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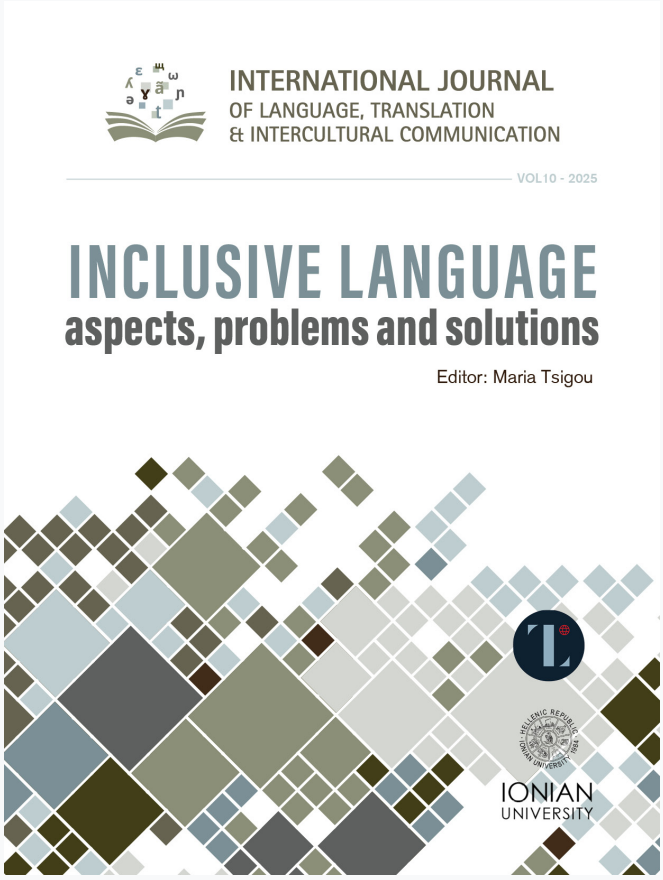

En Gender Issues in Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Greek Translation

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Gender Issues in Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Greek Translation

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Abstract

This study explores gender-related issues in two languages: Greek, which has grammatical gender, and Turkish, a language without grammatical gender. The aim is to examine how the linguistic differences between these languages impact the translation process, particularly in terms of the translator's performance and their understanding of gender. The research data presented and analyzed was collected through a combination of interviews with nine (9) participants, with many years of professional experience in the field of translation. Participants emphasized that a clear understanding of the text's communicative purpose and the ability to accurately convey the author's intentions are essential in dealing with gender issues in translation, often requiring the reformulation of original ideas. Moreover, the translators noted that a strong grasp of extra-linguistic factors— such as culture, traditions, and the political, social, and economic histories of Greece and Turkey— is crucial for any translator aiming to faithfully convey the meaning intended by the original author.

Keywords: *Gender, Grammatical Gender, Languages of different typologies, Translation, Greek, Turkish*

1 Introduction

Gender is an important area of study in many disciplines, including literary theory, contemporary art history, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies (Healey, 2003). These disciplines sometimes differ in their approaches to how and why they study gender. In linguistics, gender is one of the most elusive features of noun phrases (Corbett, 1991). Grammatical gender refers to nouns that are placed in classes not according to their meaning but according to their form, which determines the way the word behaves grammatically with regards to the agreement of adjectives, articles and pronouns. As grammatical categories belong to the structural obligations of a language, they are, like the other elements that constitute the mechanics of a language, meaningless in and of themselves. Roman Jakobson (1959) shows, however, that grammatical gender can be invested with meaning in certain cases, such as when language is turned away from its instrumental or communicative functions and used in poetry and mythology. Grammatical gender then takes on symbolic meaning, for example, when the poet wishes to emphasize the mythological origins and gendered identities of the terms for the days of the week, night and day, or sin and death. In these cases, grammatical gender must be taken into consideration for translation. While grammarians have insisted on gender marking in language as purely conventional, feminist theoreticians follow Jakobson in reinvesting gender markers with meaning. The meaning that they wish to make manifest is both poetic and, especially, ideological. They wish to show that gender relations are ideologically encoded in linguistic and symbolic representations, normative concepts, institutions, and social practices and identities.

According to linguistic work (Corbett, 1991; Comrie, 1999), languages fall into three types when it comes to their gender systems:

1. Genderless languages (e.g., Finnish, Turkish). In these languages, the gender-specific repertoire is at its minimum, only expressed for basic lexical pairs, usually kinship or address terms (e.g., in Turkish *abla*/sister vs. *ağabey*/brother)
2. Notional gender languages (e.g., Danish, English). On top of lexical gender (mom/dad), such languages display a system of pronominal gender (*she/he*, *her/him*). English also hosts some marked derivative nouns (*actor/actress*) and compounds *(chairman/chairwoman*).
3. Grammatical gender languages (e.g., Greek, Spanish). In these languages, each noun pertains to a class such as masculine, feminine, or neuter. Although for most inanimate objects gender assignment is only formal, for human referents masculine/feminine markings are assigned on a semantic basis. Grammatical gender is defined by a system of morphosyntactic agreement, where several parts of speech besides the noun (e.g., determiners, adjectives) carry gender inflections.

In light of this, the English sentence "He/she is a good friend" has no overt expression of gender in a genderless language like Turkish ("*O* iyi bir arkadaş"), whereas Greek includes several masculine or feminine markings ("*Εκείνος/εκείνη είναι καλός/καλή φίλος/φίλη*"). The analysis of gender is an actively researched area in contemporary academic literature (Hellinger & Bußman, 2001; Wechsler & Zlatić, 2003; Bobaljik & Zocca, 2011; Matushansky, 2013; Kramer, 2015; Kučerová, 2018; Murphy et al., 2018; Pesetsky, 2013; Puškar, 2018). Most languages have been studied in this domain, including Greek (Pavlidou, 1985, 2002, 2003; Giannakidou & Stavrou, 1999; Pavlidou et al., 2004; Pavlidou et al., 2015; Panagiotidis, 2002; Ralli, 2002; Makri-Tsilipakou, 1989; Anastasiadi-Symeonidi & Cheila-Markopoulou, 2003; Varlokosta & Nerantzini, 2013; Merchant, 2014) and Turkish (Deaux, 1985; Braun, 2001; Göçtü & Kır, 2014; Yalçınkaya, 2020).

Besides, translation studies highlight how gender assignment influences translation choices (Jakobson, 1959; Comrie, 1999). Problems primarily arise from typological differences across languages and their gender systems. Nonetheless, socio-cultural factors also influence how translators deal with such differences, although mistranslations can occur even when contextual gender information is available. According to Baker (1992: 96), differences in the grammatical structures of the source and target languages often result in some changes in the information content of the message during the process of translation. This change may take the form of adding information to the target text that is not expressed in the source text, which can happen when the target language has a grammatical category (such as gender) that the source language lacks.

Translators have to operate with lexical items and grammatical structures at various stages of the translation process (Baker, 1992: 111). It is nevertheless imperative that the text is viewed as a whole both at the beginning and the end of the process. A good translator should first take into consideration that he/she not only transfers translation units from the source language into the target language but that those units constitute a text in which choices at the semantic and pragmatic levels function simultaneously, as stylistic choices that must conform with the stylistic conventions or inventions of the specific text genre in the target language. The translator should also take into account that choices at the morphological or syntactic level are stylistic. The target language may or may not offer the same means to express the text's content, but the translator's choices—for instance, optional shifts such as choosing between active or passive voice, preserving the chain of subordinate clauses,

or breaking it into main and subordinate clauses—constitute stylistic choices (Batsalia & Sella-Mazi, 2010: 206).

To shed light on the translation process, the following section describes grammatically, semantically, and pragmatically the gender differences or similarities in Greek and Turkish.

1.1. Grammatical Gender Differences in Greek and Turkish

Modern Greek is a highly inflected language. In its nominal system, it syncretically encodes the phi-features of number (singular and plural), case (nominative, accusative, genitive, and vocative), and grammatical gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter). By contrast, Turkish is agglutinative, that is, grammatical functions are indicated by adding various suffixes to stems. Separate suffixes on nouns indicate both gender and number, but there is no grammatical gender. Nouns have three declensions with six case endings: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, locative, and ablative; the number is marked by a plural suffix.

The gender system of Greek is a primarily formal system, where morphological form predicts the gender value of a given word (Varlokosta & Nerantzini, 2013). Every Greek noun (including proper names) and every other element in the sentence controlled by the noun has to be marked for grammatical gender as "masculine," "feminine," or "neuter." In terms of gender marking, all nouns in Greek trigger gender agreement or concord with items such as determiners and adjectives (Sudo & Spathas, 2020). Greek adjectives and determiners need to have their gender features valued to be pronounced. However, Greek determiners and adjectives cannot come with their own features. Instead, assume that the values of the gender features on Greek determiners and adjectives are only determined by way of agreeing with the gender feature associated with a noun. The presence of determiners and adjectives, then, also requires the presence of a gender feature on a noun. Without the presence of a determiner or adjective, however, we might imagine that a noun need not be accompanied by a gender.

The morphological structure of Turkish does not differentiate grammatical gender and sex through specific suffixes or other morphemes. However, Turkish has linguistic tools for indicating referential gender, such as lexical gender, suffixes and compounding (Braun, 2001: 285). Since there is no grammatical gender in Turkish, human nouns and pronouns generally do not specify whether the person being referred to is female or male. For instance, words like *doktor* "doctor," *sekreter* "secretary," *yolcu* "traveler, passenger" can refer to either gender. Similarly, the pronoun *o* can mean both "she" and "he," and *gitti* can mean either "she went" or "he went." Explicit gender marking can be achieved by combining gender-specific terms with personal reference words (e.g., *kız arkadaş*, "girlfriend"). Some combinations, such as *kız çocuğu* "girl child", *kız kardeş* "sister", and *erkek arkadaş* "boyfriend", are commonly used, even when gender is irrelevant to the context. In her research, Braun (2001: 294) observed that gender marking was more common when referring to female. For example, in translating a text about a female child, expressions like *kız çocuğu* "girl child" were used, while a male child was simply referred to as *çocuk* "child". This indicates that male gender is often left unmarked, regardless of context, while female gender is explicitly marked. However, when referring to a specifically female domain, gender marking may be considered redundant and is often omitted.

1.2. Gender on a Semantic Level in Greek and Turkish

A close investigation of nominal ellipses in Greek shows that gender features are not all created equal. Following the literature on gender (Pavlidou, 1985, 2002, 2003; Giannakidou & Stavrou, 1999; Panagiotidis, 2002; Ralli, 2002; Merchant, 2014; Spathas & Sudo, 2020), we must distinguish syntactic gender from semantic gender. Gender features on nouns denoting humans are interpretable, but vary in where they appear in the structure: some nouns (the masculine noun *αδερφός* "brother", the feminine noun *αδερφή* "sister", the feminine noun *δασκάλα* "teacher") have gender presuppositions as part of their lexical meanings, while other (*δάσκαλος* "teacher", *γιατρός* "doctor") get their presuppositions only as a result of combining with a gender node in the syntax (whose value for gender is also interpretable) (Merchant, 2014). Merchant (2014) distinguished three groups of human-denoting masculine-feminine noun pairs, according to whether a nominal ellipsis with gender mismatch is possible. When a noun has a gender inference in its semantics, the gender inference is both presupposed and asserted. When a noun does not have a gender presupposition in its semantics, it simply has no gender inference anywhere in its denotation but can receive a gender presupposition from other exponents of gender in the nominal structure and/or via gender competition. Anastasiadi-Symeonidi and Cheila-Markopoulou (2003) proposed a different categorization system to elevate the role of real-world sex information which relies on the notion of "prototypicality." According to them, certain nouns are prototypically masculine, for example, if they are animate, their referent is human, and they bear the morphological ending *−s* (e.g., *πατέρας* "father"). Other masculine nouns are non-prototypical, and they are inanimate (*χειμώνας* "winter"). Similarly, prototypical female nouns are animate, their referent is female, and they end in *−a*, *−i*, and *−u*. Inanimate neuter nouns are prototypical and they end in *−o*, *−i*, and *−a*. By contrast, non-prototypical neuter nouns include inanimate nouns ending in *−s* and *−n* and animate nouns (for animals) both inflected (*πρόβατο* "sheep") and uninflected (*koala*) as well as uninflected human nouns (*barman*).

In Turkish, the semantics of terms for person reference are influenced more by socio-cultural factors than by grammatical genderlessness (Braun, 2001: 287). A term referring to a typically male-occupied profession (e.g., *polis* "police officer") is likely to carry male-biased semantics. For instance, while the Turkish word for actor is *oyuncu* (which can be used for both males and females), the terms *erkek oyuncu* ("male actor") and *bayan oyuncu* ("female actor/actress") are sometimes used to specify gender. Deaux (1985: 65) believed that the Turkish gender belief system impacts the semantics of Turkish terms for personal reference. The gender arrangement is characterized by male dominance, which is evident in almost all subsystems of Turkish society (economy, labor, market politics However, this gender belief system produces gender biases or expectations that remain hidden beneath the grammatical neutrality of the linguistic structure (Braun, 2001: 289).

1.3. Gender on a Pragmatic Level in Greek and Turkish

Communication styles vary among individuals due to several factors, including regional background, upbringing, education, age, and gender. Generally, men and women communicate differently, with masculine and feminine speech traits showing varying degrees. However, speech patterns among men and women are often shaped by their gender identity. In many languages, the dynamics of a conversation are shaped by social context, often reflecting the distinct social roles assigned to men and women

(Cameron, 1985; For further details, see Batsalia, 2003: 93-101[1]).

In Greek, the issue of feminine occupational terms goes beyond merely acknowledging women's roles in the workforce (Pavlidou 1985, 2003; Pavlidou et al. 2015). As Greek women entered male-dominated professions, the language adapted to label these new roles by creating terms from the official language. Some terms; such as *υπάλληλος* "clerk", *φιλόλογος* "philologist", and *αρχαιόλογος* "archaelogist" were classified in Greek school grammars (e.g. Tzartzanos, 1972) as "two-gendered" meaning the same noun and its full inflectional forms could be used for both men and women. However, other terms like *γραμματεύς* "secretary", *ταμίας* "cashier" and *γυμνασιάρχης* "high school director" remained distinctly masculine. Nevertheless, the gender (both grammatical and referential) of a noun phrase was usually clear in singular form, as nouns are often preceded by an article, numeral, other markers.

In recent years, some linguistic reforms in Greece have aimed at addressing linguistic sexism (Pavlidou, 2002, 2003; Pavlidou et al. 2004; Pavlidou et al. 2015), but male dominance in public speech remains evident. Men generally contribute more to public discussions, dominate topics, and interrupt more frequently. In her study, Makri-Tsilipakou (1989) found that women were less successful in initiating topics and made fewer contributions in casual Greek conversations compared to men. This reflects the patriarchal structure of Greek society, where men maintain dominance in both speech and social settings, despite women's advancements in the workplace and men's growing involvement in family responsibilities. It is still common in Greece to hear a mother excuse her daughter's crying by saying, "She is just a little girl" (*Κοριτσάκι είναι*), but scold her son for crying with, "What? Are you a girl crying like that?" (*Κορίτσι είσαι και κλαις?*).

Nevertheless, in Turkish, the absence of grammatical devices does not prevent the language –or rather, its speakers– from conveying messages about gender. Braun (2001: 295) stated that gender messages are embedded in various linguistic elements, including covert gender, explicit gender markings, proverbs and idioms. As these elements correlate with the social gender arrangement, they reflect existing social asymmetries. Proverbs communicate traditional beliefs about gender and, as part of the shared knowledge of the language community, contribute to gender stereotyping. Since proverbs and idioms mirror thoughts, understanding, and value judgments, everything that women (and men) generally experience in social life is reflected in these expressions (Yalçınkaya, 2020) such as *Erkekler ağlamaz* ("Men don't cry"). Because proverbs tend to be overly conservative, they often define women as responsible for the household and men as the breadwinners, as seen in *Yuvayı dişi kuş yapar* ("It is the female bird that builds the nest") or *Her başarılı erkeğin arkasında bir kadın vardır* ("Behind every successful man is a great woman"). Moreover, some proverbs express a preference for sons over daughters such as *Oğlan doğuran övünsün, kız doğuran dövünsün.* ("Let the one who bears a son be proud, let the one who bears a daughter beat herself.") or *Oğlan büyür koç olur, kız büyür hiç olur*. ("A boy grows up to be strong, proud; a girl grows up to be nothing.") (e.g. Braun 2001: 299).

Furthermore, idiomatic expressions are also an essential part of the Turkish language. For instance, the idiom *Evimin direği* ("The pillar of my house") is usually used by women for their husbands, meaning the person who keeps the house standing economically. Another example of idioms is *saçını süpürge etmek* ("To use one's hair

[1] For further details see Batsalia (2003). Language Varieties, pp.93-101, which discusses the differences in the speech of men and women and the effects of this phenomenon on communication.

as a broom"), which is used exclusively for women who exert themselves and work for someone else with great sacrifice, usually their husbands. In the translation process, if the translator does not understand the meaning of such idioms, they could may misinterpret the natural gender. Overall, translators must be aware of cultural references within texts; understanding the message implies that the receiver identifies and decodes the socio-cultural information embedded in the language (North, 1991:151).

Having discussed and compared Greek and Turkish related to gender differences on the lexical, semantical, and pragmatical levels, we now move to the research concerning the difficulties that face translators when tackling gender issues in the translation process between the two languages.

2 Methodology

This study seeks to explore how the linguistic differences between Greek and Turkish influence the representation of gender in translation and the challenges translators face in this context. Specifically, the research examines the difficulties translators encounter in terms of both performance and understanding of gender when translating between Greek and Turkish. To achieve these objectives, data was collected through a combination of personal communication and structured interviews with nine participants. These participants also provided written responses to a set of predefined questions. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained to use their responses in a published work.

The interview questions were designed to address the central aspects of the study and included the following:

1. What are the difficulties you face in terms of identifying and rendering gender as a semantic characterization when translating from Greek to Turkish or vice versa?
2. In your opinion, what kinds of texts are more challenging to translate with regard to gender issues? Why?
3. Based on your experience, what common mistakes occur in translations concerning the rendering of gender?

By analyzing the responses, this study aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between language, gender, and translation. The methodology ensures that the perspectives of experienced translators are central to the analysis, providing valuable insights into practical and theoretical aspects of the research questions.

2.1. The Participants

The study's participants include five women and four men, all of whom have extensive experience in Greek-Turkish translation. The data focuses on their professional experiences and insights. Of the nine participants, seven were born and raised in Istanbul as members of the Greek minority and are bilingual in Greek and Turkish. The remaining two participants are Greek, born and raised in Greece. Currently, eight participants reside in Athens, while one continues to live in Istanbul.

The selection of predominantly bilingual participants from Turkey was intentional, as their familiarity with the cultural attitudes, customs, and everyday life in both countries offers a deeper perspective on the challenges of Greek-Turkish translation.

Below is a table listing the participants' names and key details, including their birthplace, current residence, education level, and professional background.

Additionally, a quote from each participant's interview is included to provide a more personal insight into their experiences. Quotes related to the translation process are attributed to participants by name throughout the text, and a complete list of participants is presented in the table.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information and Key Insights

Name, age/quote	**Born in**	**Lives presently**	**Level of education, Professional experience**
Anna, 58 years old, *"Translators should be interested in clothes, shoes, jewelry, daily habits (e.g., cooking, grooming, household chores), references to the body, and family/social relationships"*	Crete	Athens	She graduated from the Department of Classical Philology of the Faculty of Philosophy at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is a consultant for the translation of texts in Greek from English, German, and Turkish.
Aris, 65 years old, *"The way one translates a word can change the meaning of the entire text. One word has different meanings in two different languages, and this can present the mentality and psyche of the people in a different way*."	Istanbul	Istanbul	He is a teacher at Zografeion Greek minority school in Istanbul, as well as a translator and writer. He completed his university education at Istanbul Technical University as a graduate chemical engineer. In 2004, he began translating contemporary Greek literature. His two-volume From the Other Side of the Aegean: A Selection of Contemporary Greek Literature was awarded a translation prize by the Greek Literary Translators Association in 2007. He translates literature, history, and philosophy from ancient and modern Greek into Turkish.
Aristotelis, 62 years old, *"Since the poetic texts are concentrated in concepts and in many cases, poets use abstract concepts, resulting in many*	Imroz/ Turkey	Athens	Assistant Professor of Language and Literature in the Department of Turkish Studies and Contemporary Asian Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is engaged in research and teaching on Turkish

times making it difficult for the translator".			Literature, Turkish Theatre and Translation (2018-).
Herakles, 80 years old, *"…for my part, translating from Greek to Turkish or from Turkish to Greek has been my way of life. Because I was born and raised in Istanbul, at home and at school we spoke one language (Greek), whenever we wanted, we could transfer it to the other language (Turkish). This worked automatically. No effort was needed to translate…"*	Istanbul	Athens	He has a PhD in political science (Ankara University, 1998) and a B.Sc. in civil engineering (Robert College, Istanbul, 1965). He translated more than twenty books, mostly Greek and Turkish poetry. Among his translations are the complete works of G. Seferis and K. Kavafis and two books on Turkish poetry: Yunus Emre and Can Yücel
Io, 58 years old, *"We translators have to be like chameleons. We have to get into the skin of the author and also the hero to translate well."*	Istanbul	Athens	Graduated from Zappeion Greek minority school of Istanbul and the Department of Business Administration of the University of Piraeus. Her professional interests focus on translation from Turkish to Greek and teaching Turkish to Greek speakers. She has translated books on philosophy, detective novels, films, advertising campaigns, and documentaries from Greek into Turkish.
Maro, 73 years old, *"Turkish personal pronoun often causes a headache for the translator rendering the text from Turkish to Greek"*.	Imroz/ Turkey	Athens	Assistant Professor of Turkish Language and Literature in the Department of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, She holds a PhD in Translation and Interpreting from the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting of the Ionian University.
Stella, 73 years old,	Istanbul	Istanbul	She studied at the Department of History and

"…When I can't determine the gender of a name and the context of the word doesn't help, I look the name up online so I can be sure of the gender..."			Archaeology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is a translator. She has been working in the publishing field for the last twenty years and has translated most of Orhan Pamuk's books from Turkish to Greek.
Thanos, 73 years old, *"When a translator translates, he essentially breaks down the source language sentence and reconstructs it into the target language. "To analyze" for her/him means to divide a whole into its constituent parts. Therefore, after breaking the source language sentence into small pieces, the translator uses the target language counterparts. This is where the difficulties begin..."*	Istanbul	Istanbul	He studied Economics at the University of Istanbul (until 1971). Since 1995, Thanos Zaragalis has been a translator of literary works (from Turkish to Greek and vice versa). He has translated novels, short stories, plays and poems. He participated in the editorial team of the Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Greek dictionaries published by the Centre for Oriental Languages.
Valeria, 34 years old, *"…translators must have a complete understanding and correct 'decoding' of the source text..."*	Athens	Athens	She received a Master's degree in "Translation and Interpretation" with working languages in Turkish and Greek from the Department of Turkish Studies and Contemporary Asian Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Turkish Studies & Modern Asian Studies at the same University. Her research and professional interests focus on translation from Turkish to Greek and teaching Turkish to Greek speakers.

2.2. Study Findings

This study presents and analyzes the participants' views on the challenges faced by translators when translating between Greek and Turkish, specifically focusing on issues

of gender representation. The following sections explore the responses regarding the difficulties encountered in translating gender-related aspects. Section 2.2.1 addresses challenges in translation from Turkish to Greek, while section 2.2.2. examines the difficulties in translating from Greek to Turkish.

2.2.1 Translation from Turkish to Greek

Seven out of the nine translators who were born and raised in Istanbul, and are bilingual in Greek and Turkish, consider this fact a "privilege." When they translate from Turkish to Greek they believe that the translation is an automatic process. Concerning this "privilege," Thanos said:

> …A good knowledge of the extra-linguistic elements, such as the culture, customs and traditions, the political, social, and economic history of Turkey is a necessary resource for any translator who aspires to render faithfully the meaning that the author wants to convey in the original text. The "Constantinopolitans" translators, because they know Turkish culture "from the inside," consider it an obligation to explain something that the author aims to refer somewhere.

He also described the process of translating from Turkish to Greek as:

> …When a translator translates, he essentially breaks down the source language sentence and reconstructs it into the target language. "To analyze" for her/him means to divide a whole into its constituent parts. Therefore, after breaking the source language sentence into small pieces, the translator uses the target language counterparts. This is where the difficulties begin...

In response to our question about the challenges translators face, Stella, noted that difficulties in Turkish-Greek translation often arise due to Turkish' preference for complex syntax with many subordinate clauses and she added:

> …because the verb is always at the end of the sentence, many times, especially in the case of Orhan Pamuk, the sentence must be read three or four times so that the translator understands who and what he is referring to.

Compared to Stella's opinion, Valeria felt that one of the most difficult and uncertain challenges is determining and expressing natural gender, due to the inherent otherness present in the two specific language systems. Valeria believed that the greatest difficulty does not lie in identifying the gender of simple nouns—which is done intuitively, as long as the translator has sufficient knowledge of Greek—but rather in the words that replace or define nouns such as pronouns or participles. In other words, the challenge is not in the morphology itself but in the semantic/morphological indications of natural gender. In Turkish, gender is not indicated by morphological markers, except in cases where there is either a distinct word for male and female (e.g., *oğul-kız*,"son-daughter*";karı-koca*,"wife-husband"), a gender-denoting word is additionally used (e.g., *erkek kardeş-kız kardeş,*"brother-sister"), or the entire word changes form (e.g., *öküz-inek,* "ox-cow"). This can sometimes pose challenges for the translator. However, in some instances, gender can be inferred from the context, allowing the translator to make the correct translation if, of course, he/she takes into account the contex.

In addition, Valeria stated that an additional difficulty is found in the case of human names, where the translator is required either to know which names are male and which female, or to cross-check from another source, as in Turkish there are first

names that are used for both genders (e.g., Deniz, Ümit, Can). In any case, the translator should, after first determining the gender of the person in question, add to their translation the appropriate Greek article (definite or indefinite) and then adapt all the determiners and all the determinations that accompany the noun as required by the Greek syntax.

The same difficulty is observed in the case of Turkish pronouns (e.g., possessive, indicative, reflexive), which do not indicate the gender of the person to whom they refer. In this case, the translator must identify the name or noun phrase that replaces each pronoun to fully convey the meaning of the text. Valeria gave an example from the book *Latife Hanım* (Çalışlar, 2006: 359-391)[2]:

> Böyle bir sondan dolayı **kendisini** de sorumlu görüyor, "çocukluk" ettiğini düşünüyordu.
> *Θεωρούσε και **τον εαυτό της** υπεύθυνο γι' αυτό το τέλος. Πίστευε ότι είχε φερθεί παιδιάστικα. (Greek translation).*
> **She** considered **herself** responsible for such an end, and thought that she was "childhood". (English translation).

In this particular passage, for the possessive ending Valeria chose the possessive pronoun "her" which refers to a woman, as its subject is Latife. The subject was inferred from the content of the previous sentences of the text, in which this is explicitly stated.

From the same book, Valeria gave another example in which a French law precept related to divorce terms is translated into Turkish. The translator was troubled by the rendering of the word *eş* which means the partner or spouse. It is, in other words, a word that does not reveal gender.

> Kendi çıkarttığı 1803 tarihli boşanma kanunu ise **eşin** 21–45 yaşları arasında olması kaydıyla karşılıklı rıza ile gerçekleşmesine izin veriyor ve yeniden evlenilmesi için boşanmanın üzerinden üç yıl geçmesini şart koşuyordu.
>
> *Ο νόμος περί διαζυγίων του 1803, τον οποίον ο ίδιος είχε θεσπίσει, επέτρεπε το συναινετικό διαζύγιο υπό την προϋπόθεση **η σύζυγος** να είναι μεταξύ 21–45 ετών και έθετε ως όρο για έναν δεύτερο γάμο την πάροδο διαστήματος τριών ετών από το διαζύγιο. (Greek translation).*
>
> The divorce law of 1803, which he enacted, allowed **the spouse** to be between the ages of 21 and 45 by mutual consent, and stipulated that three years must pass after the divorce for remarriage. (English translation).

Valeria shared her experience with us:

> In order to ascertain whether the restriction in the law applied to the man or the woman, I was compelled to look up the French law in the original language. From this research, I found that the gender in the word *eş* in this passage refers to a woman, so I translated the word as "the wife" and not "the husband." An unsuspecting translator could render *eş* in the masculine gender thus distorting the meaning of the original.

[2] From the author's Master's Thesis entitled "Translation of an excerpt of Tevfik Çavdar Türkiye'nin Demokrasi Tarihi - 1950'den Günümüze (The History of Democracy in Turkey - From 1950 to the present), Edition E', İmge Kitabevi, Ankara, 2013, pp. 9-84, translation commentary and terminological glossary", Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. 2021. Available at: https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/object/2957425/file.pdf.

The overhelming majority of participants translators confided that they search and check the same texts that have been translated into another language in order to identify the gender, be it French, English, or German. Maro agreed that the use of the common *o* (he, she,it) for the masculine and feminine Turkish personal pronouns often causes a headache for the translator rendering the text from Turkish into Greek. She said:

> ...The key factor in avoiding these mistakes is not to lose the flow, the continuity of the text, and to always keep co-text and context in mind.

Regarding the problem of names, which can belong to either men or women, Maro suggested the solution of checking social networks and discovering the gender through their posted photos or biographies.

Meanwhile, Io agreed that the lack of indicators of natural gender in the Turkish language creates problems for translators, who often find the gender of the person described in the text difficult to understand at first reading. Moreover, Io agreed with other translators that proper nouns cause a problem in literary texts. She believed that if the text is complete, at some point the gender will be understood and the problem will be solved, but if it is a fragment, she suggests that the translation is doomed to a 50% error rate.

On the question concerning which texts are more difficult to translate, Io suggested that literary texts can cause the greatest problems in translation, as the translator must have an overall picture of the story to decide whether the person being referred to is a woman, a man, or a child. She shared with us from her experiences two interesting cases regarding gender performance:

> When I translated Mehmet Murat Somer's two detective novels for Pataki publications from Turkish to Greek, I was faced with a challenge. The hero/detective of the novels was a transvestite. In the morning he worked as a computer programmer and in the evening he dressed as a woman and worked in a bar, while in the meantime he solved crimes... One might say, and where is the problem? And yet, having several transgender friends, I knew that depending on the occasion and the environment they were in, they used a different gender in their speech. I decided to translate the book as I believed and this brought great success.

And she continued with the second:

> I will finally mention another example by which one can understand how unsuspecting the reader can be about the hero of the book he is reading and how much this can trouble the translator. It is Akif Pirinçci's novel, "Felidae". The book begins with a monologue by the hero/heroine who, due to the absence of grammatical gender, does not allow the reader to understand his/her gender. The hero/heroine's partner is then described as a beastly man, so logically the chance of the heroine being a woman increases. The story progresses with the "couple" getting ready to move into a new house, which is in a bad state which makes "her" grumble, until on page 15 the reader reads the following jocular:
>
> *'...a stench was emerging from the doorway. Since I would be moving here too, I would have to put my signature on the porch too. I spun around 180 degrees and reacted instantly. The liquid that gushed out from between my butt legs covered the traces of the predecessor…'*
>
> Yes! The hero is a hysterical and curmudgeonly cat. If this book were to be translated into Greek, the translator would have to take a stance on gender from the beginning, thus spoiling all the suspense.

The two cases mentioned by Io show that a good knowledge of cultural references, such as the culture, customs, traditions, and political and social life of Turkey is a necessary resource for any translator who aspires to faithfully render the meaning that the author of the original text wants to convey. She emphasized:

> We translators have to be like chameleons. We have to get into the skin of the author and also the hero to translate well.

To the question, concerning mistakes made in translation regarding the indication of gender, Io mentioned the following, regarding her Greek-speaking students:

> When they are asked to translate a sentence that even refers to the first person from Turkish to Greek, without a second thought they translate it in the masculine gender, even if they are women. For example, a simple sentence like *Bugün çok yorgunum* is translated by everyone as *Είμαι* ***κουρασμενός*** (masculine, even if it is a woman who is speaking) ("Today I am very **tired**" (masculine).

Io suggested that it is a remnant of male domination to translate the sentence to Greek with the adjective in masculine form, even if the speaker is a woman.
Furthermore, Anna emphasized the importance of the cultural references and suggested that a basic requirement is for translators to profile each person. The translators should be interested in clothes, shoes, jewelry, daily habits (e.g., cooking, grooming, household chores), references to the body, and family/social relationships. Turkish people use many idiomatic expressions and proverbs when they express themselves. Therefore, the translators should also be interested in the way of speaking, for example, the *ayol*, "oops", an untranslatable epithet which is used mainly by women; the great emotionality in speech; and idioms that echo stereotypes of social relations.

Additionally, citing the example that most of the translators who are not aware of Turkish idiomatic expressions and proverbs could make mistakes with gender, Anna wondered:

> What man would refer to a female family member as *evimin direği* (my home pillar) even if that alone supported the house financially?

Anna said that the mistakes that occur most often are the incorrect understanding of gender, which may lead to subsequent misunderstandings and confusion in long-term subjunctive speech. This may be caused by a lack of accompanying elements in the text that could be used to help to understand the natural gender (e.g., style of speech, clothing, habits). She added:

> … in a text there can be an alternation of singular and plural, regarding the same group. Suppose a text talks about a women's issue. It is possible to alternate *kadın* (woman) with *onlar* (they) and mean women, or to insert a sentence only with plural verbs and mean women, without a clear statement. Such issues exist in vignettes and journalistic articles in general.

Concerning the question of the kinds of texts that are more difficult to translate, regarding the issue of gender, Aristotelis considered poetic texts to be more difficult to translate than prose texts, as poetic texts are concentrated on concepts, and in many cases, poets use abstract concepts with the result that it is often difficult for the translator to know to who/whom or what it refers.

After addressing gender-related issues in the translation from Turkish to Greek, the next section explores the challenges translators face when translating from Greek to Turkish, along their suggestions.

2.2.2 Translation from Greek to Turkish

Ari spoke about the difficulties he often faces regarding gender in translation from Greek to Turkish:

> In Greek, when you say "I love her" it's clear you're talking about a woman; when you say "I love him," it's clear you're talking about a man. However, when you want to express the same thing in Turkish, you need to reinforce the sentence structure with nouns. For example, you would say "I love the girl I loved" or "the boy I loved." In other words, you have to add additional words to the Greek text when translating it into Turkish. If the Greek sentence is lengthy, you are forced to use the noun twice in the Turkish translation. At the beginning of the Turkish translation, you mention the girl's name and later in the same sentence you add "the girl," which inevitably alters the original text to some extent.

Ari gave another example from the translation he made of the short story "Nostalgos" by Papadiamantis (2008):

> *Η σελήνη επρόβαλε, μόλις άρχισε να φθίνη τρίτην νύχτα μετά το ολογέμισμά της, εις την κορυφήν του βουνού ,* ***κ΄εκείνη****,* ***ασπροφορεμένη****, μετά τόσους στεναγμούς και τόσα περιπαθή άσματα, έκραξε.....*
>
> (English Translation) The moon appeared, as soon as it began to wane on the third night after its setting, on the top of the mountain, and **she**, **dressed in white**, after so many sighs and so many painful songs, cried out...

In Turkish, there is difficulty in rendering the Greek pronoun "she" because in Turkish it cannot be seen that it is a woman. For this reason, it is attributed as follows[3]:

> Ay yeni doğmuştu ve dolunaydan sonraki üçüncü geceye girildiğinde dağın tepesindeki görüntüsü küçülmeye başlamıştı. **Beyaz entarili genç kadın...**

Ari was thus compelled to paraphrase Papadiamanti's "she" as "the woman in white." The translator feels that it is necessary to add certain words or information in the translation to ensure that the reader understands the gender to which the writer is referring. Ari believed that this requirement diminishes the literary value of the text. On the other hand, because there is no gender distinction in the Turkish language, particularly in poetry, the reader can interpret the poem's content as referring to either a woman or a man. According to Ari, this ambiguity is advantageous. Each reader can interpret the text in their own way, which he believes is a benefit of the Turkish language. This ambiguity is especially beneficial when translating Kavafi's poetry. He explained:

> In Kavafi's poems, we can perceive a dynamic, very beautiful eroticism that persisted until the last years of his life. He tries to conceal this eroticism and avoid revealing the gender of the loved one. However, the Greek language imposes limitations, compelling you to disclose the

[3] From the translation made by the author of "Nostalgos" by Papadiamantis, entitled "*Düşkün Derviş*". İstanbul:Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları 2021:1):

gender of the object of desire. Therefore, the Turkish-speaking reader can appreciate a beautiful love poem by Kavafi without provoking Turkish society, which is quite modest and conservative regarding homosexual love.

In closing, Aris emphasized that:

The way a word is translated can alter the meaning of the entire text. A single word can have different meanings in two different languages, and this can reflect the mentality and soul of the people in a distinct way.

Regarding gender errors in translations from Greek to Turkish, Herakles focused on mistakes related to gender and grammatical gender when translating from Greek to Turkish via a third language. The example he provided highlights issues with both natural and grammatical gender in English-Greek and Greek-Turkish translations. According to Herakles, when the translation into Turkish is done through a third language, these problems multiply. This is evident in the Turkish translation of the poem "Kichli" by Georgios Seferis, which was made through English. Herakles explained:

Studying just one poem of Seferis translated from English we find errors and omissions: In the very first verses, the poet refers to birds and people dying. However, in the translation, we read that only the birds die. This is because the Turkish translation was made from the English version. In Greek, the reader can distinguish between "the birds" from "many" (people). In English "heavy toll" and "many" do not specify gender and consequently, birds and humans are not differentiated. In my opinion, the English translators did not correctly render Seferis's verse, because they misunderstood the metaphor Seferis uses between the image *τα σκάγια πήραν τα πουλιά* (the shrapnel took the birds) and the metaphorical use of the expression *τους πήραν τα σκάγια* (the shrapnel took them). Moreover, they did not mention 'people' because the English language does not allow translators to distinguish between the forms *πολλούς/πολλές* (many for male/many for female) which refer to men or women, and the form *πολλά* (many), which does not indicate gender. Thus, two English translators translated *πήραν πολλούς τα σκάγια* as a)"(...)Burst of fire took a heavy toll" or b)"(...) many felt the pellet". Consequently, the Turkish translator, working from the English version, may not even realize that they are deviating further from the original by referring to a flock of birds instead of people:

κάποτε ο κυνηγός βρίσκει τα διαβατάρικα πουλιά
Κάποτε δεν τα βρίσκει. Τα κυνήγι
Ήταν καλό στα χρόνια μου, πήραν ***πολλούς*** *τα σκάγια*
Γ. Σεφέρης «Κίχλη»

Sometimes the hunter gets the birds of passage
Sometimes he does not get them. There was in my time
Good hunting. Burst of fire took **a heavy toll**
Translated by Rex Warner

Hunting
Was good in my time, **many** felt the pellet
Translated by E. Keeley & P. Sherrard

Gün olur göçebe kuşları vurur avcı
Gün olur eli boş döner. Benim yıllarımda
Av boldu, **kuşların çoğu** vurulurdu saçmalarla
Translated by Cevat Çapan (1971)

Herakles considered that the translator must not only know the language of the author or poet but also understand what "knowledge" encompasses in a broad sense. Language carries the wealth accumulated by a society over many centuries, including elements from its history, culture and religious narratives, as well as the interactions with neighboring societies and communities. It also reflects expressions and particularities, arising from the evolution of the language and everyday life. Only by understanding these aspects can the translator approach the text with some certainty and hope for relative success.

Conclusion

This paper examined the issues of gender in the Greek and Turkish languages, particularly in relation to their different gender systems. The main aim was to investigate how the differences between Greek and Turkish reflect gender issues in translation and the difficulties faced by translators in terms of performance and understanding gender during the translation process. Translators agreed that a deep understanding of the context, the text genres and of the extra-linguistic elements, such as culture, customs, habits, and the political, social, and economic history of Turkey, is essential for faithfully conveying the meaning intended by the author of the original text.

The absence of grammatical gender in the Turkish language, along with the lack of specific names or characteristics to indicate natural gender, often places the translator at risk of mistranslation. Even some proper nouns can be ambiguous as they may belong to either men or women. In this case, one solution suggested by translators is to use social networks to determine gender through posted photos or biographies. On the topic of mistakes made in translation, these may occur by misunderstanding the gender, either the gender of the names or by overlooking contextual clues that indicate natural gender, such as style of speech, clothing, or habits. Additionally, translators must take into account idiomatic expressions and proverbs in Turkish to avoid mistakes related to natural gender. Therefore, it is essential that translators are deeply aware of cultural references.

When translating from Greek into Turkish, translators often need to add words or information to convey the natural gender intended by the original. Problems also arise when translations are done through a third language, such as from Greek to English and then from English to Turkish, which can lead to misunderstandings. These issues highlight the need for translators to collaborate with experts in both languages and cultures.

Moreover, the interviewees unanimously agreed that literary texts, particularly poetry, are the most challenging to translate. However, the lack of gender distinction in Turkish can be advantageous, especially in poetry, as it allows the reader to interpret the content as referring to either a woman or a man. This ambiguity benefits the translation of Kavafi’s poetry, for instance, where the poet intentionally obscures the gender of the loved one to conceal his eroticism. This example illustrates how cultural context and literary intent intertwine in shaping a translation’s final product.

To address these challenges, this study suggests that translators adopt a multidisciplinary approach that includes cultural studies, linguistics, and gender theory. Training programs for translators should incorporate modules on cultural awareness and sensitivity, emphasizing the role of historical and social factors in shaping linguistic expressions. Further research could focus on developing tools and frameworks that aid

translators in navigating gender ambiguities, particularly when dealing with languages that differ significantly in their treatment of gender.

Overall, the translator must understand not only the language, but the language as well as the culture of a linguistic community. Language carries the wealth accumulated within a society over many centuries: it encompasses elements from its history, culture, religious narratives, and interactions with neighboring societies and communities. It also includes expressions and particularities resulting from the evolution of culture and everyday life. Only by understanding these aspects can the translator approach the text and the gender issues with confidence and hope for relative success.

We believe that this study has shed some light on the complexities of gender in the context of Greek and Turkish translation. By situating translation within its broader cultural and linguistic framework, this paper underscores the importance of viewing translation as not merely a linguistic exercise but also a cultural and social act. Future research could explore gender issues in other linguistic pairs, particularly those involving languages with divergent gender systems, to further enrich our understanding of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and translation.

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