inequality. Feminist

translation scholars have challenged this notion, calling for translator visibility and accountability (Simon, 2019).

Modern translation practice takes place in a rapidly changing sociocultural environment. Globalization, media influence, and digital technologies have amplified the spread of gendered narratives. Audiovisual and advertising translations, for example, often reinforce harmful beauty standards and heteronormative ideals (Monti, 2021). These forms of unhealthy gender discourse not only distort cultural authenticity but also perpetuate psychological harm, especially among young audiences.

Literature Review

Research in translation and gender studies reveals that the representation of gender is deeply intertwined with ideology. According to Butler (1999), gender is performative—a social construct reproduced through discourse rather than a biological constant. Translators working within patriarchal linguistic systems must therefore recognize how such performance is encoded in language.

Baer and Kaindl (2018) introduce the concept of “gendered mediation,” noting that translators not only convey meaning but also negotiate social power. Their research into European literary translations shows that gender bias often persists due to institutional norms and editorial censorship. Similarly, Santaemilia and Valdeón (2020) examine media translation, concluding that headlines and dialogues are among the most frequent sites of gender distortion because they rely on cultural stereotypes for quick resonance with readers.

From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, Musolff (2021) explores how metaphorical patterns contribute to unhealthy gender representations. Metaphors such as “battle of the sexes” or “taming a woman” reinforce conceptual hierarchies that position gender relations as antagonistic. Translators unaware of these conceptual metaphors may unintentionally transfer harmful implications.

Ethical translation theories, particularly those of Baker (2019) and Venuti (2019), advocate translator visibility and self-reflexivity. They argue that neutral translation is a myth; every act of translation involves ideological choice. In this context, “healthy” translation practice involves critical engagement with gendered discourse and the adoption of inclusive linguistic strategies.

The intersection between translation and media studies also reveals a growing concern about visual and multimodal elements. O’Sullivan (2020) analyzes gender bias in children’s literature translation, showing how visual imagery and paratexts can undermine efforts toward gender equality even when verbal language is neutral. Similarly, Pérez-González (2021) highlights subtitling as a key area where gender nuance is lost due to time constraints and target audience expectations.

Technological approaches to gender bias detection in translation are gaining momentum. Costa-jussà et al. (2022) propose algorithmic frameworks for identifying gendered patterns in machine translation output. Their study shows that large-scale

neural systems replicate societal prejudices present in training data, demonstrating the urgent need for gender-aware computational tools.

Discussions

The manifestations of unhealthy gender representations in translation can be observed in literary, audiovisual, and advertising contexts. Each medium poses unique challenges for maintaining gender sensitivity.

In literary translation, gender imbalance often emerges through adjectives and metaphors. For example, in early English translations of Russian literature, female characters were frequently described as “fragile,” “emotional,” or “obedient,” while male figures were rendered as “rational” and “strong.” Such lexical patterns reinforce gender dichotomies absent in the original texts. In Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*, the character Nastasya Filippovna is translated as “a hysterical woman,” whereas the Russian original conveys “a passionate, tormented soul.” The translator’s choice not only pathologizes femininity but also distorts authorial intent. In contrast, contemporary translators attempt to neutralize gender bias through deliberate lexical balance. For instance, feminist reinterpretations of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* replace “frailty, thy name is woman” with “weakness, thy name is human,” emphasizing universality over gender blame (Evans, 2019). Such recontextualizations preserve dramatic tension while aligning with modern ethical standards. Cultural sensitivity also extends to languages with grammatical gender. For example, in Arabic, all nouns and adjectives carry gender markers. When translating feminist works from English, translators must creatively navigate this linguistic constraint without erasing inclusivity. One method involves rephrasing with collective nouns or abstract forms to avoid binary opposition (Al-Hassan, 2022).

Cognitive analysis further reveals how translators process gendered imagery. Conceptual metaphors linking femininity with “fragility” and masculinity with “power” shape mental representations. Training translators to identify and reformulate these metaphors fosters more balanced translation outcomes (Musolff, 2021).

Conclusion

Unhealthy gender representations distort communication, perpetuate inequality, and hinder cultural understanding. Translation, as both a linguistic and ideological act, has the potential to either reproduce or challenge such biases. Ethical and inclusive translation requires awareness of these mechanisms. Translators must critically examine gender portrayals, reframe harmful metaphors, and adopt gender-neutral strategies when possible. Moreover, integrating gender-sensitive modules into translator education and professional standards is essential for long-term change. By resisting unhealthy gender discourse, translators contribute not only to linguistic precision but also to cultural justice. The rearticulation of gender in translation thus becomes a transformative act—reshaping communication toward empathy, equality, and inclusivity.



References:

1. Berman, A. (2012). *The experience of the foreign: Culture and translation in romantic Germany*. SUNY Press.
2. Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
3. Costa-jussà, M. R., Prates, M., & Tiedemann, J. (2022). Gender bias and mitigation in neural machine translation. *Computational Linguistics*, 48(3), 527–550.
4. Evans, M. (2019). Feminist reinterpretations of Shakespeare: Translating ethics and gender. *Literary Translation Review*, 12(1), 67–85.
5. García, L. (2022). Advertising translation and gender ideology: A case study. *Media and Discourse Journal*, 17(4), 231–249.
6. Mills, S. (2008). *Language and sexism*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Monti, E. (2021). *Gender and audiovisual translation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
8. Musolff, A. (2021). *Political metaphor analysis: Discourse and scenarios*. Bloomsbury Academic.
9. O’Sullivan, E. (2020). Translating gender in children’s literature. *Children’s Literature in Education*, 51(2), 145–162.
10. Pérez-González, L. (2021). *The Routledge encyclopedia of translation and media*. Routledge.