A Sociological Approach to the Manifestation of Translator Gender in the Persian Translations of the Arabic Novel Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik

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ABSTRACT

The existence of a women's language has long attracted the attention of linguists and sociologists leading to several studies in this area. Within this framework, the present research—qualitative deductive content analysis—aims to investigate the manifestation of translator gender in the Persian translations of Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik by Ahlam Mosteghanemi. Two available Persian translations of the novel, one by a male translator and one by a female translator, were selected. For data coding, a codebook was developed on the basis of the linguistic features attributed to women's language by Lakoff. Two experts independently coded the text, assigning each instance to one of five categories: (a) lexis belonging to the women's domain, (b) use of emphasis and intensifiers, (c) inclusion of details, (d) polite speech, and (e) use of feminine words and expressions. The results showed that not all features attributed to women's language appear in the female translator's discourse; among them, polite speech and feminine expressions were more salient in the male translator's discourse. The use of affective modes, another feature attributed to women's language, was likewise found in the male translator's discourse. Therefore, the features attributed to women's language are neither universal nor absolute. The findings were examined from a sociological perspective, considering the concept of social roles and focusing on gender as a phenomenon shaped by social and cultural factors. Additionally, the findings were interpreted through the lens of the social constructionist approach, viewing gender as a social construct. The findings can contribute to a deeper understanding of gender as a cultural and dynamic concept and can raise awareness of gender bias.

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1. Introduction

Gender is one of the contested concepts in sociolinguistics. In relation to the connection between gender and language, linguists and sociologists have taken diverse approaches. Some accept a distinction between the language of women and that of men. Otto Jespersen (1922) is one such scholar; emphasizing lexical and syntactic differences in women's language, he proposed the term *genderlect*. This view is rooted in the idea that male speech is the standard and is regarded as the criterion for evaluation. Robin Lakoff (1975), likewise, regarded the distinctiveness of women's language as stemming from women's lack of self-confidence. Such an attitude toward the distinction between male and female speech is known as the *deficit approach* (Coates, 2013). Along the same line, Rezvani (2020) asserts that the concept *woman* is defined in relation to *man*, and the limitations imposed on women arise from a gendered perspective rooted in a male-dominated viewpoint. Such an approach, while emphasizing a binary concept of gender inherent in language—namely, the existence of male and female language— claims that gender is recognized through set, distinctive features and arises from the differing communicative styles of women and men.

However, another group of linguists— especially sociologists—have questioned the existence of such linguistic distinctions and have regarded them as products constructed by society. In this vein, Holmes (2013) contends that even if such

distinctions exist in language itself, gender is not exclusive and is better understood as fluctuating tendencies. Coates (2013), referring to the dynamic approach or social constructionism, states that gender identity and gender roles are formed through social interactions.

Now, several decades after women's participation in society and their assumption of multiple social roles, with their confidence growing, the following question arises: Are the features attributed to women's language still confined to women and do they remain reliable criteria for distinguishing male and female language? This question has also been debated in translation studies. Just as research has been conducted into the translator's style and ideology and their manifestation in translation choices, the manifestation of translator gender in linguistic choices has proven noteworthy. Most existing studies have examined English and French translated novels. AttarSharghi and Norouz-Oliaei (2020), while pointing to the shortcomings of such research regarding the generalizability of features attributed to women's language, highlight the need for studies on novels translated into other languages. They also state that these studies usually end with merely presenting field statistics on women's language and that there is a noticeable lack of sociological analysis in this area.

In order to fill this research gap, the present study selects Persian translations of an Arabic novel to examine the

manifestation of translator gender in linguistic choices. To that end, Ahlam Mosteghanemi's novel *Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik* was analyzed. The Persian translations of the novel by Maryam Akbari (2018) and Mohammad Hemmadi (2023) have been published at Niloufar and Hirmand publishing houses, respectively. The general area of investigation in this study is the examination of Lakoff's features of women's language in the discourse of the female and the male translators. Specifically, the study answers the following questions:

1. Are lexical items attributed to the women's language exclusively used in women's speech, or are they also evident in men's language?

2. How do the female and the male translators handle the translation of intensifiers?

3. Is the female translator's commitment to translating details—as an important component in Lakoff's features—more compared with the male translator's commitment?

4. Are only women consistently bound to the polite mode of language, adopting an indirect manner of speech?

5. In whose discourse is the affective dimension of speech more prominent?

2. Research Background

2.1 Gender-Focused Studies in Authored Works

In the domain of the author's gender and its impact on linguistic choices, Gholami's (2022) investigation can be mentioned. Drawing on Elaine Showalter's theory of gynocriticism, that study critiqued and analyzed four Arabic novels written by women authors and traced the evolution of women authors' works from the stage of imitation, through a protest-feminist stage, and ultimately to the stage of individual identity. The findings indicated that, among these four authors, only Mosteghanemi—through her novel *Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik*—has succeeded in reaching the stage of individual identity.

Ravanshad and Afzali (2022), likewise, examined the manifestation of women's writing in *Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik* on the basis of Sara Mills's theory. With reference to Lakoff's approach, they analyzed Mosteghanemi's language at the lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels and concluded that, although the author writes about women's conditions and lives, she makes comparatively little use of the lexis associated with women's language.

Farid and Rostampour Maleki (2022) investigated the language of male and female characters in the novel *Ṭuyūr Aylūl* in light of Lakoff's theory. The results showed that Emily Nasrallah, by employing features of women's language in the speech of female characters, managed to preserve a feminine writing style. They linked the inconsistency of certain variables—such as the use of swearwords—to the illiteracy of some of the female characters. In the same vein, Rahimi et al. (2023) examined linguistic differences between female and male characters with respect to Lakoff's lexical index in the novels of Shiva Arastooyi and Simin Daneshvar. Their

results revealed that, in some cases, the women's lexis identified by Lakoff is evident in the authors' discourse, whereas in other cases it is absent.

In another study, KhalilNejadAsl et al. (2024) explored Hoda Barekat's style of writing—using Showalter's theory—in her three novels *Ahl al-Hawā*, *Malakūt Hādhihi al-Arḍ*, and *Barīd al-Layl*. The findings show that the features attributed to women's writing surface less in the third novel.

2.2 Gender-Focused Studies in Translated Works

In the broader field of translator gender and features of the translated work, several strands of research can be identified. In some investigations—such as that of Hadipour and Bahrami Nazarabadi (2017)—female and male translation trainees were asked to translate an excerpt in order to examine the effect of gender on translation. The findings showed that women better perceived the distinctive features of women's language and displayed greater fidelity in their translations than men.

Another strand of studies has analyzed existing translations by male and female translators. In these investigations, the translations are examined from a specified perspective. Ramazani's dissertation (2012), for example, considers the role of the translator's gender identity and ideology in the quality and accuracy of the translation of the novel *Fawḍā al-Ḥawās*. While pointing to the feminist characteristics of the novel, the study shows

the extent to which Franz Meyer succeeded in rendering those aspects. Along the same line, Zand Rahimi and Akhondi (2021) analyzed the manifestation of translator gender in the translations of sermons and letters concerning women in *Nahj al-Balāgha*. The results indicated that, unlike the female translator, the male translator rendered Imam Alī's statements about women—which were stringent given their historical context—with a more positive outlook and a milder tone.

A further strand of research has aimed to assess the translator's success in conveying the features of women's language. For instance, Mohammadi (2020) attempted to evaluate Abdol-Hossein Farzad's translation of *A Lament for Jasmines* and *I Declare My Love Against You*. The findings showed that Farzad failed to render correctly certain lexical items relating to the domestic sphere and specific female lived experiences. The underlying point in this strand of studies is that stereotypes and features attributed to women's language give rise to such biases and to conclusions favoring the existence of a distinct women's language.

In a comprehensive study, however, AttarSharghi and NorouzOliaei (2020) addressed the shortcomings of the existing research in Iran on women's writing, both in authorship and in translation. Among the points they noted is that most of these studies have been conducted on English novels and that sociological analyses are largely lacking. With this research gap in view, the majority of Arabic-language

studies on gender and translation examine the features of women's language in texts translated by female translators, whereas obtaining more precise results requires a comparative analysis of translations of one or more novels by multiple female and male translators. Because few Arabic women-authored novels are available with two translations—one by a woman and one by a man—the appropriate groundwork for such research has thus far been lacking.

3. Theoretical Framework

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, four distinct approaches have been advanced concerning language and gender. The first is the deficit approach, arguably inaugurated by Robin Lakoff's article "Language and Woman's Place." Lakoff enumerates features of women's language at the phonological, lexical, and structural levels. Under this approach, differences between women's and men's language result from the power imbalance between them and from women's lack of self-confidence. Extending these reflections, Dale Spender (1980), while endorsing the existence of a women's language, attributes its roots to male dominance. Spender's views gave rise to the second approach—the dominance approach. What, in Spender's view, most urgently requires explanation is the origin and operation of gendered language. She maintains that the rules by which we live are not natural but male-made; among the most pervasive yet covert of these rules are male-centered semantic norms. So long as such rules remain in force, we are obliged to perceive the world through the standards of men, and anyone who fails to conform is regarded as deviant. In her view, men, occupying positions of power, dominance, and control, have been able to see the world from their own perspective and to create a language that serves their own ends.

Deborah Tannen (1994), likewise, acknowledges verbal differences between women and men, yet she ascribes them neither to women's subordination nor to male dominance. Rather, she holds that girls and boys grow up in two different worlds of words. This perspective—known as the difference approach—attributes gendered speech differences to the divergent socialization of women and men.

Alongside these three approaches, a fourth may be noted, one that has received comparatively little attention. Coates (2013), in *Women, Men and Language*, refers to it as social constructionism or the dynamic approach. In her view, the manifestation of gender in language is not fixed or static. Under this approach, gender is considered a social construct—that is, a product created by society. Its distinction from the "difference approach" lies in the latter's greater emphasis on the dichotomy between the two genders, whereas social constructionism regards gender as fluid and as shaped in social interaction. Consequently, language and linguistic identity possess a dynamic, ever-changing nature. Although the first three approaches also acknowledge the role of society in shaping gendered features, the major distinction of the dynamic approach is its

treatment of gender as exclusively a social construct. Thus a single individual, with a stable identity and in a given situation, may display features attributed to women's language, while in another situation features of men's speech may surface in that person's discourse.

In the present study, with the aim of examining the manifestation of translator gender in translation, Lakoff's features of women's language have been employed to categorize the findings, and the results are interpreted essentially from the perspective of the social constructionist approach (Coates, 2013).

4. Research Method

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a *qualitative content analysis* design. Given that the aim was to examine the manifestation of the features traditionally attributed to women's language in the discourse of a female and a male translator—and in view of the fact that those features (according to Lakoff's model) were already specified, so that the categories were predetermined—the type of content analysis adopted is *deductive content analysis*, and the data were collected by means of a *top-down* procedure (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

4.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

von Flotow (2010) classifies research conducted at the intersection of gender and translation studies into three groups: (1) studies that, in macro-level translation analysis, regard gender as a socio-political concept; (2) studies that, on a micro-scale,

analyze case samples of translated texts and focus on linguistic subtleties that may emerge from—or be masked by—gender; and (3) investigations that center on the impact of gender on the fundamental questions posed about translation and on how these questions relate to the practice of translating—that is, this approach examines the role of gender in shaping the theoretical frameworks relevant to research in translation studies and its connection with translation practice.

The present research belongs to the *second* category. It takes the features of women's language essentially from Lakoff (1975). According to Lakoff, lexical items expressing hesitation, tag questions, indirect requests, intensifiers, repetition, and more polite language use are features of women's language; further features include the use of adjectives, more precise color terms, more precise grammar, and rising intonation. The classification of the findings in this article is based on Lakoff's features. The findings are interpreted from the perspective of the *fourth* approach—namely, the dynamic or *social constructionist* approach (Coates, 2013).

4.3 Corpus of the Study

The corpus comprised the novel *Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik* and its Persian translations by Maryam Akbari (2018) and Mohammad Hemmadi (2022). In this novel, Ahlam Mosteghanemi portrays three categories of women in society: Heleh, an independence-seeking woman; Najla, Haleh's cousin, a cautious and moderate

woman; and Haleh's mother and aunt, women with a traditional mindset.

4.4 Procedure

To conduct the present research, a *codebook* was developed, considering the women's language features identified by Lakoff. A codebook is a table used for classifying and coding data—especially qualitative data (Guest et al., 2012)—and its use is recommended when theoretical frameworks and predetermined categories exist and when the presence or absence of specific features in a text is to be examined (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

In compiling the codebook, four columns were provided. The first column was allocated to the feature in question, and the second gave a description of that feature. The third column then supplied an example of that category (feature) to make it concrete and intelligible, while the final column recorded the instances found in the text. The rows of the codebook, following Lakoff, were devoted to the features of women's language at the lexical and idiomatic level. These features comprised: (a) lexis related to women's occupations and pastimes; (b) use of intensifiers; (c) inclusion of detail; (d) polite speech; and (e) affective and expressive modes as well as feminine terms and expressions.

From an ethical perspective, given that studies involving gender may entail deliberate or inadvertent researcher bias in data analysis, the use of a codebook renders the analysis more objective. Moreover, because the coders were of both genders and inter-coder reliability was required, the

likelihood of bias in interpreting the results was reduced as far as possible.

To assess the effectiveness of the codebook and to eliminate possible deficiencies, a portion of the text was first given to two experts (the researchers of this study) and they were asked to code that portion independently, to place the instances in the appropriate cells, and to express their views on the effectiveness of the codebook and its categories. During this process another column was added to the codebook, providing further explanations (for example, exceptions). The experts then, again independently, coded all the instances in the entire text. After coding, they discussed the points of disagreement (three cases) and reached a consensus. To evaluate inter-coder reliability, Cohen's kappa coefficient was employed; the result exceeded 0.8 (specifically, 0.92), indicating high reliability and substantial agreement between the coders (Berg & Lune, 2017).

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Use of Specialized Lexis Belonging to Women's Domains

Among Lakoff's (1975) lexical features of women's language is the deployment of vocabulary current in domains in which women have traditionally played a greater role. According to Ravanshad and Afzali (2022, p. 115), although in this novel Mosteghanemi writes about the lives of women, she makes comparatively little use of lexis specific to those domains. Examination of the two translations shows that the female and male translators handle such items differently: the female translator

appears to employ more technical expressions. For example, the phrase "تطلي أظافرها" (Mosteghanemi, 2012, p. 160) is rendered by the female translator as *mānikūr kardan* "to do a manicure" (Mosteghanemi, 2018, p. 173), whereas the male translator translates it as *lāk zadan* "to apply nail varnish" (Mosteghanemi, 2022, p. 162). The female translator renders روب البيت (Mosteghanemi, 2012, p. 211) as *rob-de-chambr* (Mosteghanemi, 2018, p. 223), while the male translator renders it *lebās-e boland-e khānegi* (Mosteghanemi, 2022, p. 214). Again, the expression "كانت ضرتها" in "ليست الأشجار بل الأصفار هي التي كانت ضرتها، "وهذا ما يفسد فرحتها" (Mosteghanemi, 2012, p. 204) indicates that the female translator, inspired by the novel's feminine ambiance and sharing the heroine's sensitivity as a woman, adopts the idiomatic Persian phrase *havvu-ye chizi yā kasī būdan* meaning "to be something's rival wife," whereas the male translator renders ضرة simply as *āzār dādan*. One may argue that the divergent renderings stem from the translators' differing perceptions of the Arabic ضرة, which carries the senses "to harm" and "co-wife, rival" (Azarnoush, "ضرة").

The following samples illustrate the rendering of details by the two translators:

« تأمّلته وهو يختار القدر المناسب لكل الطبخة. سكاكين مختلفة حسب كلّ استعمال، يأخذ الوقت اللازم لتطرية البصل. يعرف الدقائق الكافية لشيّ شرائح السمك. التوقيت الذي يقوى أو يخفّف فيه النار تحت الطبخة ومتى يضع الغطاء على الرّز وهو يغلي» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ٢١٥).

مترجم زن: «طلال را که داشت قابلمهٔ مناسب برای هر غذا را انتخاب می‌کرد زیرنظرگرفت. کاردهای مختلف هر

کدام برای یک کار. برای معطر کردن پیاز زمان لازمی را صرف می‌کند. می‌داند برای کباب‌کردن برش‌های ماهی، چند دقیقه کافی است؛ در چه زمانی باید شعله را کم یا زیاد کند. کی دم‌کنی را روی برنج که دارد غل می‌زند بگذارد و شعله را زیرش کمِ کم کند (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ٢٢٨).

مترجم مرد: «وقتی طلال داشت موارد لازم را پیمانه می‌کرد، هاله به او خیره شده بود. از چاقوهایی متنوع استفاده می‌کرد که هرکدام کاربردی ویژه داشتند، زمان معینی را به خرد کردن پیازها اختصاص داد، از تعداد دقایقی که در خلال آن‌ها تکه‌های ماهی را باید سرخ می‌کرد، اطلاع دات و خوب می‌دانست چه وقت شعلهٔ زیر غذا را کم یا زیاد کند. چه موقع در قابلمهٔ برنج را بگذارد و شعلهٔ اجاق گاز را کم کند (مستغانمی، ١٤٠١: ٢١٨).

In this passage, Mosteghanemi seeks to show how Talal exasperates Haleh in their love affair. By employing women-specific vocabulary and depicting a feminine setting, she presents Talal as a skillful cook who considers هالة a raw girl and, in his egotism, wishes to "cook" her to maturity. It is evident that the female translator has handled the metaphors in this paragraph with greater precision. The word "القدر" means "pot" or "small cauldron" (Azarnoush, "قدر"); the female translator's choice is closer to this sense. However, both translators' renderings of "سكاكين" are almost the same. The verb طَرّى denotes "to moisten," "to perfume," or "to freshen" (Azarnoush, "طري"); the female translator's rendering of the phrase "تطرية البصل" is more precise. The noun "شوي" signifies "to grill" or "to bake in an oven" (Azarnoush, "شوي"); the female translator opts for *kabāb kardan-e borsh-hāye māhi* (meaning "to grill slices of fish") whereas

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the male translator chooses sorkh kardan-e māhi (meaning "to fry the fish"). Thus the female translator distinguishes between "frying" and "grilling" and renders the term more accurately. A *dam-kani* is a cloth used in Iranian cooking to secure more even steaming; here too the female translator, by explicitly mentioning the *dam-kani*, more effectively conveys the author's metaphorical depiction of Talal's emotional oppression of the inexperienced young Haleh.

Overall, when dealing with lexical items and expressions concerning family, cookery, and sewing, the female translator employs domain-specific terms. These results accord with the findings of Farid and Rostampour Maleki (2022), who observed that vocabulary relating to the home, cookery, and women's accouterments recurs in the speech of female characters, implying that women possess a broader lexical repertoire in these domains.

5.2 Use of Emphasis and Repetition

Another feature ascribed to women's speech is the use of intensification, emphasis and repetition (Lakoff, 1975). Although emphasis apparently strengthens an utterance, it conveys a different nuance: women's low self-confidence leads them to fear that mere words will not convince their interlocutors; consequently, by speaking more emphatically they seek to ensure comprehension (Lakoff, 1999, p. 86). Mosteghanemi's prose abounds in emphatic forms and intensifiers and in the repetition of personal pronouns in particular.

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أ.   «فلا شیء فلا شیء سواها یریده فی هذه الدنیا» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۹۶).

مترجم زن: «آخر در این دنیا غیر از او هیچ‌چیز، هیچ‌چیز نمی‌خواهد» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۱۱۰).

مترجم مرد: «آخر غیر او چیز دیگری از این دنیا نمی‌خواست» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۹۹).

حتی در مواردی این تأکیدها در کلام مترجم زن شدت می‌گیرد و بیش‌تر می‌شود، مانند:

ب.   «ما کان من مجالٍ لمناقشته فی شیءٍ» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۲۱۵).

مترجم زن: «با او در مورد هیچ‌چیز جای هیچ بحثی نبود» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۲۲۷).

مترجم مرد: «دیگر مجالی برای بحث و جدل با طلال نمانده بود» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۲۱۸).

ت.   «ولا أحد سیصدّق یوماً ما سترویه. لا أحد» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۲۲۳).

مترجم زن: «هیچ‌کس آنچه را روایت می‌کند به هیچ‌وجه باور نخواهد کرد؛ هیچ‌کس» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۲۳۵).

مترجم مرد: «و هیچ‌کس آنچه را که روزی تعریف خواهد کرد، باور نمی‌کند. هیچ‌کس» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۲۲۲).

As the samples illustrate, the female translator shows greater fidelity in rendering Mosteghanemi's emphatic forms and repetitions, which attests to her commitment to translation. Moreover, because the female translator has added certain emphatic forms in her translation, this observation invites discussion from the standpoint of translator presence—that is, the emergence of features of women's language in the female translator's discourse (Hermans, 1996). The present findings corroborate those of Hadipour (2017) and Farid and Rostampour Maleki (2022), which, likewise, reported the use of emphatic forms and a higher degree of faithfulness by female translators in

rendering such intensifiers: women display greater fidelity than male translators in translating this type of emphasis.

5.3 Inclusion of Details

Details readily draw women's attention, and this microscopic, detail-oriented gaze results in shorter sentences: within a confined space women perceive numerous particulars. In the two examples below, the portions that were underlined in the source have been omitted by the male translator.

أ. «حتى الكراســـي بلون عـاجی غیر مثقلـهٔ بالزخرفات. إنه فن المسـاحة. لا شـیء بثقل فضـاء الرؤیهٔ والســـجاد یبدو لوحهٔ حریریهٔ بألوان ناعمهٔ مُدّت علی الأرض» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۲۰۷).

مترجم زن: «حتی صندلی‌ها ساده و بی‌پیرایه بودند، به رنگ سفید عاجی. این هنر چیدمان است. هیچ‌چیز فضای دید را ســنگین نمی‌کند. فرش گویی تابلویی ابریشــمین اســـت با رنگ‌هایی نرم و لطیف روی زمین گســترده شده‌است» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۲۱۹).

مترجم مرد: «حتی صندلی‌ها نیز به رنگ سفید عاجی و فارغ از سنگینی تزئینات بود؛ هنر خلق فضا» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۲۱۰).

ب. «واقتلع من تربته، ترک لیجفّ فأصـبحت سـحته شاحبهٔ وانتهی خشباً جامداً. عندها تمَّ تعریضه للنار لیقسو قلبه» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۶۴)

مترجم زن: «ریشه‌اش را از خاک درآوردند. گذا شتند تا خشک شود. سیمایش نحیف و زرد شد و دست آخر چوب بی‌جانی شــد. در این هنگام آن را به دســت آتش سپردند تا دل‌سخت شود» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۷۴).

مترجم مرد: «از ریشــه‌اش جدا و از خاکش دور شــد. رهایش کردند تا خشک شود» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۶۶).

The female translator is also more successful in rendering Mosteghanemi's short sentences: like the author, she translates the brief utterances as short, successive clauses. Consider the following example:

«هل تدعوه لیدخل؟ هل تســـتبقیه؟ عند الباب؟ هل تطرده؟ هل تسـأله بأیّ حقّ؟ وبأیّ صـوت تقول شـیئاً من کل هذا، وقد ضاع صوتها منذ تـسمّر أمامها» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۱۶۲).

مترجم زن: «دعوتش کند بیاید تو؟ دم در نگهش دارد؟ بیرونش کند؟ از او بپرسـد به چه حقی؟ و اصلاً با کدام صـــدا این‌ها را بگوید؟ آخر از وقتی چلوی او خشــکش زده، صدایش گرفته است» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۱۷۵).

مترجم مرد: «مانده بود دعوتش کند بیاید تو یا دم در نگهش دارد؟ بگوید برود یا بپرســد به چه حقی این‌جا آمده اســت؟ ولی لحظه‌ای که طلال در مقابل چشــمانش ظاهر شد، صدایش گرفت، با کدام صدا می‌توانست این چیزها را بگوید؟» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۱۶۴)

According to Ravanshad (2022, pp. 118–199), description and the articulation of details, brief sentences, simplicity, and interior monologues are hallmarks of Mosteghanemi's style: she depicts persons, places, and characters with precision and expresses herself in short, plain sentences. Examination of the translations shows that none of Mosteghanemi's descriptions or fine nuances escape the female translator's notice. These findings accord with Sharififar and Zand (2013), who reported female translators' greater fidelity to the text, attention to narrative details, and more precise lexical choices. Just as those earlier results indicated that certain words were excised because of social taboos, so in the present study the female translator renders all spatial and visual details with care and commitment and is more accurate than the male translator even in transferring simple, sequential clauses in the source text. Accordingly, in answer to the study's third question, the female translator's commitment to conveying detail is greater.

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5.4 Taboos and Indirectness of Expression

Lakoff (1975) maintains that women use fewer impolite or taboo expressions and prefer a more polite indirect way of expression. In this study, the two translators treat taboos differently, the female translator rendered them while the male translator omitted them. The underlined passages below are taboo items missing from the male translator's version.

«لو باح لها بأنه يرثی لرجال جاؤوا العالم و سیغادرونه، من دون أن یکونوا قد خبروا قبلهٔ کتلک» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ١٧٠).

مترجم زن: «دوست داشت پیش او اعتراف کند که دلش میسوزد به حال مردهایی که به این دنیا میآیند و میروند بیآنکه چنان بوسهای را تجربه کنند» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ١٨٤).

مترجم مرد: «دلش میخواست از مرثیهای بگوید که برای آن دسته از مردانی که پا به جهان میگذاشتند و بدون آنکه بتوانند طعم چنین حسی را تحربه کنند میرفتند، سرودهبود» (مستغانمی، ١٤٠١: ١٧٢).

«أشتهی أن أشمّک.. أحبّ رائحهٔ أنوثتک..» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ٢١٨).

مترجم زن: «هوس کردم بویت کنم، بوی زنانگیات را دوست دارم» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ٢٣٠).

مترجم مرد: بدون ترجمه.

The results here do not confirm those in the earlier studies. Sharififar and Zand (2013) regarded the deletion or mitigation of certain gender-related terms by a female translator as evidence of politeness. They concluded that although female translators chose more exact equivalents, they removed taboos. That claim is questionable—one of the shortcomings Attar-Sharghi and NorouzOliaei (2020) identified as researchers' bias—because,

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besides the translator's stance, the strictures of Iranian publishing may also be decisive. Observing linguistic features in men's discourse that are traditionally attributed to women challenges the essentialist view that intrinsic gender differences determine language use. Such observations suggest that linguistic behavior is not dictated by gender alone but by a constellation of factors—including social context, individual identity, and personality traits (Talbot, 2019). The *fluidity* and diversity evident in cross-gender language practices underscore the need for perspectives that transcend simplistic binary classifications of language and gender.

Lakoff likewise lists indirectness of expression as a component of women's language. In this regard, Macherey contends that the relation between a literary text and the author's ideology lies not in what is said but in what remains unsaid (cited in Eagleton, 1986, pp. 40-41). Yet, contrary to much of women's writing, Mosteghanemi's language is explicit and, through her characters, openly criticizes Algeria's misogynistic attitudes. The two samples below, spoken by Ṭalāl, depict women as foolish and gullible, all alike.

أ.   «لا أکثر سذاجهٔ من النساء غبیهٔ قبل أن تُجلسها علی کرسی کهربائی للاعتراف، تتطوّع بإعطائک من المعلومات أکثر ممّا تتوقّع» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ١٥٨).

مترجم زن: «از زنها سادهتر خودشان. زن احمق، پیش از آنکه او را برای گرفتن اعتراف روی یک صندلی الکتریکی بنشانی خودش داوطلبانه، بیشتر از آنچه که فکرش را میکنی اطلاعات میدهد» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ١٧١).

مترجم مرد: «ســـاده‌تر از زن‌ها پیدا نمی‌شـــود. قبل از اینکه یک زن ساده را برای اعتراف روی صندلی الکتریکی بنشـــانی، خودش داوطلبانه بیش از آنچه انتظارش را داری به تو اطلاعات می‌دهد» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۱۶۱).

ب. «اســتنتجت أنها إمرأة ساذجة، منخرطة فی حزب المتخلّفین الحالمین، الأوفیاء لأوهامهم» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۱۶۵).

مترجم زن: «به این نتیجه رسید که او زنی است ساده، وابســته به حزب عقب‌ماندگان که رؤیاپردازند و وفادار به تخیلاتشان» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۱۷۸).

مترجم مرد: «هاله به این نتیجه رســید که زن ســاده‌ای اســت که به حزب رؤیاپردازان خلاف‌کاری که به توهمات خودشان پایبندند، پیوسته» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۱۶۷).

جملات زیر هم نمونه‌ای دیگر هستند که از زبان عمّهٔ هاله گفته می‌شـــوند. او زنی ســـنتی اســـت که در مقابل فرهنگ مردسالار جامعه سر خم کرده است و هاله را دائماً به‌خاطر ازدواج نکردنش سرزنش می‌کند.

The following sentences, uttered by Haleh's aunt—a traditional woman who bows to the patriarchy—offer another example, as she continually reproaches Haleh for remaining unmarried.

أ. «ما الذی ینقصـــه؟ أی عیب وجدت فیه کی تفسـخی الخطوبة؟ أتعتقدین ســـتتســـابقون إلی الزواج من معلمة أبوها مغنّ؟ الطبیبات والمـحامیات ما وجدن رجلاً وأنت فرّطت فی شـــاب من عائلة کبیرة» (مستغانمی، ۲۰۱۲: ۲۲).

مترجم زن: «چه کم دارد؟ چه عیبی در او دیدی که نامزدی را به‌هم‌زدی؟ فکر می‌کنی خیل خواستگارها برای ازدواج با خانم معلمی که پدرش مطرب است، پاشنهٔ خانه را از جا می‌کنند؟ خانم دکترها و وکیل‌ها شـــوهر پیدا نکردند، آنوقت تو یک جوان خانواده‌دار را سبک کردی» (مستغانمی، ۱۳۹۷: ۲۹).

مترجم مرد: «مگه این جوون چی چی کم داشت؟ چه عیب و نقصی داشت که خواسگاری رو به هم زدی و جواب رد دادی؟ فکر می‌کنی جوونا وا سه ازدواج با خانم معلمی که پدرش خواننده‌اس، صـــف کشـــیدن؟ با هم رقابت می‌کنن؟ خانمای پزشـــک و وکیلاشـــم تو پیداکردن مرد

رؤیاییشـــون موندن، اونوقت تو جوونی رو که از یه خونوادهٔ بزرگ بود دک کردی!» (مستغانمی، ۱۴۰۱: ۲۴).

Given Mosteghanemi's forthright, ironic tone—at odds with the stereotypical women's discourse—the female translator likewise renders these statements plainly and directly, whereas the male translator adopts a more guarded approach. In fact, these observations contradict Lakoff's claim about women's linguistic conservatism. As Holmes (2013) argues, the appearance of "feminine" and "masculine" traits in the language is more influenced by sociological variables and by the roles women and men fulfill in society. She stresses the distinction between *sex* and *gender*, the former grounded in biological differences, the latter shaped by socio-cultural indices. The philosophical point of such a distinction is that gender is socially and culturally constructed; accordingly, classifying individuals strictly as women or men on linguistic grounds is inadequate. Indeed, features of so-called women's language—or, more precisely, features *attributed* to it—sometimes surface in men's speech.

5.5 Feminine Expressions, Idioms, and Affective Modes

Lakoff (1975) maintains that, in their speech, women employ particular words, idioms, and even distinctive forms of cursing and swearing—elements that carry the label *women's speech*. In the present novel, however, the male translator makes more extensive use of these affective resources when rendering the characters' dialogue and at times even adds such

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phrases to the translation. For instance, the underlined expressions in the cited examples are affective phrases traditionally attributed to women's language that appear in the male translator's version.

أ.   «مِنّی مرتاحةُ لَسـفرتک لَمصـر ولأجوائها الفنّیة» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ١٠۴).

مترجم زن: «خیالم بابت سـفرت به مصـر و فضـاهای هنریاش آسوده نیست» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ١١۵).

مترجم مرد: «خیالم بابت سفر مصر و وضای هنریش راحت نیست. دلم شور میزنه» (مستغانمی، ١۴٠١: ١٠۶).

ب.   «علیک اللعنةُ.. کنت سـتقتلنی!» (مسـتغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ٢١٢).

مترجم زن: «لعـنت به تو داشـتـی مرا میکشـتـی» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ٢١۴).

مترجم مرد: «لعنتی کم مونـده بود سـکتـه کنم!» (مستغانمی، ١۴٠١: ٢١۵).

پ.   «یا حبیبی یا ابنی.. یا ضـیعان شـبابک ما إجت إلا فیک» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ٢٣٢).

مترجم زن: «عزیزم، پسـرم، جوان ناکامم، این بلا فقط سر تو نازل شد» (مستغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ٢٢۴).

مترجم مرد: «پـسرم، پارهٔ تنم. چرا باید پرپر شدنت رو تو جوونی ببینم» (مستغانمی، ١۴٠١: ٢٢٩).

ت.   «روح یا ولیدی الله یفتح لک کلّ باب وینصـرک علی عدیانک» (مستغانمی، ٢٠١٢: ٢٣۵).

مترجم زن: «برو پسـرم خدا همهٔ درها را به رویت باز کند و تو را به دشـمنانت پیروز کند» (مسـتغانمی، ١٣٩٧: ٢۴٧).

مترجم مرد: «پناه بر خدا... برو پـسرم، انشاالله خداوند مرادت رو بده و درهای روزیش به روت باز بشـــه و دشمنات رو ذلیل کنه» (مستغانمی، ١۴٠١: ٢٣٢).

Traditionally, a variety of language used among women has been called *Evā-khāharī* (Bateni, 1991, p. 33). In the present study, however, feminine affective phrases are clearly evident in the male translator's discourse. It seems that, guided by prevailing gender stereotypes and

disregarding Mosteghanemi's wording, the male translator resorts to expressions commonly ascribed to women's language.

According to the social constructionist approach, gender identity is a social construct formed in interaction; it is neither static nor fixed but constantly evolving. Consequently, one cannot posit absolutely invariant features for the language of either gender (Coates, 2013). As the findings revealed, part of the present results challenges traditional assumptions about women's language. Features once taken for granted as intrinsic to woman's language have long been treated as self-evident in linguistic studies and in society, yet such absolute certainties can no longer be upheld.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how translator gender is manifested in Maryam Akbari's and Mohammad Hemmadi's Persian renderings of *Al-Aswad Yalīqu Bik*. The purpose was to determine which translation represents Lakoff's features of women's language more saliently.

The analysis showed that, although the author writes about women, she does not make extensive use of women-domain vocabulary. However, in cases where such lexis does occur, the female translator renders it more precisely using words specific to women's domains. Mosteghanemi's prose is replete with intensifiers and repetition, and it is the female translator who reproduces such devices faithfully—at times even adding further intensifiers, so that this feature

traditionally linked to women's language is more salient in her translation. Attention to details and the use of short, simple sentences are likewise characteristics of women's language. As for the translated versions, the female translator translates every narrative detail with precision and commitment, whereas the male translator omits some of them. She is also more accurate in conveying the author's short, self-reflective sentences and successive questions.

Yet the results also revealed points that contradict Lakoff's features. The two translators' treatment of politeness and taboo-breaking runs counter to Lakoff and to earlier studies. Throughout the novel, the female characters voice the Algerian society's stereotypical attitudes toward women. The female translator exploits these moments, deploying words that may *seem* gendered in order to satirize and denounce those attitudes, as though speaking out in criticism herself; the male translator, by contrast, opts for more guarded, conservative phrasing. Mosteghanemi frequently employs taboos and at times has her characters call women foolish and naïve to portray Algerian misogyny. The findings show that the female translator, unlike the male translator, reproduces these statements directly and bluntly. Conversely, feminine affective idioms appear more frequently in the male translator's text. Whereas some studies report a higher frequency of affective language in women's speech, the present results diverge from that consensus.

Accordingly—aligning with several studies in research on women's language—the so-called *women's language*, or more precisely the *features attributed* to it, is neither universal nor all-embracing and does not necessarily surface in every woman's writing, whether in original works or in translation.

In general, the instances of divergence from Lakoff's features can be justified from two angles. First, as Holmes (2013) argues, the appearance of so-called feminine and masculine features in language is shaped primarily by sociological factors and by the roles that women and men assume within society. She maintains that the rationale for such a distinction rests on the premise that gender is socially and culturally conditioned; accordingly, assigning individuals to the two absolute categories of "woman" and "man" is ineffective. In her view, feminine and masculine features— indeed, gender itself—should be conceived along a continuum in which female and male behaviors are not expressed as discrete points but rather as fluctuating tendencies. Because gender is contingent on social and cultural components, the boundary between women's and men's language has become increasingly blurred with the changing roles of women and men in contemporary societies. Women are now more visible in public life and the workplace than ever before, while a growing number of men engage in domestic tasks. All of these factors have challenged earlier restrictive social norms that once defined feminine and masculine traits.

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Thus, within this perspective, gender-related linguistic differences in individuals mirror broader gendered linguistic differences at the societal level, and those differences, in turn, reflect disparities in social status and power relations.

Moreover, the observations made in this study can be interpreted through the lens of the dynamic, or social constructionist, approach to gender and language research (Coates, 2013). According to this approach, gender identity is a social construct forged in interaction; it is neither static nor fixed but continually changing and developing. Consequently, it is impossible to posit absolutely invariant features for the language of either sex. As reported in the findings, part of the present observations challenges traditional assumptions about women's language. Features long presumed to be intrinsic to women's language have been called into question. The traditional view appears ill-suited to explain the complexities and varieties found in the linguistic practices of individuals of different genders. This fact highlights the importance of adopting a framework grounded in social constructionism when accounting for the findings and deepening our understanding of the relationship between language and gender.

By employing a sociological framework to interpret its findings, the present study sought—while endeavoring to fill the research gap identified by AttarSharghi and NorouzOliaei (2020)—to underscore the importance of critically and deconstructively examining the social norms and expectations that surround language use, and to take a step toward emphasizing the necessity of recognizing individuals' agency, irrespective of gender, in shaping their linguistic actions.

It must be emphasized that not all of the differences between the two translations are necessarily attributable to the translators' gender; other variables may likewise influence the emergence of divergent features. Such variables include the translator's overall approach, publishing constraints, and the intended purpose of the translation. In addition, when more than one translation of a work exists, later translations—or retranslations—may be affected by earlier versions: certain salient characteristics of a retranslation can be inherited from the first translation (Gharaei & Hosseini Nasab, 2022). In practice, investigating the influence of all such variables on translation output within a single study—and identifying the principal factor responsible for particular features in a translation—is far from straightforward, and the present inquiry is no exception. Accordingly, analyzing the interaction of all these factors and their contribution to the final translation stands as a limitation of the current study.

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