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GENDERED FRAMING IN POLITICAL TRANSLATION ACROSS ARMENIAN AND ENGLISH

ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО ПЕРЕВОДА МЕЖДУ АРМЯНСКИМ И АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКАМИ

Abstract:

This article highlights gendered framing with respect to the translation of political discourse from Armenian into English. It studies whether translation practices mirror or counteract gendered power asymmetries through an analysis of linguistic changes operating in the process of translating political texts. The main goal is to comprehend how linguistic strategy refers to pronouns, evaluative expressions, metaphorical language and naming conventions shape the depiction of male and female politicians. The study analyzes a

bilingual corpus comprising political speeches, interviews and parliamentary records using the discourse-qualitative comparative approach. Systematic coding of key features in language allows the research to identify ways in which gender representation changes across languages. The findings indicate that translation tends to introduce a form of gender bias. Armenian's gender-neutral structures are most often translated into gender-specific instances in English, thereby disproportionately marking the female speaker. The changes, furthermore, that occur in evaluative language and naming hinder female politicians from being given authority. As a final point, the study characterizes political translation as an ideologically charged process that may uphold or fight against gender bias. Scientifically, the novelties lie in its attention to the rather unexplored area of Armenian-English translation and its treatment within feminist translation theory and the critical discourse analysis. The study thus contributes to the issues concerning translation ethics and gender-oriented political communication.

Keywords: gendered framing; political discourse; Armenian-English translation; pronoun usage; metaphor; evaluative language

Аннотация:

Эта статья исследует гендерные особенности в переводе политического дискурса с армянского на английский язык, анализируя, отражают ли практики перевода или нивелируют гендерные асимметрии власти. Основное внимание уделено тому, как использование местоимений, оценочных выражений, метафорического языка и норм именования формирует представления о мужчинах и женщинах-политиках.

Исследование основано на билингвальном корпусе, включающем политические речи, интервью и парламентские записи, и применяет дискурсивно-качественный сравнительный подход. Результаты показывают, что перевод часто вносит гендерную предвзятость: гендерно-нейтральные структуры армянского языка чаще всего передаются на английский как гендерно-специфические формы, что приводит к непропорциональной маркировке женщин-ораторов. Изменения в оценочной лексике и системе именования также ограничивают признание женщин-политиков как авторитетных фигур.

Политический перевод предстает как идеологически нагруженный процесс, способный как поддерживать, так и противостоять гендерным предубеждениям. Научная новизна работы заключается в исследовании малоизученной области армяно-английского перевода и её рассмотрении через призму феминистской теории перевода и критического дискурс-анализа, что вносит вклад в обсуждение вопросов этики перевода и гендерно ориентированной политической коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: гендерные особенности; политический дискурс; армянско-английский перевод; употребление местоимений; метафора; оценочный язык

1. Introduction

Language is a powerful instrument in developing social realities and gender ideologies [11]. The language assumes particular importance in political contexts where discourse influences public perception and power relations. Translators do not merely transmit the ideological function of language when they translate political texts, rather, they reinterpret, reshape or sometimes even distort them in the process. This makes the intersection among gender, politics and translation a field of research worthy of future investigations. The translation of the Armenian-English political discourse presents a unique testing field for this intersection. While Armenian tends to prefer gender-neutral grammatical structures, English regularly encodes gender through pronouns, lexical items and discursive conventions. These differences in the two languages raise challenging questions about representation, alteration or erasure of gender ideologies through translation.

This study examines how the four linguistic features scientifically separate gendered meanings in political translation: pronouns, evaluation, metaphor and naming/referencing. In the whole spectrum, these features together set certain perceptions of political authority, agency and visibility [7]. The main hypothesis claims that, potentially, such gendered shifts from Armenian to English systematically advantage masculine-coded representations of politicians and reinforce gender asymmetries in discourse.

As for research objectives: (1) how gender-neutral pronouns in Armenian are turned in English translations, and what ideological value choices imply; (2) to analyze shifts in evaluative language, which could masculinize or feminize political speech; (3) metaphorical framing and its gender coding in translation of political discourse; and (4) naming and referencing practices in relation to the visibility and authority of male and female political figures.

With respect to methodology, qualitative discourse analysis is employed, drawing upon feminist translation theory and critical discourse studies. A corpus of official Armenian political speeches, legislative texts and any officially published English translations provides the empirical basis. This method offers a way to approach linguistic choices and their ideological effects from within the real-world situation of political communication.

The research is important in two ways, firstly, it contributes theoretically to the growing area of gender and translation studies through the theoretical and methodological apparatus of political discourse analysis and cross-linguistic perspectives. On the practical

side, the research is intended to inform translators, policy makers and scholars on how translation practices reflect upon gender equality and representation in political discourse and gender relations. By uncovering the hidden ideological translation work, this study asks for more gender consciousness in political translation and draws attention to the bigger sociopolitical issues of linguistic mediation.

2. Theoretical Foundations

This research is based on three interrelated theoretical approaches: *feminist translation studies*, *critical discourse analysis* and *political linguistics*. The three perspectives can be held to examine processes of constructing, negotiating and transforming gendered meaning in translation of political discourse between Armenian and English.

At the heart of this study is **feminist translation theory**, which arose in the late 20th century as an opposition to traditional translation canons that often invisibilized gender dynamics [12]. Feminist translators and theorists hold that translation is not a neutral or mechanical transfer of meaning but an ideological practice engrained in issues of social structures and power relations. In this sense, the translator is seen as an active agent who may either help perpetuate patriarchal norms or challenge them through linguistic choices [1].

A feminist translation theorist would call for gender-sensitive translation strategies that would fight against androcentric bias. For example, in translation, employing gender-neutral or inclusive language stands against the masculinization of discourse, especially when such texts are, in a political or legal sense, meant to be inclusive [10]. This is especially important in circumstances when the source language, as in the case of Armenian, may use a gender-neutral grammatical form that is regularly rendered into a gendered form in English, a language with a strong generational divide.

Metaphors also play an important part in feminist translation. The conceptual metaphor theory suggests that metaphors are not just stylistic devices but rather primary intellectual tools through which ideological meanings are encoded. In gender studies, metaphors tend to mirror or impose culturally dominant gender norms, for instance, war metaphors are often linked to masculine traits and strength, whereas care metaphors are linked to femininity and relational values [2]. Translating metaphorical language involves a constant negotiation of these gendered frames, whereby translators can retain, alter or discard metaphors, thereby affecting the way politicians and issues are symbolically construed in the target language. An exploration of metaphorical shifts in Armenian-English political translation will bring to light the subtle ideological work at play in the mediation of gendered political identities.

According to Hatton and Mason, choices regarding whether to use full names, titles or impersonal references may replicate or challenge gendered hierarchies of visibility and legitimacy [4]. This study thus extends these findings to naming and referencing in Armenian-English political texts to show how translation becomes a site for gendered ideological framing.

Complementing feminist translation theory, **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** was initially conceived as a formidable set of tools in the analysis of language that enact, sustain or challenge power relations within society [3]. Wodak emphasized that discourse should not be treated as a mere reflection of social structures since discourse is an operative instrument in the construction and negotiation of identities, social roles and hierarchies [13]. CDA essentially considers language to be socially oriented. It is a social practice interwoven in particular historical, cultural and political contexts with linguistic features linked to more general ideological formations. Koller similarly insists that it is crucial to look at how gendered identities and power asymmetries are discursively constructed and negotiated and at times resisted within political and media discourses [5].

With translation studies, CDA becomes a vital methodological tool for analyzing and interpreting discursive shifts occurring in the act of translation. The variations may be lexical (such as word choice), grammatical (for example, active or passive or pronoun use) or pragmatic (for example, expressions of politeness or evaluation). All the variations contribute to shaping a gendered role and power imbalances in the translated texts. CDA, hence, highlights the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural ideological function of language in political communication. It thus provides a solid foundation with which to inquire into the role of translation in either sustaining or resisting gendered power.

Political linguistics studies the strategic language use for persuasion, identity creation and ideological positioning within political contexts. According to the researchers, politicians use linguistic means, such as metaphors, framing and evaluative language to reinforce legitimacy, authority and political power [8]. Not only do they use these linguistic means to persuade their audience, but also to contribute to the construction of collective identities and align political discourse with certain ideologies.

One growing area within the field of political linguistics is the study of gender-related aspects in political discourse. Female politicians are often sighted as being described using affective, relational or emotional language tied to connection and empathy, whereas discourses related to authority, rationality and assertiveness tend to be associated more with male politicians [9]. These discursive asymmetries maintain gender stereotypes that affect perceptions of political legitimacy and public opinions about political competence.

Translating between Armenian and English produces yet another set of typological problems branching from ideological and linguistic ones. Most pronouns and nouns in Armenian do not have gender distinctions, while English represents a totally different case of gender being encoded through pronouns and nouns.

By combining perspectives from feminist translation theory, critical discourse analysis and political linguistics, this study investigates the journey of gender ideology across linguistic and cultural barriers during political translation. The study further looks into the mediatory function of translators among ideologies who, either consciously or unconsciously, give through language choices greater or lesser representation, visibility or even authority to political figures. Consequently, the conceptual convergence outlines a multi-faceted analytical approach to gendered framing, naturally presuming that translation is always ideological and political as well as power-laden, both in and across languages.

3. Discussion

The cross-linguistic study of Armenian cultural and political texts and their English translations demonstrate systematic shifts in gender representation. These shifts are ideological in nature, influencing the framing of politicians and values. The discussion follows four linguistic features: *pronoun usage, evaluative language, metaphor and naming/referencing strategies*, each contributing to the construction of gendered meaning during translation.

Pronouns and Gender Differentiation

The comparative characterization of the pronoun systems in English and Armenian showed how translation was further positioned as a site for the reproduction of gendered ideologies, even when the source texts were gender - neutral. The Armenian third singular pronoun «**նա** » was completely gender-neutral and made no grammatical distinction between male or female referents. This feature enabled Armenian legal and political texts to be formally neutral and gender inclusive. Yet, the study of translating those texts into English involved the use of gender-specific pronouns, such as "**he**" or "**she**" that indicated the gender of each referent and also compromised the neutrality of the original texts.

A striking example occurred in the translation of a clause in Armenian legislation:

Original Armenian:

Պատգամն անվանը ի լիարժեք ներկայությունները պարզապես ներկայի
ֆունկցիոնալ են ներկայումս :
Եթե նա ինքնուրույն է Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունը

ֆուդաբադիստները, նաև ենթադրելու չկարելի է ասել պետությունն
ֆուդաբադիստները, նաև պետել է հարձականում :

<https://iravaban.net/387606.html>

English Translation:

The powers of a Deputy shall discontinue if: he has lost the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia; he has acquired citizenship of another state; he resigned.

<https://iravaban.net/en/387719.html>

In the example, the Armenian «**նա**» referred generically to a deputy, which could be of any gender. The English translation made the gendered assumption by selecting the masculine pronoun "**he**", and so the previously neutral subject became male. This translation choice was not simply an impulsive choice, but a discursive act that implicitly prioritized the male subject as the default politician, who was of course marked as male. The use of "**he**" further reinforced political representation as encased within traditional gender hierarchies and erased female and nonbinary presence from the textual imagination of political power.

Such shifts in language carry with them ideological implications. The systematic translation of gender-neutral terms, such as "**deputy**" while using masculine pronouns eventually involved readers making gendered representations of political power as though men were the only actual aspect of political power, this symbolic exclusion of women from political power has been further justified via translation. The pattern of gendered framing propagated by this translation practice contributed to continued gender inequities, intended or not, across political space.

This phenomenon caused the source language to be limited interpretatively. Armenian permitted ambiguous or inclusive interpretations while supporting equality and non-discrimination. The imposition of gender in English undermined the inclusive nature of Armenian, switching translation from linguistic transfer to ideological filtering. Subsequently, translators became the arbiters of gender representation in the translated text, most often not even realizing that they were actively developed in shaping discourse.

To prevent issues like these, actual suggestions for gender-neutral procedures in English translation, such as plural constructions "**Deputies....they**" or "**Deputy....they**" were recommended to be applied to avoid bias more conscientiously, especially in a legal or political context which allows for neutrality and inclusivity. This example illustrated that what seemed like a simple grammatical change was actually an ideological intervention. It also showed how even "faithful" translations can contribute to gender bias, highlighting that translation was a site of interrelation for power, gender and language.

Evaluative Language and Power Attribution

In terms of gendered framing in translation, an important area was evaluative language - adjectives, adverbs and reporting verbs which expressed the speaker's confidence, authority or judgment. In Armenian political discourse, the evaluative language was often neutral or formal, using context and indirect language to express attitude. English was frequently more explicit with evaluative verbs implying an emotional stance or power to the speaker that sometimes exaggerated the source's tone.

An example of neutral speech acts in the Armenian source text derived from the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs meeting of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan with EU High Representative Kaja Kallas:

«Նրա խոսքով՝ Եվրամիությունը պատրաստ է առավել խորացնել գործընկերությունը բոլոր ուղղություններով»

«Նա շեշտել է, որ այդ արժեքները պետք է պաշտպանվեն...»

«Կայա Կալասն ընդգծել է, որ ԵՄ-ն պատրաստ է կանգնել Հայաստանի կողքին...»

(<https://tert.am/am/news/2025/06/30/kallas-kaja/4235673>)

These sentences employed standard political formulations: «**նրա խոսքով**», «**եւ տ է լ է**» and «**ը ն գ ծ է լ է**», expressions maintaining a formal tone without inserting personal certainty, confidence or evaluative embellishment.

However, the English version rendered these neutral structures as:

“According to him, it was a new level of political dialogue.”

“He stressed that these values must be protected...”

“Kallas praised the commitment... and stressed...”

(<https://tert.am/en/news/2025/06/30/kallas-kaja/4235673>)

The reporting verbs “**praised**”, “**stressed**” and “**according to him**” did more than convey content, they assigned a tone of assertiveness and personal authority to Kallas’s statements. Such decisions indexed her talk to leadership qualities such as certainty, command and control, which are often “coded” as strong masculine traits. Although these modifications may have contributed to her perceived assertiveness, they may also be viewed as a linguistic effort to masculinize female political discourse using standardizing practices of political language. This framing was different from instances in which female politicians hedged or emotionalized their talk, but indicative of the tension between rhetorical authenticity and masculine-coded authority underlined in translation. The asymmetry became more apparent when compared with translations of male politicians’ speech. Prime Minister Pashinyan's statements were usually translated using evaluative intensifiers (e.g., “strongly stated”,

“firmly declared”), reinforcing his dominance and credibility. When similar strategies were applied to female leaders as with Kallas, the intention may have been inclusion, but the result often remained an alignment with existing gendered power codes rather than authentic representation of the speaker's original tone.

As Wodak (2015) and Lazar (2005) argue, such discursive practices in political communication were not gender-neutral; they reproduced hierarchies of credibility and power by coding assertiveness as a masculine trait and subtly demanding female figures conform to those standards.

Metaphor and Symbolic Framing

Based on our analysis, metaphors were identified as conceptual instruments that shape how political realities are understood, framed, communicated, enacted, and bureaucratically interpreted. According to Lakoff & Johnson, these metaphors frame abstract domains of peace, conflict or diplomacy in terms of familiar concrete schemas, that is, journeys, battles, buildings (architecture) and healing/care [6]. Metaphors in political talk not only mobilize support, but they perform an ideological function that aligns with or resists gendered expectations. In general, war metaphors, enduring conquest or imperatives of strength or toughness are typically understood as masculine-coded leadership. Metaphors that embody care, connection or continuity, conversely, are more aligned with feminine-coded political expression. In witnessing the translator's negotiation of the metaphors in use, it could be seen how translation mediated these metaphors and may have been partial to either give ideological strength or weakness, dependent on the assumptions of identity of political audience and speaker.

In her speech at Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Lilit Minasyan utilized some spatial, architectural and temporal metaphors to frame the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. Some of her Armenian expressions included:

«Սա պարզապէս քաղաքական զարգացում չէ, սա շրջադարձային պահ է»
 (“This is more than a political development — it is a turning point.”)

«Եկէք այս պահը վերածենք ուղենշային մի պահի...» (“Let us turn this moment into a landmark for future generations.”)

«...կապերի կամուրջներ...» (“...building bridges of commerce, energy, and people-to-people contact.”) (parliament.am 2025)

The metaphors "**turning point**" "**landmark**", "**building bridges**" were preserved in the English translation. They pointed to a hopeful, inclusive perspective and invoked peace as

something created over time and shared space. In this way, the framing was gendered not because of explicit references to women, but due to the connections it made to feminine-coded political discourses that emphasize dialogue, generativity and an ethics of historical responsibility. The translator preserved this structure, symbolic significance and clarity of ideology.

The Head of the RA NA delegation to OSCE PA Sargis Khandanyan employed a slightly different metaphorical register. Khandanyan's presentation also featured architectural metaphors and touched upon the notion of urgency:

«Պայմանագրի տեքստը կարող է ծառայել որպես ամուր հիմք...» (“The text of the agreement can serve as a solid basis...”)

«Մենք չպետք է ծանրաբեռնենք խաղաղության օրակարգը նոր թեմաներով...» (“We do not need to overwhelm the peace agenda with new items...”)

«...պետք է վստահություն կառուցենք» (“...we need to build trust.”)

(parliament.am 2025)

Khandanyan's metaphors "**solid basis**", "**build trust**", "**overloading the agenda**" effectively framed peace as an engineering project that must be constructed, stabilized and maintained. Although less emotionally evocative than Minasyan's metaphors, the contours of Khandanyan's metaphors carried conceptual weight. Unlike many male political speeches relying on battle metaphors, Khandanyan's rhetoric substituted technical and institutional metaphors. The English translation preserved all key metaphors, but both had retained formal and pragmatic tones. This seemed to suggest that Khandanyan's metaphorical choice had been steered by context and a specific role rather than by gender. This suggested that metaphor choice may have been influenced by speaker role and context rather than gender alone. However, preservation of construction metaphors, often coded as rational, solution-oriented and masculine, helped position Khandanyan as a reliable negotiator and architect of peace, reinforcing traditional male political ethos.

Naming and Referencing Strategies

Naming and referencing practices in political translation were essential for creating notions of authority, legitimacy and visibility. Translators determining how to name politicians, whether by full name, title, institutional reference or impersonal reference, were conducted through an ideological lens, not least of which related to gender representation. In the English translation of some Armenian political texts, female politicians were often named

with full names and titles. For instance, during the DAAD delegation meeting translation, the English text always read: "*Zhanna Andreasyan emphasized... she introduced... the Minister explained...*" while male participants were frequently lumped together as "*the delegation*" or "*the officials*" without being individually sized up (<https://escs.am/en/news/28286>). These choices augmented existing conditions of a gendered landscape in translation.

This asymmetry constructed female authority as something publicly being linguistically affirmed, while male authority was presumed much more implicitly, embedded within institutional structures.

Female politicians were named more frequently, identified more fully and referenced more personally, which shaped their perceived presence as both individually meaningful and rhetorically marked. Male politicians often enjoyed anonymity, being largely presented as representatives of the state or government rather than named individuals. The practice of naming participants produced gendered expectations: women had to be named to be authentic; men were granted authority by virtue of their institutional association only. Thus, naming and referencing in political translation was a device of ideological framing. The choices made by a translator to name full names, titles or use impersonal references was not simply a matter of great or formal style, but a device that traveled within a manifested form of gendered meaning. Translators intentionally or unintentionally extended and reproduced hierarchies casualized by political language and signifiers, demonstrating just how much linguistic form mattered for shaping political visibility and gendered agency.

4. Conclusions

This research offers important gendered insights into the translation of Armenian political texts into English, emphasizing how translation has become an important site of construction of gendered ideologies in political discourse. The results indicated that gender neutral Armenian pronouns are often translated with masculine pronouns, contributing to the symbolic alienation of women and non-binary identities from political representation in the political discourse of representatives of the Armenian government. This reinforces Baker's (2006) prior research which highlights translation as a reinforcing mechanism of dominant gender norms. Further, this differs from other studies which represent translator agency to be subversive, not just ideologically productive [1]. The current research indicated that translators produced habitual ideologies of gender hierarchy often in an unconscious manner, asserting the importance of being gender aware in translation practice. The second area of analysis demonstrated the use of evaluative language which once again translated female political speech into masculinized political speech using assertive and authoritative verbs.

This finding reinforces Wodak (2015) and Lazar (2005) who identified assertiveness as an indicator of masculinity in political speech. The current study extends this by demonstrating the ways that language can masculinize a speaker's gendered identity in cross-linguistic translation, representing an ideological filtering process in translation.

This calls into question the more hopeful possibilities highlighted in the literature that translation could produce spaces for empowering women (Tymoczko 2007), by suggesting that gender empowerment is usually thwarted by established differences in power. Metaphorical framing revealed selective preservation and reinforcement of gender-coded conceptual metaphors in translation. More specifically, the coded metaphors of peace as construction or peace as dialogue were feminine, whereas coded metaphors of peace as structure or peace as pragmatism were always masculine. This pattern of gendered metaphors draws attention to the complexities of gender and genre in context, and serves to more substantiate Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) theory of conceptual metaphor, and adds to work in political discourse in establishing that metaphor mediates aspects of gendered ideology through languages. Naming and reference practices revealed marked asymmetries in the naming and subsequent legitimacy of political actor, female versus male. Female politicians were more frequently named and titled, thus reinforcing their exceptionalization within a political space usually dominated by men, consistent across studies of media discourse. In contrast, frequently male politicians were apparently rendered anonymous and received a strong institutional or structural reference, reinforcing gendered discursive practices the results continued to substantiate. These findings reaffirm the importance of naming as an ideological mechanism in political translation and media representation.

Practically speaking, there will be an urgent need for gender-aware translation protocols, including gender-neutral translation protocols, especially in the domain of law/political communications when neutrality must take precedent. Translation practitioners and agencies must educate about gender bias and how they can mitigate it through the employment of gender-neutral pronouns, such as singular "they", through evaluative choices and choices when naming to allow for inclusive consideration. Also, policymakers and practitioners in their institutions might use this research in review of their official translation practices, creating opportunities for implementing gender equality in political communication. Given that this study reflects the political translation of Armenian-English primarily, more research should include other language pairs or other discourse domains to find out whether the same gendered patterns endure. Future research may also implement an experimental approach to examine translator cognizance of gender and the processes involved in making gender-aware decisions in translation. Long preventative research may use repetition cycles to

measure change in translation practices against global gender discourses and the more successful ideas that may share value. Overall, this study extends the body of literature on the construction and negotiation of gendered meanings through political translation, illustrating the ideological constraints and affordances inherent in this communicative act. It highlights the importance of translators in their dual role of the primary agent of meaning, and how this extends into shaping political gender discourses.

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