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Talking at cross-purposes? The missing link between feminist linguistics and translation studies

Olga Castro
Aston University, Birmingham

Abstract

Following decades of feminist linguistic activism, and as a result of a greater awareness of the vital role that non-sexist language plays in achieving social equality, different campaigns were launched in many countries leading to a more frequent use of so-called inclusive language. Bringing this together with current theoretical approaches to translation studies which have been defining translation as an ideological act of intercultural mediation since the 1990's, this article seeks to examine to what extent feminist linguistics have had any influence on translation studies. My purpose is to assess whether particular feminist linguistic interventions in vogue when writing 'original' texts within the realm of the source language are also adopted when (re)writing 'translated' texts in the target language, bearing in mind the double (con)textual responsibility that translators have towards the source and the target (con)texts. I will examine the arguments for and against the use of inclusive language in (literary) translation through an analysis of the "ideological struggle" that emerged from two ideologically disparate rewritings of gender markers into Galician of the British bestseller *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon (2003), focusing on the ideological, poetic and economic pressures that (still) define the professional practice of translation. It is my contention that the close scrutiny of these conflicting arguments will shed light not only on the existing gap between the theory and practice of translation, but may be also indicative of a possible 'missing link' between feminist approaches to linguistics and to translation studies.

Key words

Feminist linguistics, feminist translation studies, non-sexist language in translation, theory and practice of translation

Translators are necessarily involved in a politics of transmission, in perpetuating or contesting the values which sustain our culture
Sherry Simon (1996:viii)

1. Introductory notes: inclusive language and translation[1]

1.1 Language, gender and feminism

In their introductory chapter to *Language, Gender and Feminism*, Mills and Mullany (2011:1-22) give evidence of the vast amount of scholarly works in the field of gender and language published in Western cultures since the mid-1970s. A great many of these publications are conceived from an explicit feminist standpoint. While stemming from a range of different positions (feminist sociolinguists, feminist discourse analysis, feminist pragmatics, etc.), they all share a '*specific political purpose* by focusing on gender as a social, political and ideological category' (Mills and Mullany 2011:2).
Indeed, feminist linguistics can now be considered as a burgeoning sub-disciplinary area of research and political activism, seeking to promote the emancipatory aim of redressing gender social inequalities through changes in language/s. Having identified this intimate link between language and society (i.e. the way women and men are represented in language influences to a certain extent the way they 'conceptualize' reality), one of the recurrent themes that has been explored is the linguistic representation of women and men in different languages, with a special focus on issues of language and sexism.

Numerous studies in recent decades have examined how texts are ideologically charged in terms of gender, revealing different ways in which sexist attitudes are materialized in languages (see, for example, Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 2002, 2003). As Mills claims (2003, 2008), these studies have taken different stances on the analysis of sexism in language over time. They have gone from those initial considerations on sedimented forms of sexism embedded within the morphology of the language system itself which led to global statements about systematic language use (characteristic of Second Wave feminist linguistics), to more recent studies stressing the importance of the context, considering the categories man/woman not exclusively but in relation to other variables such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc., and analysing the ambivalences about sexism in particular contexts to better evaluate how words acquire meaning in local interactions and how to resist new forms of 'indirect sexism' (typical of Third Wave feminist linguistics). In other words, while linguistic sexism is variable and changeable

in local interactions, when looking at the broader picture we can see how inalterable it remains over time at a global scale, to the extent that it may (sometimes) be difficult to reach a consensus on what constitutes linguistic sexism. It is for this reason that, in order to make a more integral analysis of sexism in language,

> instead of viewing these two positions as antagonistic, we should be able to see their complementarity and thus to consider the possibility of a form of analysis which combines the global concerns of Second Wave feminist analysis with the local concerns of Third Wave Feminism. (Mills 2008:22)

It is the combination of the local and the global perspectives which require that a thorough analysis of sexism in language goes beyond the level of *linguistic forms* and tackles the level of *discourse* as well. In my definition (Castro 2010a:108), sexist linguistic forms would refer to the asymmetrical and derogative use of grammatical and linguistic markers which semantically represent women and men (e.g. linguistic gender). Discursive sexism, on the other hand, would consist of using words (specific terms) or phrases (idioms, sayings, etc.) referred or addressed to men or women to convey stereotypes which reproduce traditional gender values; this would then go beyond 'mandatory' linguistic norms, although the existence of tacit social norms may invite to make certain linguistic choices.

At the same time that practices of linguistic sexism were denounced, and as a result of a greater awareness of the vital role that inclusive language plays in achieving social equality, different campaigns were launched and different laws were passed in various Western countries to promote the use of non-sexist forms of expression, leading to an unprecedented volume of publication of guidelines for non-sexist language (see Pauwels 2003). Indeed, the purpose of these disruptive practices of linguistic intervention goes beyond simply altering the superficial linguistic structures or banning certain linguistic usages, to crucially offering critical insights into the very conceptualizations of gender relations. Therefore, these proposals have to do with the potential that language has in influencing the way reality is (re)constructed. For, as Debora Cameron put it back in 1990, '[a] change in linguistic practice is not just a reflection of some more fundamental social change: it is, itself, a social change' (Cameron 1990:90).

In short, although the eradication of sexist practices in language is far from being achieved, and despite strong opposition that some alternatives for non-sexist use have

encountered (see Castro 2008a for a detailed account in Galician and Spanish), today feminist language policies have certainly made an impact on a range of different contexts in Western societies, to the extent that never before has inclusive language been as widely used as it is today (Hellinger and Pauwels 2007).

1.2 Language, gender and feminism in translation

Taking this as a starting point, and considering current theoretical approaches to Translation Studies which have been defining translation as an ideological act of intercultural mediation since the early 1990's, this article seeks to examine to what extent these principles which are now considerably deep-rooted in the field of feminist linguistics have influenced Translation Studies. Put differently, my general purpose is to assess whether particular feminist linguistic interventions in vogue when writing *original* texts within the realm of the source language are also adopted or dismissed when (re)writing *translated* texts in the target language; and I will discuss this in relation to the translation of a literary text from English into Galician, one of the four co-official languages in Spain. The question is not trivial. Especially at a time which is characterized by the constant transmission and transfer of ideas and goods between different linguistic realities, translation is one of the most important cultural practices in this global village (St. Pierre 2005). Translations nowadays powerfully contribute to the configuration of our identities and social roles, and also to the way that women and men come to construct themselves, their identities and their views of others. Many theoretical approaches specifically emphasise the potential of translation as a tool for political action and social activism.

Discussing translation, however, has certain particularities. To begin with, translation is devoted neither to the source language/culture nor to the target language/culture exclusively — instead, translating means (re)creating meanings which are located in both locations at the same time, in an in-between space where translators simultaneously have a double (con)textual responsibility towards the source and the target system. Therefore, applying linguistic strategies for a non-sexist use of language in translations could entirely (or mostly) depend on (the translator's interpretation of) the gender ideologies conveyed in the source text, or on (the translator's interpretation of) the purpose or *skopos* of the target text.

In order to address all these issues, I shall begin by considering the double

(con)textual responsibility in translation with a view to determining whether these feminist linguistic interventions could be considered legitimate and ethical when applied to translated texts. Moving from the 'Ivory Tower' of theoretical approaches to the 'Wordface' of professional translation practice (Chesterman and Wagner 2002), I will analyse the 'ideological struggle' that emerged from two ideologically disparate rewritings of gender markers into Galician of the British book *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon (2003), in one of the very few occasions when translation strategies were extensively discussed in the media.

2. Ever-changing meanings: implications for a gender-conscious translation

2.1 Translation as mediation

The understanding of meaning as an ever-changing and unstable category marked a turning point in theoretical debates on translation (Zhong 1998). On the one hand, it brought down the prescriptive paradigm which was previously prevalent, replacing it with a new descriptive paradigm that refuses to impose in advance the limits of meaning by providing a set of norms for carrying out the perfect translation. On the other, new approaches emerged claiming that '[t]he purpose of translation theory is to reach an understanding of the processes undertaken in the act of translation and not, as so commonly misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation' (Bassnett 1991:37). Given the importance of the process, the role of the translator is considered to be crucial in the act of (re)writing, questioning the former assumption that the translator is an invisible, innocent and objective bridge from one text to another. This involves recognising that translators are mediating agents, having to read a source text as a first step before having to opt for one of the various (though not unlimited) possible readings and deciding about the best way of rewriting their understanding of the text. And thus, the possibility of a faithful and objective translation proves untenable. Instead, ideology is considered to be a significant concept when it comes to translating: 'all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose' (Hermans 1985:11). Far from understanding it as a deviation away from objectivity, ideology is now defined as a systematic set of values and beliefs shared by a particular community, which shape the way each individual, and also each translator, makes sense

of the world (Munday 2007:196). In fact, in the wake of what would later be termed as the 'ideological turn in translation studies' (Wing-Kwong 2006), the realization that 'ideology rather than linguistics or aesthetics crucially determines the operational choices of translators' (Cronin 2000:695) became crucial.[2]

Yet, as an ideological act of mediation, translation is ultimately reflected in the language of the translated text, through which specific power relations are inescapably legitimised or challenged. It is precisely for this reason that applying a Critical Discourse Analysis to translation/s proves so important in order to understand language as a social practice and reveal the underlying values and ideologies that structure power relations in society (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:261). Critical linguistics highlights that failing to consciously subscribe to one particular ideology implies unconsciously adhering to the dominant ideology — dominant both numerically and also because it supports the interests of the dominant class, which therefore forces it to disguise itself and operate at the unconscious level (Althusser 1975). This is why it is presented before the translator as being 'normal', 'natural' and unquestionable common sense, and thus achieves its aim of symbolic domination which turns unwary translators into naive vehicles for conveying and legitimising the dominant discourse. The situation is made even worse by the fact that ideology is more effective when it is not openly manifested as such.

2.2 The double (con)textual responsibility

The translator is thus an ideological mediator who has to negotiate a double ethical responsibility. One is their responsibility towards the source (con)text, to convey the content of a previous text in the most thorough and convenient possible way. The other, their responsibility towards the target (con)text, which includes paying attention to the cultural and linguistic changes in vogue in the target society so as to be able to produce an 'updated' translation in accordance with them — while without preventing the target audience from getting to know how the source text was addressing its source audience. For, as frequently argued in Translation Studies, 'when a text is retranslated at a later period in time, it frequently differs from the first translation because of the changes in the historical and cultural context' (Rubel and Rosman 2003:10).

Focusing now on the language pair of my case study (English and Galician), and in line with the evidence presented above about the advancement in non-sexist language planning in different languages (see 1.1) two hypotheses could be put forward.[3] First, as

for the source (con)text, translators would be (most) likely to encounter inclusive language in texts originally written in English. If this were to happen, keeping the inclusive language in their rendering in Galician would not mean altering the gender representation of the source text, but maintaining its inclusiveness.

Second, as for the target (con)text, if the translator resorts to the common strategy of making decisions considering parallel texts (i.e. texts originally written in the target language, so that the translation complies with the norms in the target culture), s/he will find out that more and more texts are being written in non-sexist Galician.[4] In line with findings presented by Bengoechea (2011:45) for Spanish, it can be concluded that non-sexist language planning in Galicia has achieved a relative success. These changes are backed up not only by national and regional legislation,[5] but also by the continuous publication of new elaborated guidelines by the regional administrations, the national government, trade unions, saving banks, universities, etc. This, despite some fierce opposition to these changes, especially in the last few years of conservative policies following governmental changes.

Even more, as Galician is a minority/minorized language subject to on-going activist language planning campaigns which try to promote the language, it is my contention that it could have a greater predisposition to these gender-inclusive changes. As I have argued elsewhere (Castro 2008b), activism for the Galician language very often explains Galician minority/minorized status as a result of Spanish linguistic imperialism, therefore opening the doors to a mutual understanding and to strong sympathies between the anti-imperialistic and anti-sexist discourses.[6] Thus, opting for inclusive language in translation would mean taking notice of (new) norms (Toury 1980) progressively governing the realm of the target system. Marcella De Marco's words are very eloquent in this respect:

> We live in an era of great social change which has been taking place as a direct consequence of the feminist movement. In this ever-changing time, we should try to foster changes in language as well, taking into account that the meanings of words may have changed, and so have people's connotations of the social values that these meanings assume. […] From this point of view, when texts are translated [...] the changes which occur in the new social context should be reflected in language too. (De Marco 2006:13)

Putting these two hypotheses together, it could be logical to expect that the use of an inclusive language was also promoted through translation. Nonetheless, as stated above,

it must be borne in mind that *translation* has some particularities which make it different from the realm of *language* itself.

2.3 Translating linguistic gender: ethical factors at stake

As such, it could well be possible that the text to be translated was not in line with the principles of linguistic inclusivity (e.g. a source text in English making use of the supposedly masculine generic); or that it could even make a statement defending misogynistic values. In these cases, the translator should carefully reflect upon to what extent it could be appropriate to challenge the sexist expressions of the source text, something which in Sherry Simon's view could certainly be counterproductive inasmuch as it would mean to 'soften the harsh and intransigent message of a truly patriarchal document' (Simon 1996:124-125). Beyond the gender ideology of the source text, authorship is a second factor to consider, as the translator could take different positions towards practices of linguistic sexism depending on whether the text is anonymous (e.g. an online form in which the only titles available are Mr, Mrs or Miss, or in which 'headmaster' is used to supposedly denote both males and females) or whether it has been written by a well-known author who regularly makes their patriarchal values explicit. Third, different genres have also specific limitations, and while literary translation might make it possible to write translator's notes or prefaces, audio-visual translation does not allow such practices. And in order to be ethical, each individual translator should show self-reflexivity and self-criticism with regard to the possibilities and the limits of their textual interpretation. They should be aware of their intervention and of the (re-)creation of meaning inescapably involved in the mediating act of translation, while at the same time avoiding essentialist attitudes which may consider only one possible feminist reading.

In any event, it seems less problematic to defend the use of inclusive language in those cases when the source text explicitly conveys a feminist discourse; or even when the source text does not voice any particular gender ideology at the discursive level but does nevertheless display an inclusive language at the level of the linguistic forms (e.g. through the use of grammatical gender markers) — be it as a result of a conscious intervention in the text (e.g. using 'waiter/waitress', 'her/his', 'their' with singular meaning, etc.) or simply because it is a neuter term according to mainstream linguistic norms (e.g. 'teacher', thus, being inclusive *per se*). In these cases the translator should

carefully reflect upon to what extent it could be appropriate to ensure that those non-sexist expressions of the source text are not (unconsciously?) turned into patriarchal utterances. This question is central to my case study, where I will be looking at how neuter forms in English are translated and retranslated into Galician in a literary text which, despite not being a feminist manifesto, there is no reason to think it does not advocate egalitarian values. What becomes evident, in short, is that linguistic gender is not simply a meaningless category inherent to the structural obligations of language, but rather a significant element for translation.

2.4 Linguistic choices in the translation of gender markers English-Galician

When looking at linguistic choices in the translation of English neuters into Galician, the first consideration to be made is that English has a natural gender system that attributes gender to sexed beings only, although most nouns are neuters. Contrary to this, Galician (like Portuguese, Catalan, Spanish and other Romance languages) has a grammatical gender system, in which masculine or feminine gender is attributed to most nouns and adjectives (be they sexed beings or inanimate objects) through gender suffixes. When the referent is a sexed being, however, sex and linguistic gender normally converge (masculine for men, feminine for women), with the only exception of a few epicenes. Taking this into account, the key question could be formulated as follows: Is an inclusive language being promoted through translation English/Galician, in order not to hamper the development of the language itself, especially when the source text is also inclusive?

I have been carrying out extensive empirical research and compiling examples of published materials as well as of translations done by my students since 2006. As I demonstrated in my PhD thesis (Castro 2010c), these examples reveal that not only do Galician translations reproduce the linguistic sexism of the source text in English, but most often these translations 'incorporate' sexist elements when having to render a non-sexist source text, e.g. consistently translating neuters as masculines, even if that means creating inconceivable sentences with male patients seeing a gynaecologist, such as '*é un xinecólogo* [m] *moi famoso, os seus pacientes* [m] *están moi contentos con el*' (from *'he is a very famous gyneacologist* [m], *his patients* [n] *are very happy with him'*). What is more, quite often these translations also incorporate sexist elements when having to render an overtly inclusive source text written from an explicit feminist position (consciously applying strategies for non-sexist language), e.g. translating the saying '*A*

Briton's [n] *home is their castle'* (instead the traditional and widespread version of *'A Briton's* [m] *home is his castle'*) as *'A casa dun británico* [m] *é o seu castelo'*, where the neuter 'Briton' goes back to its masculine origins. This confirms the 'Male-As-Norm Principle in translating genderless forms' (Braun 1997:3) by which, if the sex of the referent is not known, the masculine will be chosen for the translation unless there are stereotypes to the contrary.[7]

In short, empirical data reveal that the linguistic representation of women and men in translations from English into Galician is often defined by a sexist and androcentric use of language, even when the source text was completely free of linguistic sexism and despite the fact that non-sexist uses are increasingly more common in the target (con)text. Put differently, the process of ideological mediation involved in the translation of a text in English into a text in Galician is usually informed by mainstream/*malestream* values, i.e. conscious or unconscious values following the dominant ideology which, being dominant, are presented as neutral and objective manners of translating. Whether this is the result of a deliberate decision, or just the result of a simple lack of reflection, the consequences are the same: translation becomes and oppressive tool, often making women invisible when/where they were not.

Some translators are aware of the political dimension of the linguistic gender in translation and translating accordingly. However, before their translations are published/or finally submitted to the client, they usually have to be approved by other mediating agents (proof-readers, copy-editors, editors, clients, patrons, publishers, etc.) acting as gatekeepers. And were they not approved, my point is that this rejection would not stem from a lack of reflection, but rather it would mostly be a deliberate choice.

The area of the ideological struggles between translators and other mediating agents remains virtually unexplored, given the impossibility of getting access to the process of negotiation in itself. Indeed, what the analyst usually gets is the final translation, making it virtually impossible to evaluate the degree of intervention of the translator and the proof-reader about the revisions. This is why I find it highly interesting to examine the very few cases when the ideological struggle between the translator and the proof-reader is made public, inasmuch as this will allow to explore in more detail the particularities of the power relationship created between the two mediating agents.

3. The curious case of non-sexist language in translation

One of these cases is the ideological struggle that emerged from the initial gender inclusive translation (trans. Reimóndez, unpublished)[8] and the dominant proofreading (and eventual re-translation, trans. Barcia (Haddon 2008)) of gender markers into Galician of the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Haddon 2003). This case study is very productive due to the extensive media coverage it had in Galicia, more broadly in Spain and also in the UK, offering valuable material to illustrate the actual arguments for and against the use of inclusive language in translation. Building on my previous work, where I offered a detailed comparative analysis of the linguistic choices in translating gender markers (Castro 2009), I am following a substantially different approach now. My aim is to classify the disparities between these two conscious ideologically-driven interventions of both the first translator (Reimóndez) and the proof-reader, who was also the publisher and eventually became the published translator (Barcia).[9]

3.1 Inclusive translation of genderless forms in literary texts

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a story narrated in the first-person by Christopher, a British 15-year-old boy who suffers from Asperger syndrome. As said before, the novel does not directly address issues of women's empowerment, but yet equality could be considered as an underlying value. There are clearly portrayed female and male characters, but also other secondary characters whose sex remains unknown as, not being relevant for the plot, the source text refers to them by using a neuter (e.g. when Christopher mentions 'a teacher from school', this teacher could be a man or a woman). These are precisely the examples I will be focusing on in this article, looking at how these unsexed characters are rendered into Galician, a grammatical gender language with very few neuters in which the vast majority of nouns and adjectives referred to people are either feminine (if referring to women) or masculine (to men).

In this situation, one of the most important tasks for the translator is to decide whether the neuter form could be maintained, or whether a neuter term like 'teacher' embodies a woman (feminine) or a man (masculine). Thus, in certain cases the translator could opt for inclusive forms which specifically represent the possibility of men and women (e.g. 'profesor/a', 'profesor@', 'profesor ou profesora', 'profesora ou profesor'), although being a literary text, genre constraints may not make this appropriate. Beyond this, it could be argued that in Haddon's novel, the singular neuter 'teacher' is referred to

one specific person, and thus the choice is reduced to the two options mentioned above – either ‘profesora’ [f] or ‘profesor’ [m].[10]

Given all these possibilities, what could be understood as adopting inclusive language in translation? My understanding would be that in those cases when the source text is absolutely neuter, it would be sexist to translate consistently all neuters as masculines; it would be inappropriate and skewed to translate them all as feminines; but it would be inclusive to alternate both genders, i.e. to use the feminine sometimes and the masculine some other times. This strategy could be labelled as ‘contrapunctual election’ (Castro 2010a:113), which I have described elsewhere as a dynamic reading that takes into account both possibilities (masculine and feminine) before the translator makes a decision about which gender to choose, while being aware of the importance of not systematically reproducing stereotypes commonly associated with each one of the sexes.

In the first translation (unpublished) the translator María Reimóndez made gender-conscious decisions: the neuters were sometimes translated as masculines, other times as feminines, and also as neuters, without introducing any more conspicuous strategies (such as @, / , duplication, etc.; see endnote 4). The proof-reader and publisher Moisés Barcia rejected those translations which were not in accordance with dominant values, arguing that: ‘as we corrected her text, we realised that she was systematically translating neutral words into feminine ones, and masculine words into feminine or neutral forms’ (Govan 2008). After a notorious dispute, in which Barcia terminated the translator’s contract, and she replied by suing him for breaching the contract, he wrote a new translation which was finally published in 2008.

3.2 Conflicting ideologies

In what follows, I will examine some of the most representative examples of both conflicting ideologies. My purpose is not to offer an analysis in quantitative terms, but rather to undertake a qualitative analysis of those few examples which were more widely and controversially discussed in the extensive media coverage of this case, as well as in a journal article authored by the translator herself (Reimóndez 2009).

3.2.1 Accepted translations

Barcia kept Reimóndez’s translations when she had chosen to translate the neuter in

accordance with dominant values (see table 1).

Table 1

ST	first translation (unpublished)	TT (published)
*The **sergeant** behind the desk* [n] (2003:16)	*o sarxento* [m]	*o sarxento* [m] (2008:27)
*Eventually **scientists** will discover something to explain ghosts* [n] (2003:125)	*os científicos* [m]	*os científicos* [m] (2008:140)
*Some of the **children** at school* [n] (2003:126)	*algúns nenos* [m]	*algúns nenos* [m] (2008:140)
*Oh yes. The **nurses*** [n] (2003:230)	*Enfermeiras* [f]	*Enfermeiras* [f]

In this way, the translation of 'sergeant' [n] was kept in the masculine as 'o sarxento' [m] (instead of the also possible 'a sarxenta' [f]), and the plural 'scientists' [n] was also kept in the masculine as 'os científicos' [m] (instead of the also possible generic expression 'a comunidade científica' [n] or instead of making explicit reference to 'as científicas e científicos', 'os científicos e científicas', 'os/as científicas', 'os científicos/as' [m/f]). In the third example, the neuter 'children' [n] was not kept as neuter in Galician (despite the language having a truly epicene noun such as 'crianzas' [n] which specifically includes both boys and girls), but rendered in the masculine form 'os nenos' [m]. Finally, the translator translated the also neuter 'nurses' [f] in the feminine as 'enfermeiras' [f], following social norms by which doctors are male and nurses female, unless the explicit 'male nurse' is used. The proof-reader did not object to this translation.

3.2.2 Rejected translations

Contrary to the examples above, Barcia rejected (and reverted) Reimóndez's understanding of the neuters when she had chosen to translate them without following the dominant/*malestream* values (see table 2).

Table 2

ST	first translation (unpublished)	TT (published)
She was wearing sandals and jeans and a T-shirt which had […] *a picture of **a windsurfer*** on it. [n] (2003:37)	*unha surfeira* [f]	*un windsurfista* [m] (2008:49)
*I had to go to the **dentist**'s* [n] (2003:140)	*a dentista* [f]	*un dentista* [m] (2008:153)
And the man who had shoes that did not match stood in front of me and said, 'Big cheese […] ***Bloody liar***' [n] (2003:230)	*maldito mentireiro* [m]	*condenada mentireira* [f] (2008:242)

The two first examples show that the understanding of ‘windsurfer’ and ‘dentist’ [n] as female characters shown by the translator (rendered as ‘unha surfeira’ and ‘a dentista’ [f], respectively) is hijacked by the proof-reader, who chooses to turn these characters into male actors. In the third example, however, the translator opted for rendering the neuter derogative term ‘bloody liar’ [n] in the masculine (‘mentireiro’ [m]), adducing that in her understanding of the plot, the man who had shoes that did not match was insulting another man. Whereas the source text does not offer enough evidence of the sex of the ‘liar’, choosing the masculine for this derogative term (as the translator did) seems to be at least as valid as choosing the feminine (the proof-reader’s option). Going even further, the proof-reader rejected the translator’s rewriting of the English neuters as Galician neuters (see table 3).

Table 3

ST	first translation (unpublished)	TT (published)
The ***police*** *arrived* [n] (2003:7)	*a policía* [n]	*os policías* [m] (2008:15)
The ***publishers*** *will be happy to correct mistakes* [n] (2003:acknowledgements)	*a editora* [n]	*os editores* [m] (2008:nota de agradecemento)

In the first case, the neuter term ‘police’ [n] (rather than ‘policemen’, ‘policewomen’ or even ‘police officers’) is translated as ‘a policía’ [n], an abstract noun which has an identical function to the source term. In the second, the same criteria were applied for translating the neuter ‘publishers’ [n] as ‘a editora’ [n] (lit. the publishing house), avoiding having to disambiguate the linguistic gender. [It is worth noting that in Reimóndez’s essay the translator discusses this example stating that she rendered ‘publishers’ as ‘a editorial’, which is another term meaning ‘publishing house’ (Reimóndez 2009:76). However, the term ‘a editora’ appears in the unpublished translation available at the Intellectual Property Office, to which the translator granted me access].[11] Possibly because the linguistic form of these two neuters in Galician coincides with the feminine form (despite clearly having a contextual generic value), the proof-reader disproved this rendering and opted for non-inclusive masculine forms, excluding women from the police and from the publishing house. In view of the tendencies shown in the tables above, three questions arise:

1. Why does the proof-reader change the translator’s perception of some neuters as masculine and some others as feminine?

2. More incomprehensibly, why does the proof-reader change the translator's perception of neuters as neuters?
3. Why does the proof-reader only accept those translations which were in accordance with traditional gender values?

4. A missing link?

Neither the discipline of Translation Studies nor that of feminist linguistics seems to offer sound arguments which could justify the proof-reader's changes to the translator's reading and rewriting of the source text. In the unpublished translation, the translator showed an understanding of the mechanisms of gender representation both in English and in Galician as well as of the norms and advancements in the field of inclusive language in both societies (see section 1.1); she was aware of her double (con)textual responsibility towards the source and the target systems as defined above (see section 2.2); and made ethical decisions considering the gender ideologies of the source text, the genre constraints and the purpose of the translation. Furthermore, the Spanish *Intellectual Property Law* (1996) grants translators the copyright of the translated version (article 11), recognizing that the authorship of a translation belongs exclusively to the translator. This would theoretically mean that any potential changes in the understanding of the text should ultimately be approved by the translator.

Interestingly, however, the extensive media coverage of this case in the Galician, Spanish and British press[12] could contain some answers to the three questions above. I will examine some of these arguments, paying particular attention to the statements made by the proof-reader to justify his decisions. My purpose is not to make generalizations from a specific case study, but to assess to what extent these justifications can shed light on the (in)appropriateness of using inclusive language in translation, therefore interrogating how productive the link between feminist linguistics and translation may be.

4.1 Fidelity

One of the ideas the proof-reader resorted to was the obligation to be faithful to the source text and to the author, despite fidelity being an obsolete and unattainable notion according to current theoretical debates in translation. This argument had already been identified by

Susam-Sarajeva when explaining her students' reactions to feminist translation at a Finnish University:

> They find it quite impossible to question the notion of fidelity. 'I believe that Finnish audience is honest and is entitled to [have access to] the texts as faithful translations' (Eeva Tervo 2001). As one of my students put it they were taught that 'a loyal translation is always a good one, you cannot go wrong with it' (Mirka Hypén 2001). (Susam-Sarajeva 2005:173)

Moving to the realm of professional practice, Wolf has discussed the role of fidelity in the translator's approach towards the use of inclusive language in German-speaking countries, claiming that 'some translators in our survey argue that they cannot intervene in the text in favour of inclusive language because they have to be 'faithful to the original' or want to meet 'the commissioner's demands' (2005:137). In the case of *The Curious Incident*, the *Daily Telegraph* echoed Barcia's words: 'Her contract insists on fidelity to the original work; something she clearly breached, Mr Barcia said' (Govan 2008). The publisher declared to *El País* that 'en el proceso de corrección nos dimos cuenta de que [the translator] estaba manipulando el original'[13] (Salgado 2008), therefore not being faithful to the source text. However, one wonders if the translation of neuter 'the police arrived' as the masculine 'os policías' in Barcia's version is more faithful to the original and to the author than the also neuter 'a policía' (unpublished); and on what grounds it can be said that the translation of the neuter 'a windsurfer' as the masculine 'un windsurfista' is more faithful to the original than the feminine 'unha surfeira'.

The imperative of being faithful to the author led the publisher to contact Haddon's agent: 'crendo que o autor é o responsábel último da súa obra, contactamos coa axente de Haddon para que se manifestase ao respecto, cousa que fixo'[14] (in *GzNación* 2008). The author agreed with them in their understanding of gender markers: 'finalmente nos pusimos en contacto con el autor, que nos ha dado la razón'[15] (Salgado 2008). This was portrayed in the British press as 'a Spanish translator has been sacked for allegedly refusing to stick to the genders chosen by the author' (Govan 2008). It goes without saying that authors are responsible for their own writing, but it is the translator's responsibility to make decisions on how to best convey their understanding of the source text, as only they have the knowledge about the target language and culture — otherwise, Haddon would have to be asked about the gender of every single character in his novel

by the 44 translators who have so far rendered his bestseller into other languages. Besides this, as previously explained, the Spanish Copyright Law states that translators are ultimately the 'owners' of the translated texts. Even if Haddon argued that the windsurfer was male (and when did he think about it, at the time of writing the novel or straight away after being asked?), there is no linguistic evidence of such and therefore the translator would have the right to consider that this character was female. It is the translator's criteria that have to be respected: collaboration with the author is an option, but should not be seen as an imperative.

4.2 Neutrality

A second idea advocated was that of neutrality, in line with Dillman's conclusions to a study carried out with American translation students a decade ago: '[Students] do not consider the role of ideology in the act of translating, and take for granted that translation is an objective, scientific, grammar-based, plug-in-the-equivalent type of activity' (Dillman 2003:529). Similarly, when Barcia stated that 'a tradución finalmente publicada fíxose ex novo […] libre dos ideoloxemas que subrepticiamente intentou coar Reimóndez'[16] (in *GzNación* 2008), he was subscribing outdated assumptions that considered the translator as a neutral and invisible bridge from one text to another, thus failing to recognize their inexorable role as (ideological) mediators. As can be inferred from this discussion, the level of alteration that inclusive translation practices involve is not necessarily any greater than that of other mainstream/*malestream* practices that are not questioned. But while the former are openly recognized and justified as stemming from a particular positioning, the latter are followed in the name of objectivity, hiding their interventions and claiming to be free from ideology. Yet, 'there is no such thing as objective truth, and thus the most dangerous manipulator is not the one who does it openly but the one who claims to be objective' (Koskinen 1994:451).

4.3 Irrelevance of theory

Another idea voiced in the press was that of questioning how relevant theory was for the actual translation practice. In a review published in the Galician newspaper *Faro de Vigo*, a literary critic was alerting of the risk that a translator 'conserve lastres da súa formación académica, e trate de resolver os problemas propios da tradución recorrendo a un nivel

teórico alleo á maioría dos lectores [*sic*]' [17] (Freire 2010:i). Indeed, this literary critic seems to be unaware that, as commonly understood by Translation Studies scholars, the role of translation theory is to help reflect upon how to improve the practice and to offer a better understanding about the limits and liberties it entails — otherwise the very existence of Translation programmes could certainly be questioned. Helena Miguélez-Carballeira (2006) has already given evidence of the 'perpetuating asymmetries' between the fields of translation studies and Hispanic studies. Are the same asymmetries to be found regarding literature and linguistics? Do literary reviewers (who also review translations) and linguists (who often comment on translations) read academic articles published by translation scholars?

> At this point, one of course ponders about the speed with which academic writings might have any influence at all on 'the real world'. It has been almost two decades that within translation studies such instances of manipulation have been a matter of fact. Yet scholars within the field apparently do not feel the need to communicate these findings to a wider audience, possibly because **writing for popular journals does not serve academic promotion**. (Susam-Sarajeva 2005:172, my emphasis)

4.4 Fluidity

The requirement of complying with the norms so as to produce a fluent translation is also recurrent to these arguments. Translation, and most especially literary translation, is still often considered to be a secondary/derivative activity with respect to the primary/productive activity of writing -- the everlasting myth of the source text as the only original still prevails. Aware of this hierarchical position, and in an attempt to assure acceptance and legitimacy, translation would tend to be moulded according to the dominant discourse. The norms and expectations which greatly influence translators' perception of their own work, as well as society's evaluation of that work, would tend to coincide with hegemonic thought (the underlying idea being that you cannot get it wrong if you do things the way they have 'always' been). Translators know that if they want their professional status and cultural authority not to be questioned, they must comply with those normative expectations; or, in other words, 'when translators do what is expected of them they will be seen to have done well' (Hermans 1993:166). In terms of gender-related linguistic choices in translation, the norm (i.e. the Grammar) still considers that in languages such as Galician or Spanish the masculine has a generic value.

Regardless how re-sounding the implementation of inclusive linguistic alternatives may have been in both the source and the target systems, translation would show a tendency towards conservatism that is often even greater than that of the source text (Lefevere 1992:50), even leading to self-censorship on the part of the translator to comply with the grammatical rules, if they do not want to see their professionalism compromised. These norms and expectations would ultimately lead to reject those options differing from hegemonic assumptions, which would be accused of failure to comply with the (expected) function in the target society. As Wolf concluded:

> The adoption of inclusive or feminist language is mostly rejected by proof-readers through comments such as 'this does not read fluently' or 'aesthetically it does not match'. [...] Beginners are not the only ones who meet with opposition when adopting feminist language; renowned translators also find disapproval if their texts are too 'conspicuous'. (Wolf 2005:133)

In the case of the translation of *The Curious Incident*, this tendency would explain the proof-reader's renderings in the feminine of both 'nurse' and 'liar', while all the others neuters were translated in the masculine. Challenging the dominant norms (though remaining cautious when using of inclusive language and refusing to applyconspicuous strategies), one of the main accusations to which the translator was subjected to was that of being 'unprofessional', despite her self-definition as 'reputable professional and scholar' having published over a dozen literary translations since 1997 (Reimóndez 2009:81).

4.5 Economic pressures

A final constraint which can be inferred from this case study is that of the economic pressures on the part of the translator. These pressures could be in in the form of not having more translations commissioned in the future or having their translations rejected, as was the case with the first (unpublished) Galician version of Haddon's novel. As publicly revealed, the translator's contract was terminated and she was not remunerated for her work (for a detailed account of the intricacies of the dispute from the translator's point of view, see Reimóndez 2009:77--8).

These economic pressures could also be in the form of 'lack of time', i.e. putting

into practice innovative and acceptable ways of translating using inclusive language requires reflection, which would take longer. And especially for freelance translators, the sooner a translation is finished, the more translations can be done that day, which means earning more money. However, being a professional and reputable translator means doing a good job, and the more often these critical mechanisms are put into practice (assessing feminist linguistic strategies in the light of the double ethical contextual responsibility towards the source and the target), the more internalized they will become and the more flexible the translator will be.

5. Concluding remarks

Both feminist linguistics and translation studies are two academic fields which have been notably and increasingly attracting scholars' attention worldwide in the last few decades. Bringing together current theoretical debates in both areas, in this article I have attempted to explore potential areas of common interest for both. My purpose has been two-fold: first, to assess whether particular feminist linguistic practices in vogue when writing original texts within the realm of the source language (namely, the use of a non-sexist language) are adopted or dismissed when (re)writing translated texts in a target language; this, indeed, considering the particularities of translation being devoted simultaneously to the source and the target (con)texts. And second, to interrogate the arguments stemming from deliberate positions, for and against the use of inclusive language in the translation of literary texts.

The focus on the language pair English-Galician led me to choose as my case study one of the (to my knowledge) very few examples of a publicly voiced 'ideological struggle' emerging from two highly conscious yet opposite rewritings of gender markers in two translations of the same literary text (Haddon 2003) – one, an unpublished inclusive translation which did not get the proof-reader's (who was also the publisher) approval; the other, the eventually published dominant translation done by the proof-reader (and publisher) himself.

It is my contention that the close scrutiny of these conflicting arguments, amply covered in the media, offered valuable insights in two directions. First, it made evident the enormous gap between the theory and practice of translation. The dominant (mainstream/*malestream*) translation eventually published was justified appealing to notions such as fidelity to the source text and to the author, translator's invisibility,

objectivity and fluency – all of them concepts which have been superseded in the theoretical field. This is a striking tendency, especially if we bear in mind that an increasing number of translation practitioners are formally trained in universities today. Therefore, there is a need for a more fruitful dialogue between translation trainers (be it scholars, professional practitioners or still very commonly in the UK, linguists) and translation students, if education is to fulfil the long-demanded objective of raising an informed awareness of the powerful position of translators in society which, invariably, has political and ideological consequences.

And second, these arguments are also indicative of a 'missing link' between feminist approaches to linguistics and translation studies. It seems urgent that both translation studies scholars and feminist linguists engage in a mutually beneficial discussion on the potentials of interdisciplinary collaborations. Translation studies should certainly "take advantage of 'scientific' linguistic studies to explain and justify some of the decisions of deliberate textual interventions during translation" (Ergün 2010:314). Feminist linguistics, on the other hand, should take notice of the unprecedented growth in translation practices today (be it literary, audiovisual, scientific-technical, legal, medical or any other types of translation), to the extent that a greater number of texts contributing to the configuration of our identities and social roles are nowadays translations. In the wake of the current call for interdisciplinarity between feminist linguistics and other fields (Mills and Mullany 2011:6), it is imperative that translation should be (also) integrated in these academic debates, if the sub-disciplinary area of language and gender is to move forward globally; and most importantly, if these academic debates are to change the perception of translation and gender inclusivity in the wider society.

About the author

Olga Castro is Lecturer in Translation Studies and Spanish at Aston University, Birmingham, UK. She joined Aston after a year working as Teaching Fellow in Translation at the University of Exeter. She gained her Ph.D. in Translation (with the European Doctorate Mention) at the University of Vigo, Spain, for which she has been also awarded the PhD Extraordinary Prize. Her main areas of research are feminist translation studies, translation and minority, gender and media, feminist linguistics and Galician Studies. She has published a dozen of different peer-reviewed articles and

chapters in edited books and journals, and has co-authored with María Reimóndez the monograph *Feminismos* (Xerais 2012). She has also co-authored the *Manual de linguaxe inclusiva para o ámbito universitario* (Universidade de Vigo 2012). She is Vice-president of the International Association for Galician Studies.

For more information: http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lss/staff-directory/castro/

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Notes

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[2] These new conceptualizations were vital for the emergence of feminist theories of translation, a relatively consolidated area of research nowadays (see Castro 2009b for a comprehensive overview).

[3] A vital aspect to be considered is the different gender system of English (natural gender) and Galician (grammatical gender). See further discussion in 2.4.

[4] In fact, it is more and more frequent to find examples of inclusive language in Galician (and in other

languages spoken in Spain), very often resorting to linguistic strategies such as neutralization (using a truly generic/neuter term), specification (specifying the linguistic gender which corresponds to the sex of the referent), duplication (including both the feminine and the masculine, especially when the referent is unknown and could refer to both), neologisms (coining new terms), usage of symbols such as / or @ (aimed at disruptively include the feminine and masculine, such as 'escritoras/es', 'niñ@s'), etc. (see Castro 2010b for real examples of all these strategies documented in Galician and Spanish media).

[5] See for example the *Galician Law for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men* 2004, or the *Spanish Law for Equality* 2007. For a summary of legislation regulating the use of non-sexist language in Spain, see http://gentyll.uah.es/gentyllp/leges/lexenix.html (Retrieved on 06 October 2011).

[6] It must be said, however, that quite often the 'Galician' activism fails to recognize the importance of the gender dimension.

[7] Alternative and more accurate translations could be 'as súas pacientes'; and 'a casa dun/ha británica', 'a casa dun ou dunha británica', 'a casa dunha ou dun británico', 'a casa dun británic@', etc.

[8] I am indebted to the translator María Reimóndez for granting me access to her initial translation of the novel, which is currently available at the Intellectual Property Office (*Rexistro da propiedade intelectual*) in Vigo, Pontevedra, Spain. The file in the copyright registry can be accessed with a legal warrant or permission by the author (see *Real Decreto* 281/2003).

[9] For ease of understanding, I will refer to Barcia as proof-reader. However, it must be born in mind that when presenting a comparative analysis between Reimóndez's unpublished translation and Barcia's published translation, what I will be comparing is the published translated text and not the previous comments and corrections that Barcia may have made as proof-reader (which I have not had access to).

[10] In the case of a plural ('teachers'), collective generic expressions could be possible (e.g. 'profesorado', lit. *teachership*; 'comunidade docente', lit. teaching community; 'corpo docente', lit. teaching body; 'a xente profesora', lit. the teaching people); but it could also be legitimate to decide that the entire group of teachers were men, women, or both ('as profesoras e profesores').

[11] I would like to thank one of the reviewers for having brought this to my attention.

[12] See *Gznación* 2008, Govan 2008, Pérez 2008, Salgado 2008.

[13] English translation (all the translations are my own): 'during proof-reading we realized that [the translator] was manipulating the original'.

[14] English translation: 'considering that the author bears the final responsibility for their work, we contacted Haddon's agent in order to find out the author's opinion, which they did.'

[15] English translation: 'finally we got in touch with the author, who told us we were right.'

[16] English translation: 'the published text was translated anew […] free from the ideological considerations that Reimóndez was surreptitiously trying to introduce.'

[17] English translation: 'retain theoretical burdens from their academic training, trying to solve practical translation problems resorting to theoretical arguments which are unknown by most readers'.