

DOLORÈS SANCHEZ

“The Truth about Sexual Difference: Scientific Discourse and Cultural Transfer” (2007)

Key words:

gender, translation, sexual differentiation, science communication

### 1. Author information

Dolorès Sanchez has a doctor degree from the University of Grenade in Spain and she specialises in studies dedicated to women (Estudios por las Mujeres). She is also a teacher of translation and discourse analysis. One of her major interests is the interaction between gender and translation.

Apart from the chosen text, published in *The Translator* (Vol. 13) in 2007, the author has also published another article on the similar subject. “Translating Science: Contexts and Contests – On the Translation of a Misogynist Scientific Treatise in Early Twentieth-Century Spain“ appeared in the same journal in 2011 (Vol. 17).

### 2. Rationale and objectives

The author claims that the public communication of science about sexual determination, and the way it is translated into different languages shape the perception of the issue in various cultures. Although it is often argued that language is a transparent code, Sanchez wants to prove that it is always affected by history and culture in which it arises. It is especially important taken into account that in case of the communication of science, the relation between the interlocutors is asymmetrical (experts/non-experts).

### 3. Terminology

In order to understand the article it is necessary to grasp the concept of gender. Dolorès Sanchez follows a definition of Joan Scott who states that gender is “a constitutive element of social relationships (...), a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (1986).

### 4. Contents

The author starts by presenting the concept of gender, discussing the framework and the context of the debate about sexual differentiation. Then, she analyses the chosen articles and their translations that appeared in *La Recherche* and *Mundo Científico* – scientific journals published, respectively, in France and in Spain. She focuses on the scientific “discourse of *truth* about the human body”. Firstly, because it is an important source of information for gender studies and, secondly, because the language of science is assumed to be neutral, thus more prone to be ideologically loaded. The researcher claims that language and all discursive practices within it are shaped in particular social, cultural, and historical conditions. Actually, she proves that not only language, but also the ideological positioning of the articles, reflect their status and influence their interpretation. It is, therefore, necessary to study the context in which all texts are embedded and, especially, to be sensitive to gender-related problems in translation.

### 5. Links

Gardey, Delphine & Ilana Löwy. 2000. *L'invention du naturel. Les sciences et la fabrication du féminin et du masculin*. Paris: Editions des archives contemporaines. 214-220.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. *Sexing the Body. Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.

Martín, María Rosario. 2005. Gender(ing) Theory: Rethinking the Targets of Translation Studies in Parallel with Recent Developments in Feminism [in:] José Santaemilia (ed.) *Gender, Sex and Translation: The Manipulation of Identities*. Manchester: St. Jerome. 27-38.

Mathieu, Nicole-Claude. 1989. Identité sexuelle/sexuée/de sexe? Trois modes de conceptualisation du rapport entre sexe et genre [in:] Anne-Marie Daune-Richard, Marie-Claude Hurtig & Marie-France Pichevin (eds) *Catégorisation de sexe et constructions scientifiques*. Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence. 109-41.

## 6. Methodology

In her research Dolorès Sanchez uses the model of comparison and contrast of empirical data. She analyses several articles translated from French into Spanish, taking into account type of publications, choice of the articles and their positioning in the magazines. She analyses connotations, intertextual references, and, in particular, focuses on the words served to label human and animal sexes, such as: woman, man, female, male, in French and Spanish.

## 7. Critical commentary

The topic of the article, namely, the relations between gender and translation, is an interesting and developing field of TS. The author clearly presents the issue and the aim of the study, drawing the readers' attention to the problems of translation of the masculinity and the femininity in scientific

discourse. Unfortunately, the analysis does not concern the English lexis – from my point of view it would be useful and enriching.

#### 8. Quotations to remember the text by

“(…) gender is a concept that refers not to difference but to the processes of differentiation that institute difference between the sexes.” (p.172)

“(…) the problematic of social identities has been displaced from the old question of sexual identities toward gender identities, also strongly challenging the gap between gender and sex.” (p. 178)

“Notions of the feminine and the masculine only have meaning, however, within a specific cultural system through which they emerge as univocal and mutually exclusive categories.” (p.190)

“The body (...) is transformed into a natural category of observation in the real world, with its own taxonomic entity that bears the stamp of truth.” (p. 191)

#### 9. References

Sanchez, Dolorès. 2007. “The Truth about Sexual Difference: Scientific Discourse and Cultural Transfer“ in *The Translator*. Vol.13. Manchester: St. Jerome, 171-194.