



GENDER STUDIES IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Gender Studies is the strand of scholarship which best expresses the need and demand for a change in social relationships. In order to clarify and to make broad investigation this article aimed to Gender Studies which is concerned with issues such as the definition of femininity and masculinity as two socio-cultural constructs, their relationships with sexuality, the analysis of the ideas built upon the differences between men and women, and the roles that men and women play and are expected to play in society.

Keywords: Gender studies, femininity and masculinity, cultural constructs, translation shift, cultural adaptation and (self-) censorship.

In recent decades the interconnection between gender issues and the ideological aspects of translation has become one of the most researched subjects among scholars. All these researches and studies show that translation is a socio-political activity that cannot be untied from the ideological constraints of its surroundings and practitioners. The development of Gender Studies and Translation Studies has run parallel to that of Cultural Studies, perhaps as a direct consequence of the growing awareness that when translation becomes entangled with gender, important cultural questions arise.

Before exploring the ways in which gender, translation and cultural issues intersect, it is helpful to talk briefly about the development of Gender Studies in contexts other than the context of translation, and about the meaning of the concept of gender in the article presented here. Women's role in translation history, translation's role in women's history, alternative feminist translation practices (Simon, 1996), the gendered metaphor of translation (Chamberlain, 1992) and translation shifts as a result of gender and cultural differences (Leonardi, 2007; Santaemilia, 2005) are some examples of the increasingly fertile ground where gender studies and translation studies intersect. Stemming from feminist criticism in the 1970s, Gender Studies is the strand of scholarship which best expresses the need and demand for a change in social relationships (and, consequently, a change in the relationship between the sexes). This need is mostly felt by women (in the broadest sense of the term) and other social groups such as gays, transsexuals and people from ethnicities other than the white one.

Broadly speaking, Gender Studies is concerned with issues such as the definition of femininity and masculinity as two socio-cultural constructs, their relationships with sexuality, the analysis of the ideas built upon the differences between men and women, and the roles that men and women play and are expected to play in society. These studies often associated with another cognate discipline (that of Women's Studies, from which, however, Gender Studies departs), advocate a heterogeneous view and focus on both women and men, and on their relationships with issues such as sexual, racial and religious oppression. Because of this

variety of concerns, Gender Studies has had a strong impact on - and has been influenced by - disciplines such as Anthropology, Literature and Philosophy, which has resulted in its giving way to new sets of theories. Many definitions of gender have been provided since the 1970 s, when this concept appeared to be one of the most discussed subjects within feminist criticism. Overviews of these definitions have been developed and explained in depth by influential scholars such as De Lauretis (1987), Humm (1992) and Showalter (1989). However, it is useful to delve into some of the ideas (developed by some of these academics). The term "gender" refers to the perceived femininity or masculinity of a person. Feminist theorists have interpreted gender to refer to identity rather than to the biological distinctions between male and female, that is, to sex. Cameron clarifies this idea when she defines gender as "the social differentiation of masculine and feminine persons, activities, behaviors and characteristics as distinct from the biological differentiation of male/female which is usually called sex". Butler states that gender is "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory framework which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being". Moreover, Butler (1990: 25) stresses that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender" claiming that "[identity] is performativity constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results". In other words, gender is conceived of as a role that social individuals take on according to the context and the time that they live in and the people in their immediate surroundings. In particular, under the influence of feminist criticism, it has become increasingly clear that throughout history women have been allotted certain roles in response to the expectations that (androcentric) societies had of them. This awareness has acted as a trigger for many women to take action and to have their voices heard in most social and cultural sectors, which has been viewed as a development that has resulted in a fruitful debate within Gender Studies. Gender Studies has recently branched out into other different directions such as Gynocriticism, Gay and Lesbian Studies - and its related area of Queer Studies -whose application has primarily concerned literature and cinema, and has also intersected with Post-colonial Studies.

Being deeply connected with feminism, all these fields of investigation share the same premises. However, at the same time, they address different needs. Although issues of cultural adaptation and (self-) censorship in audiovisual translation are now regularly explored, adapted and or censored, items are rarely fully and transversally analyzed from a feminist point of view. Within the field of audiovisual translation studies, the differences between dubbing and subtitling have been shown to operate on various levels: technical, financial and last but not least, sociocultural and political (Goris, 1993; Gottlieb, 2004). We have seen that the great range of definitions, theories and perspectives derived from Gender Studies has had a strong impact on the humanities. More recently, scholars have appropriated these concepts and applied them also to areas such as Sociolinguistics, Film Studies and Translation Studies. Consequently, these disciplines have become increasingly concerned with the relationship between language and social behavior. This cross-fertilization between Gender Studies scholars has led to a critical revision of most of the assumptions and norms in which our cultures are grounded. It is worth summarizing that, in our opinion, make the intersection between Gender Studies and Translation Studies clear. These two disciplines can be (and have actually often been) brought into relationship because of the many similarities that the concepts of gender and translation have in common. Three such similarities will be elaborated

on below. The first similarity between the two concepts is that both gender and translation can be conceived of as two variable categories. At the same time, we have seen that the traditional goal of achieving perfect equivalence in translation has given way to the idea of multiple interpretations and 'rewritings' depending on the historical and social contexts in which the translations and the translators are placed. Both gender and translation are therefore fluid and unstable entities.

The second similarity is that the concepts of gender and translation have long been labeled as two forms of a lesser speech. On the one hand, the female gender as subordinate to the male gender and, on the other hand, translation as subordinate to the source text. As will be discussed later, feminist scholars have interpreted the representation of women provided in the literature written for centuries by men, as a clear mark of androcentric manipulation.

At a certain point, these scholars felt the need to reappropriate these texts, rewrite and retranslate them from their own point of view, thus putting them through another kind of feminine/feminist process of manipulation (Hermans 1985). The third similarity is that both women (and also gays, lesbians and ethnic minorities) and translators are, in some way, 'bilingual' and 'bicultural': the former have to pass through the linguistic tools of patriarchal hetero normative-racist discourse in order to question this very discourse and claim a language of their own. Translators must have an equal knowledge of the source and the target language in order to understand how to reproduce or to alter the original text. We have seen that the great range of definitions, theories and perspectives derived from Gender Studies has had a strong impact on the humanities. More recently, scholars have appropriated these concepts and applied them also to areas such as Sociolinguistics, Film Studies and Translation Studies. Consequently, these disciplines have become increasingly concerned with the relationship between language and social behavior. This cross-fertilization between Gender Studies scholars has led to a critical revision of most of the assumptions and norms in which our cultures are grounded.

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