

## Gender, culture, and ideology in translation

Anatolij Dorodnych (School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) & Anna Kuzio (University of Wrocław)

Ivan Turgenev, the great Russian writer who induced the western public's interest in Russian literature, emphasized that it was not enough that a translator of literary prose should be faithful to the original, such a translator should be endowed with talent, the gift of creativity (see Fedorov, 1983: 56).

While agreeing with the view of Turgenev and similar minded authors, we aim to seek clarity in another aspect pertaining to literary translation, i.e. the issue of the sex/gender of the translator in the context of extant cultural scripts and ideology.

There is a commonly held belief that that the translator of literary prose should be of the same sex as the author of the source text, especially with regard to texts containing dirty and strong language, where differences are still observed (cf. Coates, 1993: 127; Myers and Cortese, 1995; Kielkiewicz-Janowiak and Pawelczyk, 2006).

Bornemann provides some examples to the contrary, claiming that a competent translator is quite capable of performing the 'Tiresian exercise' of performing the different but not mutually exclusive gender roles (Bornemann, 1984: 263).

To find out if there occur discrepancies between translations performed by female and male translators a comparison was done on a representative sample of original English works of fiction and their translations into Polish and Russian done by translators of the same and/or different sex than the author. The fact that one female translator meets the expectations and the other does not, displaying as much proficiency in conveying obscenities and expletives, seems to support Bornemann's position. Provisionally, this can be explained by different social backgrounds of the translators, their attitudes and beliefs, the presence or absence of censorship.

This requires examination of the possible cultural scripts they adhere to and of their broadly understood ideological stances.

Yet, our preliminary results show that even if a female translator can succeed in giving cultural equivalents of obscenities, she is not always capable of recognizing and rendering innocent sounding slang which, nevertheless, refers to topics generally considered taboo.

### Bibliography

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