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Article



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WOMAN VOICE AS A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Abstract: *The interaction between translation and gender has become more apparent in translation studies. As the number and quality of studies published at this intersection increase, feminist translation studies has emerged as one of translation studies' sub-disciplines. However, a gender perspective became available in audiovisual translation, a sub-discipline of translation studies, in the 2000s. Audio description is a type of audiovisual translation that allows the blind and visually impaired to access the visual track of an audiovisual product. The increased dissemination and use of accessible audiovisual products has increased the importance of audio description. This research is being conducted at the crossroads of these two sub-disciplines. The study's goal is to present a gender perspective on the gender of employees, audio description text writers, and audio describers based on data and feedback. The audio description process clearly includes "the voice of the woman audio describers" and "discourse by the woman audio description text writer." When compared to other types of translation, the "woman translator" is an undeniable component of the finished product - her voice can be heard. This provides a research platform for findings about women's voices. The following article presents not only statistical data but also data about receiver preferences, which are interpreted within the context of feminist audiovisual translation studies.*

Key words: *Audiovisual translation, audio description, audio describer, audio description text, feminist translation studies.*

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Introduction

The clarification of the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, the impact of cultural studies on the discipline, and the resulting paradigm shift in translation studies and the relationship between translation and gender have gained increasing importance in recent years, and the number and quality of studies in the field have increased both in our country and beyond it. As a result of this, the existence of a sub-field called feminist translation studies has begun to be mentioned.

Although the relationship between gender and language, and even translation, dates back to ancient times, the presence of a feminist perspective in translation studies appeared more than thirty years ago with the contributions of a group of Canadian female translators and theorists. The concept of feminist translation, which can be thought of as an opposition

to patriarchal language in its simplest definition, has become more common in time. It sprouted with the contributions of Lori Chamberlain (5; 454-472), Barbara Godard (15; 42-53), Sherry Simon (25) and Luise von Flotow (31, 69-84; 32), who can be considered as the leading names in the field, and later on, queer theory, critical masculinity studies and their relations with translation into the subject of the study, broadened its scope.

In the process, some researchers have adopted a more local and transnational approach, based on the criticism that the studies in the field concentrate on translation studies in the West (local and transnational perspectives) (4). Studies carried out in the context of translation sociology on the position of female translators, based on the idea that the employment of female translators is intensely felt in the sector, in addition to comparative translation studies conducted

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with a gender perspective, especially in the field of literary translation (33), compilations of biographies of female translators with a historical perspective (12), studies on the place of feminist translation in translation education (14, 28, 33) can be given as an example of some of the studies published in the international community in this field.

When we look at the process of translation around the world specifically, we can see that feminist translation studies have gained importance in every country over time, and that means translation history and current translation practices in our country offer an extremely productive research area. These studies, which consist of master's and doctoral theses, original articles and comprehensive compilations, have discussed the place of women in translation, feminist translation theory and practice, the relationship between gender and translation in the context of different translation fields and different translation theories with different perspectives. The fact that the field of audio-visual translation and the concept of audio description in this field are relatively rare in studies dealing with the relationship between gender and gender can be explained by the fact that this field has only recently become visible in the field of translation studies.

As Von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez stated in their article titled "*Gender in Audiovisual Translation Studies Advocating for Gender Awareness*", the handling of feminist theory and criticism in the context of literary translation dates back to the 1980s, while gender-focused studies in the field of audio-visual translation took place in 2000' (32; 296). However, the interaction between gender and media studies dates back to the 1970s and even the 1960s (9, 18, 24). Studies in which the translations of audio-visual texts are handled from a feminist perspective have emerged abroad, in addition to comprehensive articles (32; 311) or compilations describing the developments in the field (10), addressing the differences between dubbing and subtitles, comparative studies (10); There have been studies (13; 59-79) and the like, addressing the differences in the approaches of professional and amateur subtitle translators under the heading of gender.

In the case of Uzbekistan, as it can be understood from the examples above, it is seen that there are not many studies in this field, and gender and audio-visual translation fields are mentioned in studies with other focal points.

Addressing the developments in feminist audio-visual translation, Von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez, who suggested new research areas, underlined that male and female voices in translation are a subject that has hardly been addressed in the context of audio-visual translation (32, 299), They see the results of the use of female and male voices in the field of vocalization as an important field of study. Before considering the female voice as a subject of

study in terms of translation, it would be useful to briefly talk about the approaches that deal with the concept of voice, which emerged with the introduction of voice in the history of cinema, from a feminist perspective (6, 29).

Kaja Silverman, one of the leading names in the field, in her study titled "*The Acoustic Voice: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema Theories of Representation and Difference*", has made use of the hierarchical sexist logic (18) of Laura Mulvey's masculine gaze in the use of voice. She emphasizes that the image of the female body, which is discussed from the point of view of feminist and feminist film studies, can also be valid for the female voice.

According to Silverman, while the male subject has linguistic authority, the female subject is the one who echoes the words of the male protagonist. In her feminist film works, where the silence of the woman is as much as her voice, Silverman mentions that the male subject is defined as a higher address, while the woman's voice and body are in the narrative.

He explains that the motherly voice is conceptualized as powerlessness as well as happiness. Starting from Silverman's point of view, Bosseaux also considers voice and sound as part of the translation, explaining that voice is a fundamental element in the representation of the characters and that the voice actors must recreate the characters so that there is no mismatch between the visual and auditory representations on the screen (quoted by Von Flotow and Hernandez, 32; 305). Although Bosseaux's work is not directly gender-focused, this study focuses on the concepts of potential and power. According to Von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez, because audio provides important information about a character's age, social position, authority, self-awareness, self-confidence, and sexual orientation, further research on this topic will provide valuable insights into how gender is represented through voice (32; 306). If issues of authority and power are, as Bosseaux says, really about sound, then feminist, queer and gender-focused approaches to audiovisual translation will provide valuable data to address this issue. (32; 306). Based on the idea of Von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez that the problem of sound in the field of gender and audio-visual translation is a potentially productive field of study, it is appropriate to look at audio description (32; 306), which is another productive research area in audio-visual translation, from a gender perspective.

Audio description is a type of translation developed to provide access to people who do not have access to the visual channel of an audio-visual product. Today, this type of translation has gained importance in terms of meeting the special needs of visually impaired people with the spread and sharing of audio-visual products. Pujol and Orero (21; 49-60) state that this type of access has existed since ancient times. Audio description, which is constantly evolving

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with theoretical studies and examples in practice, has been described as a type of inter-signature translation until recently (2; 154-165). In this type of translation, which has been examined by many researchers, most of the studies have focused on audio description for cinema and television (3, 645-662; 14, 205-295; 20, 179-193; 22, 151-174, 27, 191-198). Audio description in performing arts has been studied (7, 163-179; 29, 139-156). There are also studies on visual arts in this field (8, 189-200; 19, 277-293). Very little work has been done on the gender of the text writer in audio description, and the gender of the person who wrote or voiced the audio description text.

While the audio description is being performed, in the first step, the audio-visual product (with all the necessary attachments) is delivered to the translator, who is the audio description copywriter. Audio description copywriter carefully examines the product; it identifies all the elements that need to be depicted and the silent intervals in which they can be made. He/she writes the audio description text in a way that is suitable for the flow and does not overlap and/or disrupt the auditory code. The generally accepted criterion is to articulate enough visual stimuli to enable understanding of movement and interaction; moreover, it is the transfer of this in a way that allows the visually impaired person to form their own opinion without adding comments (1, 1-13). While researchers emphasize the importance of describing what is on the screen (objects, people, etc.) and what is happening (story flow) in audio description, on the other hand, they also draw attention to the importance of how it is shown (angles, distance, point of view, etc.), why it is shown (narrative effect) (17, 233-234). Later, this expert or another person who will voice the audio description enters this prepared text into the relevant parts of the audio-visual layout. The resulting product is checked by a visually impaired editor and any corrections, additions or deletions, if any, deemed necessary to ensure access as a result of the evaluation, are made at this stage. Then the final assembly of the product can be done.

Gender and the female voice in audio description is a productive research area for contemporary translation scholars. In terms of the receivers, the "voice of female voiceover" or "voiced discourse of the female voice-over copywriter" is clearly felt in the audio description. Compared to other types of translation, in this context, the "female translator" is an undeniably part of the product – her voice is heard. This provides a research platform pregnant with findings on the female voice in this field.

Considering the findings obtained as a result of the research, it is possible to say that audio description buyers first look at quality and then they consider the "sound element" in audio description at the level of preferences. This is actually an expression of the fact that we are faced with a very conscious buyer group. When it comes to preferences, the picture that emerges

in this context can be read as a reflection of society's view of women's roles. The association of women with adjectives such as "emotional, delicate, sensitive" has turned into a guide in terms of the harmony of the voiceover with the movie she is singing -sometimes the buyer himself is not aware of it.

As mentioned above, the listener who cannot identify the voiceover with the content he/she voices may feel similar discomfort, just as the receiver feels discomfort when he/she cannot combine the voiceover with the visual. It would not be wrong to say that we see a reflection of the role of women in society, in our example, especially in Uzbek society. When we look at the gender roles attributed to women, a connection can be made between the docile, emotional and conflict-averse traits, which are more preferred by women as voice actors in emotional and family films. Likewise, as Serpil Sancar quotes from Collinson and Hearn, the dominant masculinity values presented as "not avoiding risk, physical toughness and endurance, being persistent and persevering, not being afraid of being aggressive and attacking ... an unemotional rationality, enduring pain and not complaining" (23, 37), it can be said that "man as the voice of authority" is often preferred in adventure, detective and horror movies. At this point, it is useful to underline once again that the gender of the voice actors is not a priority in line. We would like to say that the prejudice and distrust towards female translators (33) in some studies conducted abroad were not seen against female text writers, translators and voice actors in this study, only female or male voices were distinguished when specifically asked.

In addition, starting from the idea that we can draw parallels between the view of gender relations in interpreting studies and audio description and gender relationship, Pascal Singy and Patrice Guex's "Gender" in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies in other words, their determinations under the title of "Gender" are important. According to Singy and Guex, although studies conducted especially in Western societies underline the similarities between male and female language use, they also mention certain differences. Emphasizing the two basic communication styles, they mention that the masculine style is associated with determination, competitiveness and directness, while the feminine style, on the contrary, exhibits features such as empathy, cooperation and avoidance of conflict, and these features cause some language use (26, 169-170). It is possible that these linguistic features revealed in the oral translation were also revealed during the audio description and therefore caused the preference of female voice actors and male voice actors in the audience. In this context, it is obvious that a comparative content analysis on the TV series and movies to be selected for this purpose will provide us with more data.

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When approaching the subject from a second axis, based on the above data, it would not be wrong to say that women are interested in the field of audio description, they produce with determination, and they are more inclined to work in this field than men. This applies to many types of translation. As Sherry Simon, one of the important names in the field of Feminist Translation Studies, stated in her book *Gender in Translation*, although translation has a less valuable and secondary historical position next to the act of writing, women sometimes enter the world of literature, and this has emerged as a powerful form of expression for women, allowing them to defend their political cause and engage in writing relationships that will motivate them (25, 36). Again, according to Simon, “the work of female translators should be taken in the context of what they tell us about their interventions in the cultural and intellectual movements of their time” (25, 40). During both individual and collective translation activities in our country, women gained new subject positions and contributed to the intellectual, cultural and political

life of the period in which they lived. When we look at the translation history, we see how many roles women translators have played, and that they are indispensable actors, especially during the activities of the Translation Bureau.

In some cases, the identification of woman and translation can also be interpreted as imprisoned in this secondary role, where women are seen as “only” translators (25, 37), while in the audio description, which is the focus of this study, female voice actors are extremely “hearable” and are in the foreground which is very crucial to pay extra attention.

As a result, women who exist in the audio visual translation, who show themselves not only in the field of translation of literary and social sciences texts, but also in interpreting and social translation, establish an “intermediate space” between the private and public spheres through translation, as in oral translation and audio description from time to time. It can be said that they exist in the public sphere not only with their translation actions but also with their voices.

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