

# On the need for non-sexist language in translation

Robert Neal Baxter

University of Vigo (Galiza)

## Abstract

This article defends the introduction of non-sexist language into translation study related disciplines on the grounds that it is both a social necessity and a useful tool in order to encourage students to think about the way they use language, its implications and appropriateness. Taking a simple test as its basis, it discusses male-dominant bias and sexism in translation via the use of gender-specific morphemes. As such it challenges the accepted view of prescriptivist non-sexist language reform versus supposedly neutral, non-prescriptivist conventional language usage.

Politeness is no threat to our liberties, though it is worth remembering that activism may be necessary to make us realize that we are not being polite. Misrepresentation of the truth and outright censorship – the respective techniques of the liberal and the totalitarian – need to be opposed. At least, that much is clear if – like me – you believe that no censorship is defensible. (Smith, 2002:56)

## 1- Introduction

It would be admittedly rather trite to try and dredge up and rehash the hoary old chestnut that translation necessarily involves some part of manipulation on the part of the translator. There is, however, one very notable exception to this argument, i.e. the way translators intentionally or unintentionally project their own biases and prejudices onto their readership by reading into the original text things that are not explicitly there. While such ideological slants in translation have been dealt with in general (*Vid.* Hatim *et al.*, 1997: 143-163), the way all pervasive male-dominated discourse permeates translation is something to which I have personally been unable to find any specific discussions. Unlike the general topic of manipulation in translation where 'manipulating' the source text may not only be legitimate but also an integral part of the translation process *per se* (*Vid.* Baxter 2004), I personally believed that this is far from the case when dealing with gender-based prejudices which are allowed to creep, unchallenged, into translated texts.

To illustrate how translation can be used to make such biases tangible and to alert the translator to the potential dangers of interpreting the world through their own social conditioning, implicit heterosexist interpretations of 'sex-unknown' or 'sex-concealed' (Bodine, 1975:131) 2 source texts can be quite revealing.

I recently carried out a very quick experiment to confirm a suspicion I had regarding heterosexist bias in translators by requesting a group of approximately twenty, final-year translation students to translate the following sentence from Galizian to English: "Despois dunha noite de paixón, levantou-se, beixou-na e marchou traballar dexiando-a a esperar o seu marido" (lit. After a night of passion, (s/he) got up, kissed her and went off to work, leaving her to wait for (his/her) husband). Galizian is a pro-drop language, whereby the sex of one of the players in the trial sentence is not overtly specified, whereas English syntax calls for a compulsory subject pronoun, with the expected third person singular forcing the translator to choose between masculine 'he' or feminine 'she' 3. Despite the fact that this was a topic which had recently been aired in class, certain subjects still 'automatically' assumed that if one of the players was explicitly female, then the other must 'logically' be male. When challenged, they saw nothing 'strange' about the sentence they had been asked to translate. What this clearly illustrates is that translators often tend to project their views of what they expect human society and behaviour to be like onto their final target texts based on received dominant social discourse, i.e. heterosexual relations are the norm and that heterosexual marital relationships preclude same-sex extramarital relationships, although this may not actually be implicit in the source text. One might want to argue at this point that the translator's assumption is fair based on their knowledge of socially dominant norms. I, however, would disagree with the right of anyone to silence any social minorities merely on the grounds that they are minorities within the societies the translator happens to live in, condemning them to the realms of not existence with a sweep of the pen. Nor, it should be pointed out, are such 'marginal' phenomena absent from literature that translators made be solicited to translated, one case in point being the well-known British author Jeanette Winterson, where the absence of context caused by 'sex-concealed' (Bodine, 1975: 131) forms an integral part of the plot.

The same applies to the usage of male-dominated social perceptions displayed via language use ('sexist language') within the context of translation studies. Unlike the previous case, it would be fair to say that only an outright bigot could allege that wimyn are either too 'insignificant' or 'a marginal phenomenon' in society for them to be taken into account by agents of cultural transfer such as translators.

It is often argued that what may be construed as sexist usage was not in fact the intention of the speakers on the grounds that that's the way 'grammar' works. While on the one hand this hoary old argument favoured by language mavens over implies 'over-sensitiveness' on the part of people who feel that so-called inclusive usage of masculine gender in English is sexist, it also implies that the issue is a language-related one.

Here I shall argue that whilst on the surface it involves language usage, what is at stake is in fact something quite different. The question, as Cameron (1988: 120-122) quite rightly points out is not so much about the actual contents of the rules, but more about who is entitled to make the rules and what social agenda the makers of the rules ascribe to and wish to foster within society.

Nor is PC language merely a question of deferent politeness and avoiding making offence, in which case it would be perfectly acceptable to continue to use derogatory terms such as 'nigger' to refer to Blacks or 'girl' to refer to adult wimyn when not in the presence or at least in earshot of the people whom it would be likely to offend. Instead, non-discriminatory, inclusive language reform involves challenging the way people use language in order to question the way they express their underlying world views.

For all of the reasons outlined above, therefore, such questions as sexist and non-sexist language would be best addressed not within the framework of strictly linguistic equivalences, or as a part of a second or foreign language learning process, but rather as an essential element of what are often referred to in the literature as 'cultural references' in as much as it involves language usage based not on syntactic or pragmatic rules but rather on social conventions which may vary from one culture to another. As such, such questions as sexist, racist, heterosexist biases in language as a cultural practice are startlingly absent from translators' handbooks which deal with the question of cultural references, preferring instead to centre on much more 'important' issues as clothing, gestures and habits, ecology, food and rock music (Newmark, 1988: 95 *et alii*)<sup>4</sup>.

Within the new conceptual framework of non-sexist language not as linguistic engineering *per se*, but rather the surface manifestation of a deeper social intervention agenda, this implies not merely asking questions about the prescriptivism of the non-sexist rules to be applied but also about the reasons behind them. In other words, the prescriptivist model proposed by the non-sexist language

lobbies should not be perceived as being opposed to otherwise 'natural' non-prescriptive language usage, but rather actually challenges the view that such sexist language in general usage is in itself non-prescriptive and 'natural'.

Whilst diffidently acknowledging the potential benefits of politically-oriented language reform 5, writers such as Smith (2002: 53) apparently feel 'attacked' (*sic.*) by such normative proposals, claiming that: "Many aspects of the campaign for political correctness have the stamp of authoritarianism, but the campaign is harmless if it stops short of censorship [...]" (Smith, 2002: 56). It is authoritarian in as much as it claims the right for certain people – wimyn, blacks, differently abled people, etc. – to claim back authority over the way they want society to refer to them through language and as such definitely is a form of censorship (*Cfr.* Cameron, 1998: 159). Smith's comfortable idea of freedom is of course only a chimera. People are not entitled, to act and speak as they please with impunity: how else is Prof. Smith able to teach his students and mark their papers if everything goes and he exercises no authority over the 'correctness' of what they say and write?

As Bodine (1975: 131 *et passim*) points out, it is the traditional prescriptivist grammars which intentionally 'tinkered' with the way people spontaneously used gender-neutral pronoun 'they' in the singular in order to enforce an andocentric usage of language on the speakers. The point here is that dominant, male-oriented discourse is seen as the norm and therefore goes unchallenged, whereas non-sexist language is often accused of somehow trying to pervert 'natural' usage. The question is therefore not one of non-sexist prescriptivism versus non-prescriptivism, but of one kind of prescriptivism versus another, each with its own ideological underpinnings.

Neutrality, therefore, is illusive and comfortably relies on the *status quo*, i.e. the conservative agenda rather than a progressive agenda. This is why non-sexist and PC language are so interesting, not because they actually change society or the way people think, but because they challenge the supposed neutrality of dominant social norms:

One way to read the emergence of so-called 'politically correct' language is as a challenge to the whole idea of a universal and neutral language. It pushes to the limits established beliefs about what language is, or ideally should be [...]. Cameron (1995, 120)

One of the aims, therefore, of promoting such language reforms involves forcing people to think about what they say, the way they speak, the implications of their

words and what these words may be construed to mean by their addressees as distinct from their intentions. One very clear example of this sort of gap between emitter intention and addressee interpretation can be found in the use of the so-called 'inclusive male gender' or 'sex-indefinite 'he'' (Bodine, 1975: 130; Pauwels, 1998: 50-53) when wimyn have to infer it refers to them or not. For example, why is it that a French-speaking Swiss womyn is supposed to 'know' that the United Nation's 'Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme' (lit. 'Declaration of Man's (*sic.*) Rights', 1948) is supposed to refer to her rights as well as to her male compatriots 6, whereas until wimyn finally won the right to vote at the Federal level in Switzerland in 1971, she would have been expected to interpret the same phrase in any legal texts published in her home country to implicitly exclude her. It would, of course, be pointless to ask how many man would, on the contrary, feel identified with the title of "Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne" [lit. 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Female Citizen'] written by Marie Gouze (a.k.a. Olympe de Gouges) as early as 1791 or "A Vindication of the Rights of Wimyn" penned by Mary Wollstonecraft dated one year earlier in 1792. Or, to take another example, how are wimyn really supposed to feel when a plate showing an anatomical illustration of a naked wimyn, vulva included, appears under the heading 'O homem / Man' in a modern-day bilingual dictionary 7. If wimyn are so used to knowing that 'men' refers to them, how are they supposed to know that 'men' doesn't refer to them when they see it posted on the door of a public toilet? When translating sentences such as 'Que pena non ter fillos' (lit. 'What a shame not to have sons') the translator must be fully aware of the implications of interpreting 'fillos' as a generic masculine, in which case it would have to be rendered 'children', as opposed to 'son' reflecting the actual masculine-feminine distinction 'fillo – filla' (lit. 'son – daughter'). Within such an ambiguous context, it is perhaps not quite so clear what Bush really meant when he famously said: "We cannot tolerate attacks on the wife of an American citizen" (in Cameron 1995: 136), implying quite openly that wimyn are not citizens unlike men... Without a context, which may not always be available, translators should beware of (unwittingly) using their own social prejudices to resolve such problems.

For translators to glibly overlook is part of the much larger on-going debate in translation studies regarding responsibilities. It may well be that the translator is torn between an allegiance to the readership of the target text versus an allegiance to the writer of the source text, but perhaps the time has also come for the translator to start taking more seriously the responsibilities they have towards themselves and implications of the words they use. Basically, translators and especially students of

translation should be made to realise that their usage of language may, in certain contexts, hinge around basic, albeit not necessarily conscious, underlying power relationship and it would be fair, therefore, for translators to have to ask themselves, as interlinguistic and intercultural mediators, whether is it legitimate for them to burrow their heads in the sands of socially accepted conventions and not to consider the possible implications of the words they use on socially less visible groups such as wimyn, blacks, GLBTs, etc., having the right to label them or render them invisible or forcing such groups to ponder on whether they are correctly interpreting the intentions of the person supposedly responsible for breaking down communication barriers?

In my experience as a teacher of translation-related subjects, as a facet of interpersonal mediation involving language I feel that the introduction of issues such as non-sexist language in particular and 'politically correct' language in general can serve a very useful purpose in a as much as it forces students to think not so much about language at the structural level or questions such as equivalences in cross-systemic or cross-cultural terms, but rather to think about the implications of the way they themselves use terms within their own cultural reference frameworks. M. Carme Junyet is only partly right when she writes:

[the] fight [for a politically correct language] involves substituting any element suspected of implying any kind of discrimination towards any group. Junyet (1996: 12)

Whist it is true that politically correct language may serve to avoid being offensive, its main aim is to make people think about the way they see others and the way they reflect that in their language and to gauge the way the receivers of this language may interpret it and to decide whether such behaviour is acceptable and legitimate:

[...] the object of tampering with linguistic conventions is to make the point that the way of using language which most people consider 'natural' is not natural at all [...]. Cameron (1995: 156)

and

Deliberate departures from conventional usage are meant to bring those assumptions to the surface so they can be noticed and challenged. Cameron (1995: 157)

Surely that is the very basis of what training translators should be all about, i.e. teaching students to think about the words they use and the possible effects they may have when shifting from one human interaction framework to another.

## 2- The Test

A simple test was drawn up to test the hypothesis that translators would be likely to project sexual stereotypes according to the predominantly male-oriented discourse through their translations by ascribing and allotting grammatically marked gender in the target language where such implications were not present in the source language, in line with expectations about social gender roles.

A set of 46 final-year students were asked to translate a number of test sentences (see Annex) 8. In order to recreate semi-spontaneous conditions, i.e. precluding conscious focusing on gender-related questions, the test questions were interspersed with other unrelated sentences and the students were asked specifically to provide answers in Galician using the newly approved spelling norm and avoiding Spanish loan-words in an attempt to distract their attention away from the specific issue to be tested by forcing them to focus instead on other aspects known to be problematic but not insurmountable. Care was also taken to avoid the segments to be studied appearing in an over-prominent position at the start of the test sentences in order to over-topicalise them and alerting the testees to the possible aim of the study. None of the test questions contained any terms, structures, etc. considered to be so difficult to translate so as to render the whole exercise unviable.

The disproportionate female-male student ratio of approx. 42:4 would render any extrapolated interpretations meaningless.

## 3- Discussion of the Results

One of the commonest and indeed thorniest questions involving the use of sexist vs. non-sexist prescriptive models involves the way different professions are traditionally assumed to be carried out by one sex or another (Pauwels, 1998: 42-43). Whilst it has often been argued that society has moved on over the last few years as far as sexual equality in Western Europe is concerned, while certain battles do seem to have been won, a rather more traditionalist view still continues to hold sway as reflected by the way people use language as illustrated by some of the translations provided in response to a number of test questions.

The first cases we shall discuss here involved what Bodine (1975: 131) terms 'mixed-sex, distributive'. In the first case it might be argued, that doctors (sentence 1) in today's society are predominantly males and that nurses (sentence 2) are predominantly female, and as such this unequal usage of gender marking in language is merely a faithfully reflection reality. This argument which is often raised against non-sexist language meets, however, with two main objections: firstly, it is highly dubious that were the trend to gradually become reversed in society with equal numbers of male and female doctors and nurses, language would follow suit to 'keep up with' changing reality. Secondly, the rule is not applied when other sectors or professions mainly represented by wimyn are concerned, e.g. teachers (sentence 3) are still predominantly labelled 'profesores'. The latter is even more startling when such generic usage of male gender runs counter to actual direct experience, as in the case of the sentence, where in fact the students questioned would realise that the vast majority of the students (sentence 4) enrolled in the translation and interpretation course are, in fact, wimyn. Once more, it is clear that language usage doesn't reflect anything other than social norms and a male-dominated discourse, which specifically excludes wimyn unless they fulfil the roles and careers traditionally expected of them, e.g. nurses, secretaries, etc. Incidentally, 'nurses' is the only case where a specific inclusive gender mark is used on one occasion, effectively integrating men, whereas no such device is ever used to effectively integrate wimyn grammatically into what is perceived as a primarily male-dominated field.

Furthermore, as sentence 14 illustrates, anyone not specifically marked as a womyn is automatically assumed to be a man unless there is some context which identifies the person in question with a role or profession traditionally associated with wimyn, thus subordinating wimyn as a subcategory of men.

In other cases of 'sex-unknown' (Bodine, 1975: 131 *op. cit.*), the situation is similar as happens with the grammatical gender ascribed to the term 'president' (sentences 5 & 6), where it would seem that presidents must be male by default, especially in male-dominated field such as football (sentence 5), although specific contexts ('semantic frames') geared to activities traditionally ascribed to wimyn (sentence 6) may help tilt the balance towards the use of the feminine gender. The test sentence used (5) was actually taken from a news item referring to Ms. María Teresa Rivero, president of the Spanish Rayo Vallecano Football Club. It may well be argued that in this case female football presidents are so few and far between as to pale into 'insignificance'. However, such linguistic liberty to sweep certain realities aside seems only to apply to socially marginalised groups such as wimyn as any teacher who has



ever tried to use female gender as inclusive-gender when addressing groups of predominantly female students will know. Even in a numerically 'marginal' ration of 1 male to every 20 females, male students thus addressed more often than not immediately object to being 'left out'. It is, therefore, not a question of numbers, but of how society seems to accept it to be acceptable practice to ignore members of society who do not fit into pre-established roles. Sentence 6 was intended to provide a specifically female context, i.e. 'shellfish collectors' who even the Galician Government refers to in the feminine 'mariscadoras'. The term was also very much in the headlines recently following the catastrophe caused by the sinking of a petrol tanker off the Galician coasts. Nevertheless, irrespectively of the ways the term was translated, it was overwhelmingly referred to in the masculine. What is more, even in the few cases where it was referred to in the feminine, the office of president was always in the masculine. One cannot help but wonder how many people would have even considered the possibility of a grammatically male president for such a thing as a 'knitting association'....

Relative rank is also apparently important when opting for one grammatical gender or another for what are essentially the same lexical items as in the case of 'secretary' vs. 'secretary general' (sentences 7 & 8). Here the socially higher rank is reserved for males with the specific feminine marker appearing on the item traditionally perceived as a job for women: "Une secrétaire d'accord mais une secrétaire d'État, ah non ça ferait dactylo" 9 (Sarraute, quoted in Houdebine-Gravaud, 1998: 19). The author then goes on to remark "Aux femmes les menus métiers mais non les réelles responsabilités ou bien dans ce cas masquées [...]" 10 (*ibid.*) It should also be noted that there is nothing in the sentence itself which permits the Secretary-General in question to be identified with any particular body or institution and any assumptions that reference is being made to, for example, the United Nations Organisation is unfounded speculation on the part of the translator. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the students surveyed also have examples of female Secretary-Generals rather close at home such as Lúcia Senra, Secretary-General of the Galician Small Farmers' Union (SLG-CCLL), which means it is neither out of the question nor indeed unknown in an immediate social context for women to hold such posts. All of the students who gave 'secretary' in the feminine gave 'general secretary' in the masculine. Given the overall panorama, the fact that the term 'secretary' is overwhelmingly given in the masculine is probably indicative not of a redefinition in the public eye of what has traditionally been considered a female profession, but rather that women continue to be perceived as being absent from the workplace outside the home except in the very

exceptional circumstances of jobs traditionally 'reserved' for wimyn, such as nursing (*Cfr.* sentence 2). Once again, therefore, what is illustrated by the male-bias in the language used is not a reflection of reality but rather of preconceived social expectations: judges (sentence 11b) are also quite unsurprisingly always male.

The case of 'mayors' (sentence 9) is only very slightly different from that described so far. By playing on immediate experience, recent events and culturally close context, it was hoped that including the local mayor involved in a well-publicised political debacle would have triggered some sort of compensatory mechanism on the part of the questionees to offset male-biases associated with this public office. However, rather surprisingly, no students actually reflected this correctly through their use of the feminine 'alcadesa'. Students might have objected that 'proper usage' required 'mayoress' to be used in English, and by using the term 'mayor' they had been intentionally misled. The distinction traditionally made in certain prescriptive grammar *cum* etiquette manuals between 'mayoress' and 'lady mayor' does not correspond, however, either with modern English usage as illustrated by the following excerpts from local borough regulations and ordinances: "In law there is no position of Mayoress or Mayor's Consort within the Borough. Quite obviously, the accepted term Mayoress relates to the wife or female consort of the Mayor." (Rushcliffe Borough Council, 2005 ) and: "The term 'mayoress' does not describe a lady mayor. The First Citizen is known as the Mayor regardless of whether the person is male or female." (Seaham Harbour On-line, 1996).

The case of the gender ascribed to the Galizan equivalent for 'prime minister' (sentence 10) is rather more difficult to resolve satisfactorily, where the gender in sentence 9 should have been feminine (the students were assumed to be familiar with the mayor of the town where they live and study...) and in other cases gender neutral terms could have been deployed. In this case however, it is quite possible that the students 'cultural baggage' did not provide them with knowledge of who was Prime Minister in Rwanda ten years ago. In fact, it would not be inappropriate to refer to Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana as the 'primeira/o ministra/o' because, by necessity, she must be one or the other. Nor is any neutral term available in Galizan for this office. Assigning masculine gender on the basis that 'most Prime Ministers around the world are men' would not only look odd but actually wrong to many readers if it suddenly appeared in large bold type as a caption under a picture of the person referred to. In such cases, the translator should always look up the relevant data required to fill in the blanks. This, however, requires them to first of all be aware of their own stereotypes if they are to avoid bulldozing wimyn out of their texts.

The issues raised in sentence 11 are slightly different from those discussed so far, in so much as even a cursory thought about who was being talked about would have ruled out using the term 'patient' in the masculine as the overwhelming majority of students did. While a gynaecologist may well be male or female, and probably are male if statistical criteria are applied, their patients certainly are not. Interestingly, several students corrected the masculine form 'dous' to the feminine 'dúas', presumably when they reached the term 'gynaecologist'. The two gender neutral replies involving the use of the gender neutral figure '2' are, in the light of the overall picture, probably to be ascribed to the speed of writing rather than to any specific intentions of the part of the testees involved.

The responses provided to sentence 12 are not all that different from the message hiding behind Bush's words cited earlier: if it isn't a man, then it's just not worth mentioning in its own right. By translating 'children' as the generic masculine 'fillos' (lit. 'sons') as opposed to a neutral 'decendencia' (only 4 cases) the sentence becomes quite ambiguous: did the couple have no daughters? Nothing of the sort is implied by the source sentence. And if so, why is it that they had no right to inherit from their parents? Nor is the sentence as contrived or twisted as some might wish to suggest, as the recently heard sentence 'Que lástima no haber tenido hijos' reflects, where the Spanish 'hijos' did in fact refer to 'sons', as the person who said the words did have daughters. The rule of thumb seems to be 'if in doubt, cut her out'. Whether this is a legitimate and ethical practice for would-be professional translators is quite a different matter. As sentence 13 shows, however, even specifically female experiences can be obliterated by generic-male language, because whilst it is true that male rape does exist (perpetrated by other males) rape in general and especially rape as a weapon in wars is (almost) exclusively a female phenomenon. In this case, using masculine terms such as 'nenos' to refer to both boys and girls (i.e. children) begs the question, were no girls killed? Nor is a sex-neutral term desirable in cases such as these, where it is important to specifically highlight the existence of wimyn by the use of such of phrases such as 'girls and boys'. In fact, this illustrates that inclusive, sex-neutral language is not always the same as a feminist linguistic norm in practice 11 (*Cfr.* Cameron, 1998:161). Is it not important that such nuances which are present in the original version, which makes not allusion to either sex and therefore refers to them both, not be glossed over in the translated version? Once again, wimyn are a subset of 'men' 12, diluting and obliterating wimyn's specific experience.

All in all, regardless of the actually textual typology – mixed-sex, sex-concealed, mixed-sex distributive/conjunctive – grammatical masculine gender predominates except in cases where specific markers exist to indicate social functions and roles traditionally associated with and expected of wimyn, reflecting the underlying male-dominated discourse. As such, so called 'neutral' language usage clearly reflects underlying rules obeying social discourse and is therefore just as prescriptive as non-sexist language reform proposals rather than being somehow 'natural' or 'descriptive' by ignoring the true role wimyn play in society.

## 4- Conclusion

The fight for generalised use of non-sexist language in practice as opposed to the apparently rather ineffectual publication of non-sexist style guides and recommendations is part of the on-going need to make people think about the society they live in and the way they describe it to themselves and to others via language, especially about the power speakers feel they have to label other people who are less socially empowered. Translators have a vital role to play in this process as one of the leading actors in linguistically conscious transpersonal communication processes.

Against the argument that 'radical' feminists are trying to meddle with language and control thought and freedom of expression, it should be made clear that while non-sexist language is of itself prescriptive, i.e. it excludes certain terms (Cameron 1998: 158-159 *et alii*), it should not be perceived as the perverse flip-side to an otherwise 'natural' linguistic situation. Language and more specifically the rules according to which it is used is always bound by prescriptive constraints:

It is always worth asking why, and from whose point of view, one way of using language seems obvious, natural and neutral, while another seems ludicrous, loaded and perverse. Cameron (1995: 159)

The question is, therefore, one of determining who is to be allowed to set the rules. In other words, why should the predominantly male members of the Galician Academy – in a male to female ration of 29:4 – be ascribed the authority to dictate how wimyn should be felt about the way they are addressed as opposed to groups of wimyn demanding social justice, parity and simply to be visible through speech rather than considered as a sort of subgroup of humanity represented by the omnipresent and all-inclusive masculine gender.

As such, therefore, two concrete proposals can be made leading on from what has been discussed.

Firstly, that a discussion of the purpose, mechanisms and desirability of non-sexist language in particular and so-called PC language in general as applied to their future careers should be fully integrated as a core subject into any curriculum designed for translation studies at university level. It should be made clear that such a demand is not a not a whim or a luxury, but is at the very heart of making future professional translators think more deeply about and take full responsibility for the language they use and its potential implications in order to avoid foisting their prejudices onto their readership, which is surely the bias of educating future would-be translators.

Secondly, in the light of what has been said, it would be advisable for all professional translators' and other related associations to include recommendations and guidelines to their members as an integral part of their deontological code of practice covering the avoidance of sexist and other demeaning and/or inappropriate language, issuing statements explaining the reasons behind the adoption of such guidelines.

## **Endnotes**

1. "The teacher (masc.) is absent (masc.) due to [him] birth". This startling, but far from uncommon, example of the neutralisation of wimyn's experience is reported in Houdebine-Gravaud (1998:11)

2. Unfortunately things don't seemed to have moved on very much since this article was first published in 1975 judging by the fact that it was republished as it stood in 1988 (in Cameron, 1988: 124-138) and remains just as valid today, nearly thirty years on, in 2004.

3. Note that the option 's/he' is marked as mixed-sex conjunctive (Bodine, 1975: 131) whereas the original was unmarked as sex-unknown or sex-concealed (*idem*). Interestingly no-one used the truly gender-neutral 'they' which is popular in common speak despite violating the putative 'rule' of singular concord. It transpires that the majority students had not been informed of the existence of such usage in Modern English. For a discussion of the appropriateness of 'they' in such contexts, *Vid.* Bodine (1975).

4. Not one single reference to the way either wimyn or minority groups are dealt with by language within the general socio-cultural setting throughout any of the almost ten pages the author devotes to the question of 'cultural references' in translation

(Newmark, 1988: 94-103). The reason for choosing this particular manual is simply that it is one of the very few to exist in Galizan, and therefore serves as a reference for the particular students of translation dealt with here, although I'm sure a wider analysis based on a broader selection of titles would provide very similar results.

5. He "bravely" (*sic.*) condescends to give up what he still sees gender-neutral masculine pronouns for politeness sake and to avoid "offence to some" (Smith, 2002: 53).

6. While one can only assume that the United Nations does expect wimyn to feel identified with such a title in the twenty-first century, it is far from clear that such concerns would have been taken into account by all involved in drafting the document at the time it was first published in the late Forties. In fact, none of the following countries has granted full voting rights to wimyn by the time the Declaration was published, making a mockery of Art. 1 because all wimyn were not "born equal in dignity and rights: Belgium and Rumania (1948), Chilli and India (1949), Bolivia and Greece (1952), Mexico (1953), Pakistan, Colombia and Syria (1954), Peru (1955), Egypt, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Vietnam ((1956), Paraguay 81961), Monaco (1962), Iran and Kenya (1963), Switzerland (1971), Mozambique, Angola (1975), Liechtenstein (1984).

7. Not only does The Oxford Pictorial Portuguese and English Dictionary published in 1992 show a female nude under the heading 'Man / O home I' (page 16), where a more appropriate title would surely have been 'The Human Body' which is what it actually illustrates, the dictionary further adds insult to injury hen it includes both the female and mal reproductive systems and genitalia under the heading 'Man / O home V' (page 20). It would, in fact, be rather hard to find anything less 'manly' than a vulva, ovaries and a womb...

8. Thanks to Mr. Luis Alonso Bacigalupe and his students ( University of Vigo).

9. "A secretary in the feminine, that's alright, but a feminine gender for a Secretary of State, certainly not, it would sound like a typist. "

10. "Wimyn may occupy more menial professions but no real responsibilities or in which case [their identity as wimyn] should be hidden."

11. For the reasons outlines, it might be preferable to draw a distinction between more liberal 'non-sexist' reform proposals and more radical 'anti-androcentric' ones.

12. This is why we have opted here to use the alternative spellings 'womyn' and 'wimyn' which, whilst perhaps being at first sight disconcerting to those unaccustomed to them, symbolically take the 'men' out of women and make the two terms 'man' and 'womyn' stand apart as two separate items rather than one appearing as a subset of the other. As this article hopes to have demonstrated, such linguistic distinctions are important and can have major implications.

## 5- Annex

**N.B.** The totals do not necessarily tally owing to the fact that not all of the questionnaires were complete or mistranslated and therefore irrelevant.

TEST SENTENCE	MA SC	F E M	M I X	NE UT
1. Hospital workers were shocked yesterday when a <b>doctor</b> working at the Galician General hospital in Santiago died as a result of a stab wound caused by one of the patients.	46	-	-	-
2. Following recent events in the Juan Canalejo Hospital in Corunna, <b>nurses</b> met with their Union representatives to discuss possible industrial action.	1	4 3	1 (1 )	-
3. There was a massive walkout by <b>teachers</b> today	42	-	-	3 (2)

when the government broke off negotiations with the main teachers' union and refused the proposed pay-rise and a strike looks likely is agreement cannot be reached on the matter.

4. Even though some **students** do decide to go into interpreting as a career after they graduate, most students of translation and interpretation tend to opt for translation or other careers requiring second language skills.

42

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5. When questioned by the press after the match, the **President** of the Club was clearly unhappy about the team's classification for the third round of the UEFA cup

44

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6.	a	43	-	-	-
The <b>President(a)</b> o	b	38	2	-	-
f the					
Galician <b>Shellfish</b>					
<b>Collectors'</b>					
<b>(b)</b> Association met					
today with the					
President of the					
Galician					
Government to					
discuss problems					
caused by the					
Prestige oil spill.					
7. In the official		46	-	-	-
address broadcast					
by all major					
television channels					
last night,					
the <b>General-</b>					
<b>Secretary</b> clearly					
stated that they					
would be backing					
the U.S.					
government					
decision to apply					
economic sanctions					
in the short-term.					
8. The Galician		34	1	-	-
Trades Union was			2		
happy to announce					
today that					
the <b>secretary</b> fired					
after asking for a					
pay rise was					
awarded damages					
today by the					

Courts.

9. The <b>Mayors</b> of Mos and Vigo who both belong to the ruling party in Galicia all met today in Pontevedra to discuss possible alliances with the nationalist forces following recent events in Vigo.	44	-	-	-
10. The death of Rwanda's <b>Prime Minister</b> Uwinlingiyi mana during the Hutu/Tutsi massacres and genocide of 1994 marked a definite turning point in the hostilities and more direct intervention on the part of the international peace keeping forces.	45	1		
11. In an historic court decision made public today the accusation of negligence brought by <b>two patients</b> earlier this year against their gynaecologists this	26	1 5		3 (3)

year was made in favour of the latter owing to a lack of substantial evidence to support the claims.

12. As the couple had had no <b>children (a)</b> , the <b>judge (b)</b> decided that the inheritance would automatically revert to their next of kin, in this instance their brothers and sisters.	a	41	4
	b	44	(4)
			1
			(5)

13. One of the most worrying aspects of new warfare around the world is the way <b>children</b> are being deliberately targeted, raped, tortured and killed as we saw recently around the globe from Bosnia to Rwanda and again in Iraq where many have been condemned to die of starvation due to the blockage and thee ensuing invasion by US	40	1	-	-
		(6		
		)		

troops.

14. <b>J.R. Smith</b>	a	39	1	-	4
<b>(a)</b> was the author					(7)
of many books for	b	33	-	-	
children, many of					6
which became					(8)
extremely popular					
with children					
and <b>parents</b>					
<b>(b)</b> alike despite					
the fact that they					
had a clear,					
underlying left-wing					
discourse, talking					
about					
unemployment,					
exclusion and class.					

## Notes

1. Specifically mixed gender 'os/as enfeirmeiros/as'.
2. Collective noun 'profesorado' and adjectival phrase 'sindicato docente' (lit. 'teaching union').
3. One occurrence of 'persoas' (lit. persons'). Two testees used the gender neutral figure '2' rather than opting for masc. 'dous' or fem. 'dúas'.
4. Gender neutral 'decendentes' and collective noun 'decendencia'.
5. Gender neutral institution 'xulgado' (lit. 'court of law').
6. Although grammatically feminine, the Galizan word 'crianza' (lit. 'child') used in this case can be applied to both boys and girls and is therefore considered gender neutral.
7. Gender neutral verb with pro-drop 'escribiu' (lit. 'wrote').
8. Semantic reanalysis of 'parents' as 'maiores' (lit. 'grownups') and 'adultos' (adults), both grammatically masculine but considered gender neutral in this case.

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