

GENDER BIAS IN TRANSLATION: CHALLENGES IN RENDERING GENDER-SPECIFIC TERMS

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Annotation: This article explores the linguistic and ideological challenges related to gender bias in translation. It focuses on how gender-specific terms in source texts—such as occupational titles and pronoun structures—are rendered in the target language. The discussion draws upon feminist translation theories and provides examples from English-to-Uzbek translations, where grammatical gender is absent, yet socio-cultural gender roles remain influential. The article also examines the potential distortions or erasures that can occur when gender-neutral or gender-specific meanings are not adequately preserved in translation.

Keywords: gender bias, feminist translation, gender-specific terms, inclusive language, ideological shifts

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada tarjimada jinsga oid noto'g'rilik (gender bias) muammolari va u bilan bog'liq lingvistik hamda mafkuraviy muammolar tahlil qilinadi. Xususan, manba tilidagi kasb nomlari va olmoshlar kabi jinsiy aniqlikka ega birliklar qanday tarjima qilinishi va ularning ma'no yo'qotilishi muhokama qilinadi. Feministik tarjima nazariyasi asosida ingliz tilidan o'zbek tiliga tarjimalardagi jinsiy betaraflik, o'zgartirish yoki yo'qotish holatlari misollar bilan ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada grammatik jins yo'qligi tarjima jarayonida jinsiy ma'nolarni qanday o'zgartirishi ham ochib beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar: gender noto'g'riligi, feministik tarjima, jinsga oid terminlar, inklyuziv til, mafkuraviy o'zgarishlar

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются проблемы гендерной предвзятости в переводе, а также связанные с этим лингвистические и идеологические трудности. Особое внимание уделяется переводу гендерно-окрашенных терминов — профессиональных наименований и местоимений — с английского на узбекский язык. Статья опирается на теории феминистского перевода и рассматривает случаи, когда в процессе перевода происходит искажение или утрата гендерного смысла. Также анализируется влияние отсутствия грамматического рода в узбекском языке на сохранение или стирание гендерной информации.

Ключевые слова: гендерная предвзятость, феминистский перевод, гендерные термины, инклюзивный язык, идеологические сдвиги

The issue of gender bias in translation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a socio-cultural and ideological concern. In many source texts—especially those written in languages with grammatical gender such as English, French, German—gender is encoded explicitly through nouns and pronouns. However, when translating these texts into languages like Uzbek, which lack grammatical gender, preserving the intended gender identity becomes more complex.

As Simon (1996) points out, “translation is not innocent—it reflects power relations, including those shaped by gender” [1, p. 12]. This notion provides the foundation for **feminist translation theory**, which aims to expose and resist the erasure or distortion of women’s voices and gender-specific meanings in translated texts.

Theoretical Background

Feminist translation theory emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a reaction to androcentric language and male-dominated discourse in both original and translated works. Key figures such as Luise von Flotow, Sherry Simon, and Barbara Godard argued that language is inherently political and that translation can reproduce or challenge gender ideologies [2, p. 21].

Newmark (1988) viewed literal translation as insufficient in cases where socio-cultural nuances must be preserved [3, p. 83]. In the context of gendered language, the choice between **faithfulness** to the source text and **ideological responsibility** becomes a central dilemma.

Gender-Specific Terms and Their Translation

Occupational Titles

English contains gender-specific job titles such as:

- *Chairman, policeman, stewardess.*

Translating these into Uzbek often requires **neutralization**:

- *Chairman* → “rais” (gender-neutral)
- *Stewardess* → “havo yo‘lovchi xizmatkori” or “styuardessa” (borrowed, still female)

However, neutralization can lead to **erasure of gender identity**, especially in feminist texts where highlighting the subject’s gender is intentional.

Pronouns (In English) :

- *He / She*
- *They* (as a singular gender-neutral pronoun)

In Uzbek:

- *U* (gender-neutral)

The translation of “She is the director” as “*U direktor*” removes the gender marking, which in some contexts could lead to **misinterpretation or invisibility** of female presence.

Gendered Metaphors and Expressions

Metaphors such as “*founding fathers*” or “*motherland*” carry gendered ideological weight. Translators must decide whether to retain, adapt, or neutralize such expressions without distorting the original tone.

Case Studies and Examples

Source Term	Literal Translation	Feminist-Aware Translation
Chairman	Rais (neutral)	Ayol rahbar (if context calls)
She became a CEO	U bosh direktor bo‘ldi	U (ayol) bosh direktor bo‘ldi
Founding fathers	Asos soluvchilar (neutral)	Dastlabki rahbarlar (reframed)

Such examples show that **literal translation often suppresses gender identity**, and only a **conscious approach** can preserve intended nuances.

Cultural and Ideological Challenges

In cultures where gender neutrality is traditionally encoded in grammar, the **absence of grammatical gender** may be interpreted as inclusivity, but in fact, it can mask gender disparities. In post-Soviet linguistic environments, using gender-neutral terms was considered “progressive”, yet they often led to **invisibility of women** in texts.

Moreover, ideological decisions by translators or institutions (e.g., publishing houses) may influence whether gender-specific references are retained, adapted, or erased entirely.

Gender bias in translation is a layered problem encompassing **linguistic structure**, **cultural expectation**, and **ideological positioning**. In source languages with grammatical gender, the translator faces the challenge of rendering this gender specificity into a target language that may lack such markers.

While Uzbek, with its grammatically gender-neutral system, offers simplicity in structure, it also creates risks of **gender erasure** when translating texts where gender identity is central. Feminist translation theory offers a framework for resisting this erasure by highlighting the translator’s agency and responsibility in representing gender meanings accurately.

Understanding and addressing gender bias in translation is not merely a matter of linguistic fidelity, but a critical act of cultural and ideological representation. The translator, therefore, becomes not only a linguistic mediator but also a **conscious participant in shaping social narratives** through language.

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