

Gender and Linguistic Rights

An Interdisciplinary Perspective



Maribel Del-Pozo-Triviño

Alev Bulut

(eds.)

EDITORIAL COMARES



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Sumario

FOREWORD	XI
INTRODUCTION	XIII
 I. VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO Y TRAUMA: UNA CONTROVERSIA CONCEPTUAL EN EL ÁMBITO DE LA INTERPRETACIÓN	 1
<i>David Casado-Neira</i> <i>Silvia Pérez Freire</i> <i>Maribel Del-Pozo-Triviño</i>	
1. Introducción	1
2. ¿Qué es «violencia de género»?	3
3. La violencia de género como problema en la investigación para intérpretes	5
3.1. La problematización del concepto de violencia de género	6
3.2. La mirada fragmentada	7
4. ¿Qué es el trauma?	9
5. Conclusiones	13
6. Referencias	13
 II. VULNERABILITY AND VINDICATION: A LOOK AT THE RIGHTS OF DEAF WOMEN FROM THE SPANISH CONFEDERATION OF THE DEAF	 17
<i>María del Carmen Cabeza Pereiro</i> <i>Beatriz Longa Alonso</i>	
1. Introduction	17
2. Background	18
3. Reviewed materials	20
3.1. Planning	21
3.2. About gender-based violence	21
3.3. Health and others	21
4. Analysis	21
4.1. Accessibility and communication	22
4.2. Gender-based violence	24
4.3. Health and others	25
5. Conclusions	26

6. References.	28
7. Annex. CNSE documents reviewed for this chapter	30
7.1. On planning	30
7.2. Gender-Based Violence (documents in Spanish).	31
7.3. On Gender-Based Violence (signed materials available on the internet) . .	31
7.4. Health and others	32
7.5. Services.	32
III. NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE IN SPANISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING: EXPLORING SOME CHALLENGES. .	33
<i>Rayco H. González-Montesino</i>	
<i>Carmen Toledano Buendía</i>	
1. Introduction	33
2. Linguistic sexism	34
2.1. Gender expression and interpretation	35
3. Challenges in sign language interpreting from a gender perspective	40
4. Conclusions	44
5. References.	45
IV. REPRESENTATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING WOMEN THROUGH TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING.	47
<i>Sinem Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt</i>	
<i>A. Şirin Okyayuz</i>	
1. Introduction	47
2. Deaf community and deafness as a cultural identity.	49
3. The rights of women with disabilities and their representation	50
4. Challenges and opportunities for empowerment.	52
5. Conclusion	58
6. References.	59
V. WOMEN AT THE HELM: EXPLORING GENDER DYNAMICS IN TURKISH CONFERENCE INTERPRETING. .	63
<i>Esra Ozkaya-Marangoz</i>	
1. Introduction	63
2. Gender roles in Conference Interpreting	66
3. Methodology.	68
4. Findings	69
5. Conclusion	77
6. References.	78
7. Annex 1	81
7.1. Survey Questions	81
VI. TRANSLATING GENDER IN GREECE: TRANSLATION AS A DYNAMIC AND ENGAGED ACTIVIST PRAXIS. . .	83
<i>Vasiliki Misiou</i>	
1. Introduction	83
2. <i>Girl, Woman, Other</i> in Greek: Resistance is Fertile	86
2.1. Paratextual and textual voices setting the stage.	87
2.2. Translating as an all gender embracing praxis	90
3. Conclusion	98
4. References.	101

SUMARIO

VII. ANALYZING THE AMPLIFIED REVISIONIST VOICE OF SEXTON IN THE TURKISH TRANSLATION OF <i>LIVE OR DIE</i>	105
<i>Nihal Yetkin Karakoç</i>	
1. Introduction	105
2. Feminism, Sexton and the translator Göncü	108
3. Translation strategies used for the feminist agenda	109
3.1. Author-centred strategies	109
3.2. Translator-centred strategies.	110
4. Analysis of the Turkish translation of <i>Live or Die</i>	111
5. Conclusion	115
6. References.	116
ABSTRACTS	119
CONTRIBUTORS	125

Foreword

The perspective of gender—the diverse gender identities we now acknowledge, the cultural sensitivities that gender triggers and the social marginalization often associated with gender—has become essential in academic work on language and translation. Add to that the question of linguistic rights and we face numerous challenges. In fact, the concept of linguistic rights alone presents numerous challenges! They flare up regularly in the increasingly mobile and multicultural world we inhabit today—in instances of migrancy, of refugeeism, of life in diaspora, with regard to intersectional issues such as disabilities, race and ethnicity—but also in everyday human rights.

Although linguistic rights have been set out in documents such as the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* (1996), they often turn out to mean different things in different places, much like the term ‘gender’ which has different cultural and political definitions depending on “local” conceptions and interpretations of what the term might mean and how it might be implemented. Agreement on the meaning and thus applicability and usefulness of the term ‘gender’ is just as unlikely as agreement on linguistic rights.

In regard to gender, Joan Scott pointed out some years ago that ‘gender’, as a concept and term to designate the usually cultural aspect of sexual difference, stems from a particular environment, namely Anglo-American feminism of the 1960s, and has seen a complex sixty-year history in English. Its meaning in English is already hard to pin down, and it has not been easily translatable into other cultures and languages. The term ‘gender’ is a good example of how a certain concept remains a ‘local’ phenomenon, especially in the case of a stubbornly monolingual entity such as Anglo-America.

The articles in this book have largely aligned the gender focus with feminist concerns; women are the main point of research interest. While there is some reference to

the importance of language rights in cases of gender diversity, the focus is essentially on the achievements of women interpreters and women sign language professionals, the language rights of women living with disabilities, and the translations of books by women poets and writers. This focus continues what has now been three decades of academic work on “women and words”—on the impact of language and language use on marginalized sectors of the population, first and foremost women, on feminism in language and in translated language.

This work must go on, it is vital; and this compendium drives it onward in interesting directions. While there has been progress in initiatives to render language more ‘inclusive,’ the need to make women’s work with and in language visible remains an important cultural and academic objective. Further, the intersectional aspects of women’s lives, affected by racial issues, by disabilities, by poverty, and other oppressions, also need to be rendered visible through and in language—and this, across borders, boundaries, in *transnational* solidarities.

The transnational approach to research in translation studies, on gender perspectives, and in the field of linguistic rights assembles work from different parts of the world, and brings what might be ‘local’ issues to a more general awareness. It gains greatest visibility when it is published in English; and although the ‘hegemony of English’ in academia is indeed problematic, its power to disseminate work internationally can also be appreciated. In the case of this collection of articles, the focus on women interpreters in Turkey, the use of sign-language interpreting for women who are deaf or hard-of-hearing—in Spain and in Turkey—and questions raised about the culturally and politically different interpretation practices in the case of “gender-based violence” demonstrate how feminist interests in the field of language rights are developing work in the area of pragmatic cultural politics. While the analysis of literary texts in translation still plays a major role in the field, as in the article on Turkish translations of Anne Sexton, and the discussion of activist strategies needed to represent gender- and identity-fluid characters in the article on Greek translations of Bernardine Evaristo and Ali Smith, new directions in the field are focusing on translating for/with disabilities and increasingly translating with a decolonial impulse.

This impetus brings in a whole other set of topics, writers and questions—from parts of the world that early feminist and gender-based translation and language studies could hardly venture into. It is most gratifying and interesting to see the field broaden not only in terms of the languages and cultures but especially in terms of the many different instances of language-use and language politics.

LUISE VON FLOTOW

Introduction

Gender and Linguistic Rights: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

The “gender” concept entered our lives with the 1st wave of the (egalitarian) feminist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and developed into a fully-fledged area of academic research in the 1990s. The first research and discussions on gender issues were centered on its philosophical and cultural dimensions. Since then, both the traditional concept of gender (based on the biological bipolarity of the sexes as male-female) and its modern-day expansion (addressing all gender-based identifications under LGBTI+) have been associated with democratic rights and social equality.

Linguistic rights encompass the freedom to use one’s language in various domains, including legal, educational, and political contexts. Women and gender minorities may face barriers in accessing these rights due to language-related challenges. By providing linguistic access, translation and interpreting help break down language barriers that can perpetuate discrimination and exclusion.

The connection between gender and linguistic rights is a complex, multifaceted issue that reflects the broader challenges faced by marginalized groups in society. Linguistic rights encompass the right of individuals to use their own language, participate in cultural practices, and access information in their preferred language. Translation and interpreting play a crucial role in guaranteeing the linguistic rights of women and gender minorities by facilitating communication, preserving cultural diversity, and fostering inclusivity.

The present book attempts at creating an interdisciplinary platform by bringing together several domains of humanities, namely translation and interpreting studies, gender studies and socio-linguistics under the “gender” concept with focus on “linguistic rights”. The chapters of the book address this focal concept through several research contexts from feminist translation, signed language interpreting and conference interpreting to community interpreting. We are pleased to have

included chapters that address the issue of gender and language in literature in different languages and cultures as exemplary modes for the representations of feminist strategies. Although the majority of the chapters address the issue of gender from the perspective of community tasks and linguistically disadvantaged groups as in sign language interpreting, a brief look at the status of women in conference interpreting expanded the scope for the benefit of a discussion of gender and professional rights.

The contributors of the book are academics from Spain, Turkey and Greece representing a variety of backgrounds and research interests mainly within the general scope of gender studies and translation and interpreting studies. We are proud to have our Foreword written by an eminent feminist translation studies scholar from Canada, Luise von Flotow.

The first chapter titled “Gender-Based Violence and Trauma: A Conceptual Controversy in the Interpreting Field” and written by David Casado-Neira, Silvia Pérez Freire and Maribel Del-Pozo-Triviño in Spanish explores the conceptual and practical challenges in interpretation within contexts of gender-based violence, drawing on international experiences. While there is a consensus on the importance of interpreters’ work and the challenges they face, these vary depending on the policies, legal frameworks, and initiatives in each country, as well as internal and regional differences. This creates a fragmented and unequal landscape in providing support to victims who need interpretation services. Two key concepts, gender-based violence and trauma, are particularly problematic due to their variable interpretations. Although they might seem universal, in practice, they reflect cultural, legal, and political differences that influence communication among experts, the development of international projects, victim care, and the victims’ own perception of their situation. Additionally, authors argue that the concept of trauma has evolved beyond its medical origins to include notions like vicarious trauma, which affects interpreters working with victims. The text concludes that it is crucial to clarify both concepts: gender-based violence, as it defines the field, and trauma, as it redefines the interpreter’s role and the impact on their professional performance and personal well-being. Authors conclude that building an interdisciplinary collaboration is essential but challenging but only by doing so, we can “build bridges between different cultures and disciplines”.

María del Carmen Cabeza Pereiro and Beatriz Longa Alonso contribute to our book with their chapter titled “Vulnerability and Vindication: A Look at the Rights of Deaf Women from the CNSE” which puts forth an overview of the rights of the deaf women in the Spanish society by means of the legal documents of the Spanish State Confederation of Deaf Persons (CNSE), the highest legal body in the field in Spain. They analyze the equality policies of CNSE with its pros, cons and areas of improvement for the rights of the deaf women who are doubly discriminated against and disadvantaged being women and deaf. The authors then discuss the use of Spanish Sign Language (LSE) in daily life with respect to the care and support of

deaf, female, gender-based violence victims, as part of CNSE's reasons for existence. Moreover, the chapter stresses the importance of training the professional service providers on issues such as preventing and detecting gender-based violence as well as on issues related to working with interpreters.

In the chapter titled "Non-sexist Language in Sign Language Interpreting: Addressing the Current Importance and Specific Challenges" Rayco H. González Montesino and Carmen Toledano Buendía problematize the use of non-sexist language as a commitment to gender equality and a contribution to more inclusive and empathetic communication. The authors point at the role of language in raising social awareness on gender equality and diversity as well as eliminating gender discrimination. The chapter exemplifies all of these with the use of non-sexist language in Spanish Sign Language (LSE) interpreting as an unexplored topic in translation and interpreting research. The predominantly female nature of the profession of interpreting is touched upon inclusive language practices in various deaf and hearing communities. This chapter addresses the specific challenges faced by LSE interpreters in applying non-sexist language strategies, such as navigating cultural nuances, linguistic variations, and power dynamics. The goal is to initiate a critical dialogue and promote further research on the progress of non-sexist and inclusive language practices in sign language interpretation.

Sinem Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt and Şirin Okayayuz, co-authors of the chapter titled "Representation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women Through Translation and Interpreting", delve into the issue of Women's Rights with regard to the rights of persons with disabilities as a double disadvantaged group. The authors review the legal background in Turkey and discuss the accessibility of this double disadvantaged group to policy making mechanisms and their political and social representation by sign language interpreting. Visibility of the issues discussed by the authors concerning the status of the deaf and hard of hearing women in Turkish society are linked to research in Translation and Interpreting Studies on sign language interpreting putting forth the role that translation and translators/interpreters play in the matter. Translation/interpreting in this respect serve as an instrument of linguistic rights helping improve the legal and social systems through sign language translators and interpreters.

The chapter by Esra Özkaya Marangoz titled "Women at the Helm: Exploring Gender Dynamics in Turkish Conference Interpreting" examines the role of gender in Turkish conference interpreting, predominantly female in composition. The research introduced in the chapter has been carried out by surveys and in-depth interviews concerning the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of women interpreters in the Turkish settings emphasizing empowerment and leadership roles regarding cognitive, linguistic and cross-cultural competencies of women interpreters. The survey responses highlight the multi-linguistic proficiency, cross-cultural and contextual

adaptability, and resilience of women conference interpreters uncovering the importance of cultural norms, educational opportunities, and professional networks. The chapter concludes by discussing the findings of the research that show how the positive dominance of women within the profession in Türkiye challenges the existing narratives on gender dynamics owing to the advocacy of recognition and support for women interpreters in the Turkish setting.

Vasiliki Misiou contributed to our book with a chapter titled “Translating Gender in Greece: Translation as a Dynamic and Engaged Activist Praxis” in which she discusses how language might be used in the process of translation for the purpose of unsettling certain ontological and epistemological foundations and fixed boundaries. The research in the chapter concerns the field of transnational feminist translation studies and queer theory, discussing the role of translation in resisting gender stereotypes. Misiou uses examples from the Greek translations of Bernardine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* and Ali Smith’s *Girl Meets Boy* in her exploration of the strategies used by translators in representation of gender- and identity-fluid characters with respect to grammatical gender. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the instrumentality of both language and translation in pursuit of social change and transformation by means of the innovative discourses and linguistic practices at work for a more inclusive world.

Nihal Yetkin Karakoç, in the last chapter titled “Analyzing the Amplified Revisionist Voice of Sexton in the Turkish Translation of *Live or Die*”, approaches feminist translation in the light of the new currents of third wave of feminism of the 1990s promoting intersectionality, transfeminism and ecofeminism by means of the visibility of the confessional American poet Anne Sexton. *Live or Die* is the only work by Sexton in Turkish translated by Arzu Göncü, a clinical psychologist, with the title *Yaşa ya da Öl*. Yetkin Karakoç analyzes the translator’s linguistic choices on selected poems from the book in terms of author-centered strategies and translator-centered strategies on examples from the thick translation that the translator has created in cooperation with the publishing house. The chapter, thus, helps demonstrate that translated feminist works are influential in the dissemination of female ideas and voices, strengthening women’s linguistic rights as part of their span of human rights.

We are happy as the co-editors that all of our chapters collaborated and spoke to one another under our main and focal point: gender and linguistic rights. We would like to thank our esteemed contributors for helping us achieve our goal of presenting parts of a whole in harmony. Right at this point, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our publishers for their commitment and support as well as to our esteemed colleague Leslie Fernandes for his meticulous work of proof-reading and language editing of the draft texts all through.

To conclude this introduction, we wish to express our aspirations for the diverse audience this book aims to engage. We hope to reach researchers, academicians and

students from the humanities with a particular interest in gender and linguistic rights, as well as members of the general public, the civil society, women's organizations, NGOs, businesses and associations committed to the defense of human rights. It is our sincere hope that the insights within these pages contribute meaningfully to the growing body of literature on human rights, democratic values, and language use. Together, let us envision a future where the democratic rights of all —regardless of gender, race, or background— continue to flourish and evolve, enriching our shared humanity.

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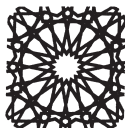
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Ana Belén Martínez López y Pedro San Ginés Aguilar

This pioneering book explores the intricate relationship between gender and linguistic rights, shedding light on how language access and gender identity intersect in powerful and often overlooked ways. Linguistic rights —the right to speak one's language, engage in social and cultural life, and receive information in a language one understands— are deeply entwined with the realities of migrant and deaf women, who often face systemic barriers rooted in both language and gender discrimination.

The decade-long academic collaboration between two translation and interpreting women scholars from the Universities of Vigo and Istanbul, bestows a unique and practice-informed lens to the study of language, gender, and human rights. Their shared expertise in applied linguistics, intercultural communication, and gender studies has helped them collate interdisciplinary research contributions that reveal the strong impact of access to one's own language in diverse settings—from legal and technical discourse to literature, public services, and sign language interpreting, which is crucial for ensuring communication rights in deaf communities, especially deaf women.

This book focuses on translation and interpreting as empowerment instruments and highlights how these practices can foster inclusion, challenge linguistic discrimination, and guarantee human rights. Scholars, students, and professionals in gender studies, sociolinguistics, translation and interpreting, human rights, and intercultural communication would greatly benefit from the findings in this book since it offers fresh insights into the social responsibilities of language professionals and the critical role of translation and interpreting in ensuring equity and human rights.



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