Gender Bias in Translation:
A Hermeneutic Analysis of Language Manipulation between Men and Women

By

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Abstract:

When comparing an original text to its translation, semantic differences may become apparent. This is due to the fact that translations are a human product and can vary depending on the translator. The manipulation school refers to ways of adjusting or modifying a source text, consciously or unconsciously, by the translator so as to make it acceptable and corresponding to his own ideology.

This paper investigates essential question regarding translation and translator's ideology from a translation studies perspective. It discusses how much the translation can be manipulated by translator's ideology. The main interest is in how ideology, specifically "gender", is conveyed and presented textually in translation. The study adopts Hermeneutic theory to understand, analyze, and compare the source text with the target text. Out of the various translations of the Shakespearian play "The Taming of the Shrew", the study compares a translation produced by Dr. Saheer El-Kalamawi to the translation that is produced by Dr. Mohamed Enani in order to illustrate how gender can affect the product of the translation process.

Being a female or a male can affect the process of translation. Although translation has been described as a cross-cultural transfer, it is important to note that this transfer implies an ideological transfer as well, if ideology is understood in its broad sense, i.e., as the standard set of values, ideas and beliefs that govern a community, and consequently, a translator must possess in-depth knowledge of the ideas, beliefs, and values that connect to the languages being translated. This study intends to illustrate to what extent ideological considerations play a role when the translation is produced by a female translator and how far it differs from a translation produced by a male translator.

Keywords: *"Translation", "Men and Women", "Hermeneutics", "Manipulation", "Gender bias"*

ملخص:

عند مقارنة نص أصلي بترجمته، قد تظهر اختلافات دلالية. يعود ذلك إلى حقيقة أن الترجمة هي منتج بشري وقد تختلف باختلاف المترجم. تشير مدرسة التلاعب الثقافي إلى أسباب التعيل فى النص الأصلي، سواء بوعي أو بدون وعي، من قبل المترجم لجعله قابلاً للقبول عند القارىء ومطابقًا لأيديولوجيته الخاصة.

يستكشف البحث السؤال الأساسي المتعلق بالترجمة وأيديولوجية المترجم من منظور دراسات الترجمة. ويناقش إلى أي مدى يمكن أن يتلاعب المترجم بالترجمة بناءً على أيديولوجيته الخاصة. يكمن الاهتمام الأساس في كيفية نقل وطرح الأيديولوجية في الترجمة، وعلى وجه التحديد "الجنس: ذكر/ أنثى".

تستخدم الدراسة النظرية الهرمنيوطيقية لفهم وتحليل ومقارنة النص الأصلي مع النص المستهدف. تقارن الدراسة من بين الترجمات المختلفة لمسرحية شكسبير "ترويض الشرسة"، ترجمة الدكتورة سهير القلماوي بترجمة الدكتور محمد عناني لتوضيح كيف يؤثر "الجنس: ذكر/ أنثى"على منتج عملية الترجمة.

يمكن أن يؤثر كون الشخص أنثى أو ذكر على عملية الترجمة. على الرغم من أن الترجمة قد وصفت بأنها نقل ثقافي متعدد، إلا أنه من المهم أن نلاحظ أن هذا النقل يعني نقلًا للأيديولوجيا أيضًا، إذا تم فهم الأيديولوجيا في معناها الشامل، وهو مجموعة المعايير المحددة للقيم والأفكار والمعتقدات التي تحكم مجتمعًا ما، وبالتالي، يجب على المترجم أن يكون لديه معرفة عميقة بالأفكار والمعتقدات والقيم التي ترتبط باللغات التي يترجم إليها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح إلى أي حد تؤثر الاعتبارات الأيديولوجية على دور المترجم الأنثى عند إنتاج الترجمة وإلى أي حد تختلف عن الترجمة التي يُنتجها مترجم ذكر.

- Ideology

The term 'ideology' is generally considered to be a set of conscious and <u>unconscious</u> <u>ideas</u> that constitute one's goals, <u>expectations</u>, and <u>actions</u>. An ideology is a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things (Hershey, 2017).

'Ideology' has been always accompanied by its political connotation as it is evident in its dictionary definition as a 'manner of thinking, ideas, characteristic of a person, group, etc, esp. as forming the basis of an economic or political system' (Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English, 1984).

Under the influence of Marx who defines ideology as an action without knowledge (false consciousness), ideology is sometimes defined in its negative political sense as 'a system of wrong, false, distorted or otherwise misguided beliefs'. (Calzada-Pérez, 2003: 3)

- Manipulation

According to the theory of Manipulation, translation implies a degree of manipulation of the ST for a certain purpose, because the translation process brings the TT into line with a particular model which should secure social acceptance in the target culture.

Explicitly, the theory is in sharp contrast with linguistic theories of translation because from the start it approaches trans-

lation not as science, but as an art which permits manipulation rather than equivalence, thus it is concerned with literary, not technical translation. Accordingly, the translation process is deemed a rewriting process and the translator is a re-writer who can alter or manipulate the ST in such a way as to be acceptable in the target language and culture.

This theory is adopted by a group of scholars associated with a particular approach to the translation of literature, and to what is known as 'Manipulation School' and also as the 'Descriptive, Empirical or Systemic School. (Hermans, 1995: 217 in Shuttleworth: 101-102)

The Manipulation School

The name Manipulation School comes from an anthology of essays published in 1985, and edited by Theo Hermans entitled '*The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*'. In the introduction, Hermans states, "From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose". (Hermans, 1985: 4)

- "Manipulation" in Translation Studies:

The term "translation studies" was first put forward by James Holmes. In his paper "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies", Holmes made a comparison amo00ng "translation studies", "science translation" and "translation theories", suggest-

ing that translation studies seem to be the most appropriate. Holmes conceived of the approach as an empirical practice, one which looks at the actually translated texts as they appear in a given culture (Gentzler, 2004: 93). Later on the term "translation studies" was frequently used by Lefevere and Bassnett. The 1970s witnessed the "cultural turn" in translation studies in western countries. Polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies, and manipulation school were the most influential at that time (Hermans, 2004: 13). The term "manipulation" is almost associated with "culture" and "translation". (International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2013)

- Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a term that is derived from the word "hermetic" which means "magic" and "ambiguity. Others argue that it is derived from the old Greek translation of the Egyptian God "Thoth" – "Hermes" the mythical writer of the mysterious and magic texts. The word "Hermenus" is an Ancient Greek word for interpreter\translator and it is directly related to God Hermes .The verb "Hermeneuo" means;

- interpret foreign tongues

- translate

- explain, expound

- put into words, express

The term was introduced c.360 BC by <u>Aristotle</u> in his

text (*Peri Hermēneias, "On Interpretation"*). It is often suggested that the Greek word root is etymologically related to the name of the Greek mythological deity <u>Hermes</u>, but cognate to a corrupted composite borrowing from Hebrew Har [ha]Emet (Emes) referring to the Biblical Mount Sinai where Moses interpreted the Jewish Law (known as haEmes ("the Truth") to the people. (Yourdictionary, 2015)

Hermeneutics is defined as "The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts. (Oxforddictionaries, 2017). The term "Hermeneutics" was used to refer to "The New Testament" interpretation.

Hermeneutics briefly can be defined as the science and methodology of interpreting texts. The process of discovering the correct meaning of a text is the core of hermeneutics.

- The relevance of Hermeneutics to the study of translation, Ideology and Manipulation.

Upon the nature of the relation between Hermeneutics and Translation James M. Robinson, in his article, "Theology as Translation" argues that: "Not only do translation and interpretation belong together; they in turn share with language a basic scope. For language itself is the bringing of expression, the exposition, of an understanding. Language is already the bringing of the hermeneutical process. Thus, one catches sight of the basic interrelatedness of the problem of the word of God and that of theological hermeneutic." (James Robinson, 2007:518)

James Robinson argues that translation and interpretation are closely related to each other as they are sharing the same field, namely, the language. Language is the first hermeneutic step as it is the expression of a certain understanding. The process of translation can be described within the frame of interpretation which could accordingly be described as hermeneutic, and accordingly, the task of translation is not met simply by replacing the vocabulary and grammar of one language with that of another. The translation must go much further if it is to complete its task.

Again, the relation between "Hermeneutics" and translation is that there is no translation without understanding and interpreting texts, which is the initial step of any kind of translation including literary translation. Inappropriate understanding inevitably results in inadequate interpretation.

Throughout the development of hermeneutics as a theory of understanding interested in a comprehensive actualization of the author's motives and the text in its social, cultural and historical background, and by realizing the Hermeneutic circle which refers to the study of semantics (including the study of both; context of situation and semantic field) the relevance between Hermeneutics and translator's ideology becomes fundamental and reasonable grounds for the process of manipulation.

- **Gender in Language:**

The study of gender and language in sociolinguistics and gender studies is often said to have begun with Robin Lakoff's (2004) book, *Language and Woman's Place*, as well as some earlier studies by Lakoff. The study of language and gender has developed greatly since the 1970s. Prominent scholars include: Deborah Tannen, Penelope Eckert, Janet Holmes, Mary Bucholtz, Kira Hall, Deborah Cameron, and others.

The 1995 edited volume *Gender Articulated*: *Language and the* Socially *Constructed Self*, is often referred to as a central text on language and gender.

"Our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings. Woman's language has as foundation the attitude that women are marginal to the serious concerns of life, which are preempted by men". (Lakoff, 2004: 45) Her argument proves that women's translation can reflect their attitudes and their referential meanings including their feelings about being marginal to the serious concerns of life. Also, women's perceptions of language can affect their understanding of a text. Adding to the fact that Women's talk can be considered a cultural product, (Tannen, 1990:132), you just don't understand: Women and Men in Conversation.

In his book The Truth about Managing People, Stephen P. Robbins says:

Men and Women have difficulty communicating with each other. The reason? They use conversation for different purposes. Men tend to use talk to emphasize status, while women generally use it to create connection. (Robbins, 2012: 184)

Communication includes process of **encoding** a message from a sender to receiver and **decoding** the message by the receiver. Decoding the message means; interpreting the message, understanding its meaning, and re-drawing the pre-encoded message in mind as a certain alive case. The process of understanding, re-drawing is highly affected by being male or female. Men can interpret and understand with different perceptions of those of women.

One of the best-selling books is *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* by John Gray, discusses the idea that men and women differ fundamentally in the way they use language to communicate. John Gray is an American author on relationships and personal growth, best known for his 2015 book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, and other "pop psychology" books offering relationship advice. All versions of the book share this basic premise; most versions, in addition, make some or all of the following claims:

- Language and communication matter more to women than to men; women talk more than men.

- Women are more verbally skilled than men.

- Men's goals in using language tend to be about getting things done, whereas women's tend to be about making connections to other people. Men talk more about things and facts, whereas women talk more about people, relationships and feelings.

- Men's way of using language is competitive, reflecting their general interest in acquiring and maintaining status; women's use of language is cooperative, reflecting their preference for equality and harmony.

- These differences routinely lead to "miscommunication" between the sexes, with each sex misinterpreting the other's intentions. This causes problems in contexts where men and women regularly interact, and especially in heterosexual relationships. (Cameron, 2007)

- **Gender Bias Illustrative Examples:**

Translation is not a neutral process; it involves subjective decisions made by translators that can be influenced by their own biases. By examining translated texts from both genders, the study seeks to provide supposed examples that support the argument that gender bias exists in translation.

Example 1:

- A statement that is translated by a Male Translator

- Original Text: "She was assertive and confident during the meeting."
  Translated Text: "كانت متسلطة و عدوانية اثناء الاجتماع"

   "She was bossy and aggressive during the meeting."
Analysis: The male translator's choice of words introduces negative connotations to describe a woman's behavior. The use of "bossy" and "aggressive" implies a negative judgment, reinforcing stereotypes that assertive women are seen as overly dominant or confrontational.

Example 2:

- A statement that is translated by a Female Translator
  Original Text: "He is known for his strong leadership skills."
  Translated Text: "هو معروف بموقفه المتسلط"

- "He is known for his bossy attitude."

   Analysis: In this example, the female translator's choice of words mirrors the previous example but with reversed roles. By using "bossy" to describe a man's behavior, she perpetuates stereotypes that assertive men are seen as domineering or controlling.

Example 3:

- A statement that is translated by a Male Translator
  Original Text: "The actress delivered an outstanding performance."
  Translated Text: "قدمت الممثلة أداء جيدا"

- "The actress gave an okay performance."
  Analysis: The male translator's choice of words downplays the actress's achievement by using "okay" instead of "outstanding." This subtle manipulation diminishes the impact of her success, potentially reflecting a bias that undermines women's accomplishments.

These examples illustrate how language manipulation in translation can perpetuate gender biases. Both male and female translators may unconsciously introduce their own biases into their work, resulting in different forms of gender bias. By recognizing and addressing these biases, we can strive for more accurate and unbiased translations that promote gender equality and inclusivity.

- "The Taming of the Shrew" between El-Kalamawi & Enani

The study states that being a female or a male can affect the process of translation. The translator might be unconsciously affected by his/her ideology. The following example illustrates and supports the purpose of the study:

The Understanding of the relation between the hero and the heroin "***Katherina*** & ***Potruchio***" can be affected also by 'Gender', and consequently can affect translator's decisions throughout his\her translation. The study contrasts the used words, phrases and expressions by both translators in the conversation between *Katherina* and *Potruchio* to find out how can *'Gender'* affects the understanding process and the produced translation causing manipulation.

The first meeting between *Katherina* and *Potruchio* comes at the first scene of the second act.

Good morrow, Kate – for that is your name, I hear.

Katherina: Well have you heard,

but something hard of hearing:

They call me Katherine that do talk of me.

Petruchio: **You lie,** in faith, for you are called plain

Kate,

And bonny Kate, and sometimes **Kate the curst**.

(Shakespeare 2014)

"Bonny": fine, strapping

"Curst": bad-tempered and perverse (Global Classics 2014 106)

"Curst": adj. deserving a curse; some used as an

intensifier; "villagers shun the area believing it

to be cursed'.

(Spears "McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs" 2006)

Dr. Enani translates:

بتروشيو: .... يا كيت عمت صباحا ... ذاك فيما قيل اسمك

كاترينــــا: حقاُ سمعت ما يقال .. لكن في اذنيك وقرا

فانما الذين يعرفونني يدعونني كاترينا

بتروشيو: **هذا كذب** في الواقع . اذ يدعونك اما كيت فحسب

او كيت الكبري او **كيت الشرسة** في بعض الاحيان

The translator changes the structure of the sentence "You lie" in which Petruchio addresses the doer of the action - you- into to "**هذا كذب**" which is a nominal Arabic sentence describing the speech said by Katherine. The translator manages to understand the context hermeneutically and realizes that Petruchio does not intend to insult Katherine.

And he translates "curst" into "**الشرسة**", the best choice of the typical intended meaning in the original text according to the understanding of readers of the year 1592.

Dr. Saheer translates:

بتروشيو: سعدت صباحا يا (كيت) فهذا اسمك فيما سمعت

كيت: حق ما سمعت، و لكن ما سمعت صعب عليك.

إن الذين يتكلمون عني يدعونني (كاثرينا)

بتروشيو: **تكذبين والله** ، فإنك لتسمين كيت ولا اكثر من كيت

وكيت الحلوة ، و أحيانا كيت **الملعونة**

Dr. Saheer translates "You lie" into "**تكذبين** ". She keeps the structure and transfers the literal meaning, but this form in Arabic culture may convey an impolite or a harsh style. She translates "curst" into "**الملعونة**" which transfers a real insult in Arabic culture. These words drive the Arabic reader to a feeling of an expected conflict and non-respected relation.

Finally, it is clear that Enani translated the text into verse; however, Saheer produced her translation into prose. That reflects also the translators' feelings: Enani transfers the innermost but understood feelings, the love relation between Petruchio and Katherine.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the issue of gender bias in translation and its impact on the interpretation of literary works. The analysis of two translations of "Taming of The Shrew" by Dr. Saheer el kalamawy and Dr. M. Enany highlights the significant role that cultural and ideological factors play in shaping the translator's perception and representation of gender roles.

The findings reveal that Enany's translation introduces a romantic relationship between Katherine and Petruchio, which reflects their innermost feelings towards each other. This is achieved through his use of verse, which allows for a more nuanced portrayal of their characters. In contrast, El-Kalamawy's translation emphasizes the violent conflict between Petruchio and his wife, using harsh Arabic words to convey the intensity of their struggle.

The study suggests that these variations in translation are influenced by cultural norms and values surrounding gender roles. In particular, it highlights how patriarchal attitudes towards women can lead to their portrayal as aggressive or submissive in literary works.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of considering gender bias in translation and its impact on our understanding of literary works. It calls for greater awareness among translators and readers alike about the ways in which cultural ideologies shape our perceptions of gender roles, and encourages a more nuanced approach to translating texts that takes into account these complex issues.

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