Angeliki Alvanoudi
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
aalvanou@lit.auth.gr

Travelling between languages and disciplines: linguistic and interdisciplinary translation practices in Women's/Gender Studies

Abstract

In this paper I address issues related to translation from a disciplinary (linguistic) and an interdisciplinary perspective. I theorize translation as a process of travelling between a) languages and b) disciplines. In my discussion of translation as a travelling between languages, I address questions about language as a medium of constituting social reality and shaping experience. Here, I examine how words are related to different conceptualizations across different languages and argue that this linguistic and social context of concepts must be made visible and problematized in processes of translation. To illustrate the need for a reflexive engagement with this issue, I explore two case studies: the different conceptualizations related to various translations of 'gender; and the sexism embedded in, and reproduced through the use of grammatical gender in Greek. In addition, I claim that the metaphor of translation can be productively used to problematize the travelling of concepts between disciplines. I demonstrate this through a focus on processes of reception, integration and expansion of meanings between linguistics and feminist philosophy and I examine the ways in which the concept of performativity has undergone a process of conceptual translation. Finally, I raise issues of politics and power associated with translation practices.

Women's/Gender Studies scholars as (conceptual) translators

As a co-teacher in an MA course on 'Practising Interdisciplinarity in European Gender Studies',[1] I had the opportunity to participate in a process of ongoing translation that took place within a heterogeneous community of Gender Studies teachers and students. The course aimed at increasing knowledge of interdisciplinary work in Gender Studies on a European level, taking into consideration the regional, ethnic and national differences within Europe (Grenz & Pereira 2009: 41-42). The participants in this course were 10 teachers and 18 students from different European institutional locations who had to negotiate their disciplinary and linguistic differences in order to engage in an open dialogue with each other

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[1] Members of the Interdisciplinarity subgroup (part of the *Travelling Concepts* working group, Athena 3) planned and co-taught an experimental intensive course on 'Practising Interdisciplinarity in European Gender Studies' at Radboud University, Nijmegen (23 June-4 July 2008). (See Grenz & Pereira, 2009).

and practice interdisciplinarity. During this course, participants were involved in two sorts of translation processes: translations from one language into another(s) and translations from one discipline into another(s).[2] Drawing on this experience, I propose here a broader view of translation which includes both processes of producing equivalent meanings between different language systems[3] and processes of reception, integration and expansion of meanings and concepts that take place in interdisciplinary spaces when different disciplinary systems and codes come into contact. That is, I theorize translation also as a conceptual interdisciplinary process, which I define as 'conceptual translation'.[4]

In this paper, I conceptualize translation as a double process of travelling between languages and disciplines, and I approach this dual aspect by drawing on a) my disciplinary location, which is linguistics (in particular sociolinguistics, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology and cognitive linguistics) and b) on the interdisciplinary dialogues between language and gender research, on the one hand, and feminist philosophy, on the other. In the following sections, I will examine the relation between meanings, concepts, language, thought and culture, and argue that words are linked with specific concepts which vary across cultures and which are not always easy to transfer in translation processes. I illustrate this with two case studies - the different uses of the terms 'gender/sex' across European languages and the sexism reproduced through the use of grammatical gender in Greek. I will then apply this notion of translation to an analysis of interdisciplinary movements of concepts, focusing specifically on how the notion of performativity has been subjected to processes of conceptual translation in the context of interdisciplinary dialogues between linguistics and feminist philosophy. To conclude, I will raise issues of power and politics related to translation processes.

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[2] The participants in the course were affiliated in philosophy, political sciences, cultural studies, linguistics and Women's/Gender Studies, to mention only but a few.

[3] Bassnett-Maguire defines translation as "the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted" (1991: 2 in Andermahr et al. 2000: 277).

[4] Braidotti (2002: 302) uses the term trans-disciplinary 'conceptual translators' to describe the process of creating a European interdisciplinary curriculum in Women's/Gender Studies.

Travelling between languages: the power of words

Ideas travel between national and cultural borders because of language, that is, because people possess a flexible symbolic system for the communication of abstract meanings. Discussions relating to translation usually involve discussions on *words*. Why do non-native speakers of English often feel that part of the meanings they intend to communicate get lost in their 'Greek', 'Spanish' or 'Swedish' English? Why do we experience certain kinds of restrictions imposed by our native languages? Why do words matter so much?

Words are defined by Saussure ([1916] 1979) as linguistic signs (symbols), i.e. arbitrary associations of concepts (signified) and acoustic images (signifier). For example, the word *cat* is associated with the concept of a mammal with four legs, a tail, which mews, and the acoustic image [kat]. According to cognitive linguistics, concepts are mental representations which are related to conventional semantic contents (meanings) (Evans & Green 2006: 6-9). Quoting Fauconnier (1994: xxii-xxiii), linguistic meanings are just the 'peak of a conceptual iceberg' which provides speakers' conceptual system with minimum instructions for accessing more complex ideas and concepts (Evans & Green 2006: 8-9). Words function as 'access-points' to a wide repertoire of stored cultural knowledge which is organized into structures that have been theorized as frames (Fillmore 1975 in Evans & Green 2006: 222), domains (Langacker 1987 in Evans & Green 2006: 230) or idealized cognitive [metonymic] models (Lakoff 1987). All of them constitute knowledge structures (conceptual schematizations of experience) that serve as the basis for the interpretation of linguistic meanings and link language with cognition and culture (Kövesces 2006: 64).

Language is deeply embedded in social practices. Words do not simply refer to the objects of the external world. Speakers use words in order to evaluate things, express particular attitudes towards the world or *do things*, to quote Austin (1962). Being contextualized in the social world, words are not neutral; they carry social, ideological meanings which naturalize and

reproduce the social order (Bourdieu 1977, Eckert-McConnell-Ginet 2003)[5]. Because linguistic meanings prompt the construction of concepts, different linguistic meanings tend to produce different thoughts and conceptualizations, i.e. different ways of experiencing reality. According to the linguistic relativity hypothesis[6] (Gumperz & Levinson 1996: 23-24), linguistic categories influence certain aspects of speakers' non-linguistic categorization, memory, perception or thinking.

How does this linguistic perspective on words and meanings contribute to our understanding of translation practices and processes in Women's/Gender Studies? If words carry socially and culturally defined meanings which orient speakers towards different perceptions of the world, then these meanings must be considered and made visible in translation processes. I discuss this problem through two case studies: a) the different conceptualizations related to the translations of gender in Scandinavian languages and the Bulgarian language, and b) the reproduction of sexism through the use of grammatical gender in the Greek language.

Case study one: the English 'gender' travelling in other languages

In this section I focus on how gender has been translated across different European languages. Braidotti (2002) has discussed some of the problems and conceptual challenges that emerge from the dominant Anglo-American model of theorization of the sex-gender distinction, and has argued for the need to find adequate modes of translation in different European languages without reducing cultural and linguistic diversity. She asks: Does the English word 'gender' have equivalents in other European languages? Do we actually possess a common language to talk about the same things in European Women's/Gender Studies? Here I re-address these questions from a linguistic perspective. What kinds of conceptual,

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[5] Here I refer to a wide range of linguistic work which has been influenced by phenomenology, social constructivism and poststructuralism, for instance Austin's work on performatives (1962) or Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, Schegloff 2006).

[6] The idea of linguistic relativity is originally attributed to Humboldt, Boas, Sapir and Whorf. According to the linguistic relativity hypothesis, a) different languages use different semantic representation systems, b) semantic representations determine aspects of conceptual representations, so c) users of different languages use different conceptual representations (Gumperz & Levinson 1996: 2, 7).

cultural and social differences do different uses of the terms 'gender/sex' across different languages highlight? Do these language-specific differences get lost in translation?

According to Widerberg (1998: 134), the English word 'gender' was used primarily in grammatical and literary contexts and was adopted by American feminists in the 1970s to define sex in a social sense. While the word *sex* in English is associated with the concept of the biological and the natural, the word *gender* is associated with the concept of the social and the constructed; that is, speaking from a linguistic perspective, 'gender' activates a conceptual frame which highlights social constructions in opposition to biological differences. In this sense, I argue that the English word *gender* includes a 'mini-theory' about gender. These 'mini-theories' vary across different languages. In the Scandinavian languages, the division between the social and the biological is not encoded by equivalent gender terms. According to Jegerstedt (2000), the words *kjønn* (Norwegian), *køn* (Danish), and *kön* (Swedish) cover the meaning of both 'sex' and 'gender'. These words are associated with frames which include both social constructions and biological differences. Speakers distinguish between sex and gender by using markers such as 'biological' (*biologisk kjønn*) and 'social' (*sosialt kjønn*). Because these terms do not force any distinctions between the biological and the social, they are considered to be more useful by feminists than other possible equivalents of the English term 'gender' e.g. the Latin word *genus*. Widerberg discusses the tensions that arise in relation to these language differences and the difficulties of translating research from Scandinavian countries into English:

> (…) specific understandings of gender within most cultures cannot be properly translated; they get made into something else, into the understandings of gender that are implicit in the English language (…) the dominant language of gender, and its gender of language (…) differences in understandings of gender are made invisible, we all sing the same song, the American tune, so familiar to us all. (1998: 134)

Nikolchina (2006: 125) discusses the various ways in which gender has been translated from English into Bulgarian. These ways 'meta'-reflect issues which have been central in the feminist debates in the Bulgarian context, such as the nature/culture division, essentialism, sexual difference and strategies against inequality and discrimination. *Rod,* the Bulgarian

word for grammatical gender, is considered to be a problematic translation of the English *gender* because it carries meanings of blood kinship, filiation, etc., as well as 'asexual' meanings which imply a type of organic relationship and maternal continuity rather than difference and division (Nikolchina 2006: 125-126). The frame activated by the use of the word *rod* integrates the ideological position that gender issues can be resolved through relatedness and togetherness, rather than conflict, and thus it hides or denies the drama of sexual differences (Nikolchina 2006: 126). On the other hand, the translation of gender by the Bulgarian word for sex *pol* foregrounds issues of sexual differences, because it emphasizes division (sexual difference) and individual (be it man's or woman's) incompletion (Nikolchina 2006: 126-127). According to Nikolchina, *pol* used to refer to the sexual organs or the sexual act; the broad use of the English word 'sex' in the Bulgarian language "expropriated the essentialist aspects of *pol*, its deployments as 'nature' and exposed its etymological closeness to the Bulgarian word for 'half' and 'divide'" (Nikolchina 2006: 126). The different uses of 'gender/sex' in these languages and their translation into English show that translation is not a linear and uncontested process. Words do not have equivalent meanings across different languages; words with the same referents may carry different social and ideological connotations which orient speakers to different conceptualizations of the world. For example, the Swedish *kön* signifies both the biological and the social. However, this meaning is lost when Swedish speakers translate their work into English which marks the division between the biological and the social via the 'sex/gender' distinction. In this case translation operates as a restrictive process for speakers. These case studies also raise another interesting question about what constitutes a 'proper' translation. For example, the translation of 'gender' in Bulgarian echoes ideological tensions in relation to key feminist issues, such as essentialism or sexual difference.

Case study two: grammatical gender as a medium of constructing asymmetric representations of women and men

The terms 'sex/gender' are part of the system of gender deixis (McConnell-Ginet 1988: 80) in language, that is, a set of grammatical and lexical means which index gender (Ochs 1992), construct gender identities and social relations (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003), and sustain

gender ideologies. These social labeling practices shape and give content to gender identities (McConnell-Ginet 2003: 71). In Greek, grammatical gender (masculine, feminine or neuter) constitutes the most overt, direct and exclusive index of gender (Ochs 1992).[7] Grammatical gender is a morphological category which marks biological difference in the case of animate reference (grammatically feminine nouns denote female referents while grammatically masculine nouns denote male referents, i.e. there is a close correspondence between the grammatical gender of the noun and the sex of the noun's referent), which produces asymmetric representations of women and men. For example, in Greek grammatically feminine personal nouns tend to be female-specific (οι φοιτήτριες [oi fititries] the students. FEM is used for female referents only), while grammatically masculine nouns have a wider lexical and referential potential (*οι φοιτητές* [oi fitites] the students/MASC is used for both male and female referents) (Pavlidou 2003). Hellinger (2001: 108) has commented on the generic use of the masculine as a practice integrating an underlying ideology which defines **'**male as the norm' and 'female as the other/deviant from the norm'. A male bias in the way gender is represented by the Greek language has also been confirmed by Pavlidou, Alvanoudi & Karafoti (2004). This study found that the masculine gender is primarily used for person reference in Greek.

These aspects of gender representation are rarely taken into account in discussions around translation processes. How does the system of gender deixis in a language, in particular the system of grammatical gender, affect speakers' gendered stances towards the world and their experience of the world? For instance, Boroditsky, Schmidt & Phillips (2003) have shown that grammatical gender in Spanish and German affects speakers' perception of the inanimate world, because the objects denoted by masculine nouns tend to be perceived by speakers as male, while the objects denoted by feminine nouns tend to be perceived by speakers as female. In my doctoral research on the social and cognitive dimension of grammatical gender (Alvanoudi 2009a, 2009b), I examine how the system of grammatical gender affects speakers' 'thinking for speaking' (Slobin 1996) and speakers' perception of the world through the lens of a) structural and b) discursive relativity (Gumperz & Levinson 1996). Regarding the first aspect, I examine whether the grammatical gender of inanimate nouns

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[7] For a thorough analysis of the different systems of gender deixis across different languages see Bussmann & Hellinger (2001, 2002, 2003). For an analysis of the system of grammatical gender in Greek see Pavlidou (2003).

affects speakers' perception of referents as female or male. Regarding the second aspect, I examine whether the use of grammatical gender categories constitute linguistic practices, i.e. habitual ways of orientation to the world and experiencing of the world (habitus), which produce gendered stances and affect the way speakers think about reality. I conceptualize grammatical gender as an index of gender which indexes gender directly in the case of animate reference and indirectly in the case of inanimate reference. I also conceptualize how grammatical gender integrates stereotypical beliefs about gender and performs gender categories and the dominant gender order. Indexes denote social meanings (Ochs 1992), co-exist with their referents and constitute or perform them (Silverstein 1976 in Duranti 1997: 19). Let me provide an example of what I consider to be a typical instance of grammatical gender operating as a direct (performative) index of gender. Hall and O'Donovan (1996) have shown how in India the hijras, a transgender category whose members are born male but do not identify as male or female, use feminine and masculine gender markers in Hindi in order to express particular social meanings and resist and subvert the oppressive gender dichotomy. For instance, they use the masculine gender in order to construct, that is perform, relations of power while they use the feminine gender in order to construct, that is perform, relations of solidarity. They refer to themselves in the past tense in the masculine and in the present tense in the feminine in order to signal that they identify neither as men nor women and perform a 'third gender'.

Why is the social and cognitive dimension of grammatical gender important in discussions about translation? I believe that examining the ways in which gender is grammaticized across different languages and the ways in which these language patterns affect speakers' ways of experiencing the world contributes to our understanding of the constitutive power of language in terms of constructing and maintaining the dominant gender order as well as in terms of experiencing it. When I speak Greek, my thoughts may reflect language specific conceptualisations of gender and therefore differ from my thoughts when I speak English. In addition, when I speak Greek I may express certain social meanings through the local system of gender deixis which may get lost in translation into another language (English), which uses a different system of gender deixis. In Greek, the generic masculine is used in a vast number of cases in daily interactions. For instance, in the phrase 'Who is it?' (Ποιος [poios] who.MASC είναι [ine] is it?) the pronoun 'who' is masculine and thus it is marked as male,

and in the phrase 'Jon and Maria are happy' (είναι [ine] are χαρούμενοι [xarumeni] happy.MASC+PLU) the adjective 'happy' is masculine and thus it is marked as male. The generic use of the masculine gender necessarily marks male sex and produces asymmetrical representations of gender. The animate world is represented as male and language forces women to 'symbolic exile', speaking in Irigaray's (1985a) terms. Women do not 'see' themselves in language. Women's experience of being muted and under-represented by language cannot be understood when these sentences get translated into English in which the words 'who' and 'happy' are gender-neutral.

Given that certain aspects of speakers' experience with their native languages may get lost in translation, there is a risk of loosing sight of the specific ways in which sexism is constructed and reproduced through language. Still, thinking about translation critically may allow us, who are involved in translation processes, to reflect on the different contextual histories of words across different languages and thus understand better the 'voices' of the subjects that we seek to translate.

Travelling between disciplines: interdisciplinarity as conceptual translation

So far, I have examined translation as a process operating between different languages. Now, I turn to my second point regarding translation as a process operating between different disciplines. If we conceive disciplines as different semantic/conceptual systems analogical to languages, we can theorize interdisciplinary dialogues between disciplines as processes of translating concepts from one conceptual system into another. According to Lykke, interdisciplinarity is a process of transgressing "borders between disciplinary canons and approaches in a theoretical and methodological bricolage that allows for new synergies to emerge" (2004: 97). These new synergies are possible only because people who speak different disciplinary languages manage to understand each other and communicate on the basis of a common code. This communication presupposes a process of conceptual translation, that is, the exchange of meanings and concepts between disciplines and their subsequent integration and transformation in different disciplinary contexts. Interdisciplinarity has often been characterized as a buzzword (Pavlidou 2006c, Liinason

2009). Here I propose the notion of conceptual translation as a working definition for the interdisciplinary movement in and out of disciplines and the hybrid spaces (Latour 2000) that emerge in-between disciplines. I give an example of what I consider to be a typical case of conceptual translation between linguistics and feminist philosophy – the concept of performativity.

The concept of performativity has travelled from linguistics to feminist philosophy and from feminist philosophy back to linguistics; thus it has been subjected to two kinds of conceptual translations, a feminist philosophical one and a feminist linguistic one. Performativity is central to linguistic pragmatics and to Austin's speech act theory (1962), which theorized language as a medium of doing things and performing actions.[8] The concept of performativity has different trajectories in different disciplines (Pavlidou, 2006a: 5), and this can be demonstrated by exploring the relations between Austin's and Butler's theories of performativity.

Butler's theory of the performativity of gender ([1990] 1999, 1997) is deeply influenced by Austin's speech act theory as well as Derrida's (1972 in Butler 1997: 13) critical reformulation of the performative. Butler (1999) theorizes gender as an act, a 'doing' rather than a 'being', "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1999: 43-44). In this sense, gender is *performative*, because it constitutes the very identity it is purported to be. Drawing on the Nietzschean position that there is no 'being' behind the doing and that the doing itself is everything, she argues that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1999: 33). Gender identities are performed through language. Butler (1999) argues that there is no 'I' outside language; intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses and gendered bodies are inseparable from the acts that constitute them (Salih 2002: 65). It is in this framework that the doctor's utterance 'it's a girl' operates as a performative which initiates a process of

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[8] According to Austin (1962), speakers perform three types of acts when they speak: a) locutionary - the act of saying something, b) illocutionary - the act accomplished by the speaker in saying something due to the conventional force of the locutionary act, and c) perlocutionary - the act produced by the locutionary act.

'girling' and interpellates the subject into being within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1997). Based on Derrida's position that linguistic signs can be reiterated in ways that do not conform to their speakers' or writers' original intentions (Salih 2002: 91), Butler moves from performativity to citationality and theorizes words as potential *loci* of resignification, agency, and subversion, as a medium of changing prior contexts and inaugurating new ones.

Butler's theory of performativity has been influential for language and gender research. An originally linguistic concept returns to linguistics with a renewed feminist philosophical content. The name is the same but its referent has slightly changed. Butler's theory of performativity, together with symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, social anthropology, interactive linguistics, ethnography of communication and conversation analysis (Pavlidou 2006a: 30), signifies the 'performance turn' or 'discourse turn' in language and gender research (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 4-5), or what Mills (2004, 2008) calls 'Third Wave feminist linguistics', in contrast to 'Second Wave feminist linguistics'. The performance turn changed the focus of the agenda in language and gender research because it shifted attention from the study of language as a medium of representation to language as a medium of construction of gender (Livia and Hall 1997: 11). In the former case, gender is theorized as a stable homogeneous category which is reflected in language, while in the latter case gender is theorized as a heterogeneous category which is constructed and negotiated through language (Pavlidou 2006b: 23-36). After the performance turn, language and gender research started to focus on the kinds of linguistic resources that speakers deploy to present themselves as certain kinds of women or men (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 5), on the ways in which gender is accomplished (performed) through linguistic practices in every day interaction within particular communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1998, 2003) and on the ways in which gender becomes relevant in interaction through indexicality (McElhinny 2003: 35, Ochs 1992) (i.e. how do linguistic forms index gender identity directly or indirectly?).[9] A good example of how performativity is understood and analyzed in language and gender research is Hall & O' Donovan's work on the ways in which the hijras construct their gender identity through language (see the

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[9] For example, the use of tag questions (e.g. It's a nice day, *isn't it?*) is associated with tentativeness which is associated with feminine behavior according to cultural and ideological expectations about femininity (McElhinny 2003: 35).

previous section). The hijras deploy specific linguistic practices (i.e. they use the masculine or the feminine gender) in order to *perform* masculine or feminine identities.

Performativity re-enters language and gender research through the lens of Butler's work, shifting attention to gender as a 'doing' which is performed through language. At the same time, the concept of performativity gets creatively integrated and expanded through the systematic linguistic analysis of the performative/constitutive role of language. Butler argues that gender is performed through language but language and gender research scholars are the ones to show in detail how this is done, through their careful examination of the ways in which linguistic practices construct gender.

I view the conceptual translation of performativity as a set of 'transgressive steps' which blur disciplinary boundaries and open up hybrid spaces where interdisciplinarity can be materialized. These hybrid spaces combine elements of knowledge from both feminist philosophy and linguistics, re-signifying the content of performativity and creating the possibility for the concept to develop in new ways or 'perform itself' in unforeseen ways – speaking in Butler's terms – which are not legitimate within the static and restrictive mono-disciplinary contexts.

Processes of conceptual translation are processes of interdisciplinary dialogue about concepts which travel between disciplines and get transformed through their travelling. Pavlidou (2006a) argues that interdisciplinarity requires the development of shared knowledge and of common background assumptions and presuppositions, which involve an understanding of the practices that lie behind a discipline or concept and an acknowledgement of the rooting of the meaning of a word in a specific context.

> When a term/concept «travels» from one field to another (or from one culture to another) the old context is left behind, and another one usually becomes operative; and in this new context a different bundle of significations may accompany the/some nuclear meaning that was supposed to be carried over. An interdisciplinary approach would probably have to assess both contexts in order to gain full understanding of what is going on. (Pavlidou 2006a: 5)

In my opinion, conceptual translation is about contextualizing concepts and understanding the practices that lie behind them.

Whose language? Whose meanings?

Translation as travelling between languages and disciplines inevitably raises questions of power and representation. Whose linguistic, cultural and disciplinary differences are represented through translation processes? How are we, feminist European Women's/Gender Studies scholars, to be held accountable for our translation practices? To quote Spivak:

> My first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. If you are interested in talking about the other or and/in making a claim to be the other, it is crucial to learn other languages. There are countless languages in which women all over the world have grown up being female or feminist and yet the languages we keep on learning by rote are the powerful European ones, sometimes the powerful Asian ones, least often the chief African ones. (1992: 190)

Language matters and language differences do matter. I have shown in the previous sections that language is not a neutral medium which refers to the external world; it is rather linked with the speakers' worldview, constituting a tool of action which shapes speakers' experience. If we re-read Spivak's call for learning other languages from such a linguistic perspective, we can better understand why the act of learning other languages becomes an act of solidarity. Learning 'her language' means desiring or attempting to learn 'her world' and hear 'her voice'. In this sense, translation practices involve our collective practices of learning how to speak with each other and hear each other when we speak English with our different linguistic/cultural/disciplinary 'accents'.

Practices of translation between languages and disciplines foreground issues of diversity. It is our different linguistic, cultural and disciplinary voices that seek to be represented through translation. There are two homogenizing forces in present day academia which work against

difference and which we, Women's/Gender Studies scholars, need to overcome: the English language hegemony, and disciplinarity. The first one can be negotiated but it can never be fully resolved. Becoming multilingual is an act of solidarity in Spivak's terms. Still, no matter how many languages we learn there will always be some part of the linguistic, social and cultural context of the text that will get lost in translation. Our awareness of this restriction can limit the amount of context that risks getting lost and a reflexive engagement with these restrictions can lead us to find important insights about how words are used across different languages and how the various social and cultural contexts shape their meanings.

The second problem is disciplinarity. Conceptual translation is not a 'friendly' practice for present day academia, because it addresses issues of interdisciplinarity and it thus challenges the dominant cognitive disciplinary *habitus* within academia. According to Liinason, "the possibilities for developing interdisciplinary (…) collaborations are largely the result of the researchers' willingness to challenge their own intellectual habits" (2009: 59). This willingness is not easily found in the disciplinary contexts of current European academia, especially in times of intense pressures to increase productivity and publish in (usually disciplinary) highly reputed international journals. Even in contexts such as Women's/Gender Studies, where interdisciplinarity is said to be an aim, conceptual translation needs to overcome the disciplinary hierarchies that already exist within interdisciplinary research. To quote Hark (2007: 30), "what is left out when inter- or transdisciplinarity becomes the norm? How can we guarantee that all disciplinary perspectives are heard in contexts that organise knowledge along hierarchically ordered disciplinary lines? What kind of disciplinary hierarchies already exist in the field of Women's Studies?" If there are disciplinary hierarchies in the interdisciplinary work we are doing in Women's/Gender Studies, does that mean that certain disciplinary voices will be heard through processes of conceptual translation while others will not? How can we avoid exclusionary practices?

A preliminary response to this question would be that this paper already constitutes a challenge to disciplinary hierarchies. Linguistics is not a key research area within Women's/Gender Studies. Yet, here I am, a feminist linguist working on language and gender, already being involved in processes of conceptual translation, writing about translation practices in Women's/Gender Studies from a linguistic perspective, asking my

non-linguist readers to hear my 'disciplinary perspective' and get engaged in a (interdisciplinary?) dialogue with me.

Translators as nomadic subjects

In this paper, I proposed that translation constitutes a double process of travelling between languages and disciplines. I showed that translation foregrounds our different linguistic, cultural and disciplinary locations either as restrictions (lost in translation) or as potential (found in translation) for emerging links between different linguistic communities working on the same concepts (e.g. Women's/Gender Studies) or between different disciplinary and post-disciplinary communities (e.g. language and gender research and Women's/Gender Studies as a post-disciplinary discipline, according to Lykke 2004). In the latter case, translation foregrounds difference as an affirmative positive category which generates potential for creative and subversive forms of becoming: translators as nomadic subjects (Braidotti 1994) in transit between different (disciplinary) languages, crossing linguistic and disciplinary borders, making connections and coalitions with different linguistic and disciplinary locations in an inclusive manner, forming a transgressive identity or what Braidotti has described as "a collective becoming polyglot" (1994: 36). According to Braidotti,

> Feminists need to become fluid in a variety of styles and disciplinary angles and in many different dialects, jargons, languages, relinquishing the image of sisterhood in the sense of global similarity of all women *qua* second sex in favor of the recognition of the complexity of the semiotic and material conditions in which women operate. (1994: 36)

Translation as travelling between languages and disciplines addresses precisely this multiplicity of voices as well as the complex ways in which semiotic resources (languages) affect the materialities of women's lives. As such, a critical engagement with language difference and translation deals by necessity with issues of difference, power and representation.

To conclude, I believe that the conceptualization of translation as a process operating between languages and disciplines (conceptual translation) can contribute to our better understanding of the complexities, the difficulties as well as the potential that arise from speaking different languages and practicing different disciplines.

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Angeliki Alvanoudi is a PhD student at the Department of Linguistics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her areas of interest are the relationship between language and gender and issues of interdisciplinarity in Women's/Gender Studies. She has been a co-teacher in the Intensive Programme 'Practising Interdisciplinarity in European Gender Studies' at Radboud University Nijmegen (22 June–4 July, 2008). Her publications include (2008) "The relationship between language and gender in feminist deconstruction theories: the case of grammatical gender" (in Greek) in Studies in Modern Greek 28, Institute of Modern Greek Studies, (2009) "Open letter: golden boys, marxist ghosts and nomadic feminism" in European Journal of Women's Studies 16(2), (2009) "Teaching gender in the neoliberal university" in D. Gronold, B. Hipfl & L. Lund Pedersen (eds.), Teaching with the third wave – New feminists' explorations of teaching and institutional contexts, Stockholm University Press. Address: Linguistics Department, Faculty of Philology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR-541 24, Greece. aalvanou@lit.auth.gr