UDC 821.111(71).09-31 Atwood M.
821.111(71)=353.1
https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2024.16.21

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GEORGIAN PERCEPTIONS OF MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*: CHALLENGES OF THE LITERARY TRANSLATION

Abstract
The paper deals with Ani Kopaliani's Georgian translation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale.* Dystopia as a genre has its strict conventions and complexity in context, requiring great cultural knowledge from the translator. Moreover, Atwood's dystopia, which presents a woman's view of the theocratic regime, contains numerous allusions and metaphors from the Bible, as well as ironic implications and puns. The translator largely succeeds in overcoming various translation challenges such as maintaining contextual accuracy and proposing original alternatives for the title, as well as for the unusual names of the female characters. On the other hand, due to the specific objective of the paper, the focus is placed on several specific semantic translation errors that may leave the reader unaware of some contexts of Atwood's dystopia or potentially lead to misunderstanding some of its nuances.

Key words: Canadian literature, dystopia, relevant translation, title, context, intertexts

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1. Introduction

Margaret Atwood is a well-known contemporary Canadian author who first gained popularity in 1986 after publishing the dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale, in which,* following the tradition of classics like Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, she presents a strongly feminist vision of the futuristic 'perfect' society with advanced technologies, where people live under strict religious, bureaucratic and corporate control. Atwood considers that *The Handmaid's Tale* belongs to 'speculative fiction" and dedicates the book to her ancestor Mary Webster who became a victim of accusations of witchcraft in Puritan New England. In the era of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, with the growing power of conservative parties and well-organized religious groups, Atwood believed that they presented a real threat to the women's rights gained in the 1960s and '70s (Atwood: 2018). On the other hand, the choice of the theme of the novel was the result of the events that took place in Iran in 1978–79, when after the Islamic revolution, women completely lost their rights and were forced to wear hijabs under the theocratic regime. It is worth mentioning that Atwood's dystopia gained great popularity once again in President Trump's epoch: "The book rocketed back onto the bestseller list after the 2016 election in the United States and the creation of a Hulu television series" (Atwood: 2017).

Scholars and readers have shown a great interest in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* since its publication and have studied it through postmodern, feminist, cultural, postcolonial and other approaches. The novel has been translated into more than 40 languages (Atwood: 2017) and despite its controversial themes, it has even been translated into Persian and Arabic. The Georgian translation of *The Handmaid's Tale,* by Ani Kopaliani, was published in 2015. Kopaliani is a well-known Georgian translator who has received several notable awards for her work. She has brought Georgian readers Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter,* Kate Chopin's *Awakening,* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun,* Kathryn Erskine's *Mockingbird*, and Edith Warton's *The Age of Innocence*. Kopaliani successfully lectures on the theory and practice of translation at several Georgian universities in Tbilisi.

The purpose of the present study is a literary-oriented analysis of the Georgian translation of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in order to examine

its relevance to the source text in terms of context, intertextual associations, and wordplay. On the one hand, the paper aims to study specific translation practices so as to highlight the unique challenges and techniques involved in translating a literary text from English into Georgian. On the other hand, it also focuses on several specific semantic translation errors that may leave readers unaware of some contexts of Atwood's dystopia or potentially lead to misunderstanding some of its nuances.

2. Literary Translation and Literary Critics

Translating dystopian literature, which has strict genre conventions and complexity in context, requires awareness of different historical events and extensive cultural knowledge. Moreover, dystopian works are characterized by constructed languages such as Newspeak in *1984* and Nadsat in *Clockwork Orange*. In Atwood's novel, the biblical language used by the theocratic regime of the Republic of Gilead plays a crucial role in the indoctrination of its citizens. The government successfully uses religious rhetoric as a tool to control and manipulate people. Accordingly, the translation of *The Handmaid's* Tale requires a deep understanding of what the text suggests, its cultural context and nuances of intertexts. The discipline that aids in these insights is literary theory or literary criticism (Jean Boase-Beier: 2012). Thus, the starting point of this analysis is that literary theory has an important role in the translation of literary text and as Barslund argues "Prose translators need to be widely read in the literature of at least two languages so that they have a sense of where a novel belongs in the literature of its original language as well as that of the language it is being translated into" (Barslund: 2012). Moreover, current research in translation studies focuses on literary translations within their sociocultural contexts. Scholars like André Lefevere, Gideon Toury, and Sherry Simon have explored how concepts such as accuracy, equivalence, and fidelity are shaped by cultural, political, and economic factors, demonstrating that these criteria are not fixed but context-dependent (Wittman 2013: 441). Accordingly, many contemporary scholars coming to translation from a linguistic background realize the importance of studying full literary texts or contextualized fragments rather than isolated sentences, and the necessity "to integrate "linguistic" knowledge and "cultural" knowledge" (Delabastita 2010: 202). The integration of methodologies from disciplines

such as literary theory and cultural studies allows translation studies to approach their subject matter from multiple angles (Barslund: 2012; Hassan: 2011; House: 2015; Wittman: 2013).

3. Literary Translation and Linguistic Approaches

As mentioned above, scholars see translation studies today as interdisciplinary by nature and draw their methodology from various disciplines. The gap between "literary" and "cultural" approaches on the one hand, and "linguistic" approaches on the other, has narrowed considerably (Delabastita 2010: 202). There is no doubt that grammatical and syntactic accuracy in literary translation is also crucial as grammatical incorrectness can cause misinterpretation and even misunderstanding of the target language text. Thus, the present research is also based on the approaches of contrastive linguistics. As Adriana Serban highlights, literary translation can be a valuable resource for linguistic research by providing insights into language structures, semantic shifts, and cultural nuances. It allows researchers to analyze how different languages express similar concepts, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions. By studying literary translations, researchers can uncover patterns in language use that might be less visible in non-literary texts (Serban 2013: 214).

The qualitative contrastive analysis of the biblical allusions, ironic implications and wordplay in the research is based on key translation methods proposed by Jean-Paul *Vinay* and Jean *Darbelnet* (1958) in the middle of the last century as well as modern methods theorized by Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir (2002). Molina and Albir expanded on the seven translation techniques proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, creating a more cohesive framework to unify terminology effectively and reduce ambiguity. They developed 18 translation techniques: adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution (linguistic, paralinguistic), transposition, and variation (Molina & Albir 2002: 509–511).

4. Discussion

As Clifford E. Landers argues "The ability to influence the choice of a work's title places a heavy responsibility on the literary translator" (Landers 2001: 140). According to him, approaches to the translation of titles can vary, but in any case, the title must provide thematic relevance and "should be changed only when it cannot be left unchanged" (Landers 2001: 140). The Georgian title of Atwood's dystopia is "მხევლის წიგნი". The word "მხევალი"(handmaid) used by the translator is a perfect choice for the title. Atwood starts her book with three epigraphs, the first of which is a passage from Genesis 30: 1–3 which states the importance of having children to women. Rachel, who claims that she would die if she didn't have children, offers her maidservant Bilhah to her husband, saying, "she shall bear upon my knees," thereby becoming a surrogate mother to the two sons of her husband and maidservant. Atwood uses the authorized version (King James) of the Bible where Bilhah is mentioned as a maid:

> And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.[2] And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, *Am* I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?[3] And she said, Behold my **maid Bilhah**, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.[1]

In the modern English version of the translation of the Bible, Bilhah is introduced as a servant:

> [1]When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"
>
> **[2]** Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"
>
> **[3]** Then she said, "Here is **Bilhah, my servant.** Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her.[2]

[1] https://biblehub.com/genesis/30-1.htm

[2] https://biblehub.com/genesis/30-1.htm

So Offred, the protagonist of Atwood's dystopia, performs the role of Bilhah in the text, she is a maid or servant who helps her childless master's family to have children. The translator follows Atwood's idea literally and employs the established equivalent translating technique, defined as using " a term or expression recognized (by dictionaries or language in use) as an equivalent in the TL" (Molina and Albir 2002: 510). She borrows the word "მხევლი" from a passage of the Georgian Translation of Genesis 30;1–3.

> და ვითარცა იხილა რაქელ, რამეთუ არა უშვა ძე იაკობს, და ეშურებოდა რაქელ ლიას, დასა თჳსსა, და ჰრქუა იაკობს: მეც მე შვილი; უკუეთუ არა, მოვკუდე მე.
>
> განურისხნა იაკობ რაქელს და ჰრქუა: ნუუკუე, ნაცუალი ღმრთისა ვარი მე, რომელმან დაგაკლო შენ ნაყოფი მუცლისა შენისა.
>
> ხოლო რაქელ ჰრქუა იაკობს: აჰა ეგერა, <u>ბალა, მჴევალი</u> ჩემი შევედ უკუე მისა და მიშუეს მე მუჴლთა ჩემთა ზედა და შვილიერ ვიქმნე მეცა მისგან.[3]

The issue is that the word "მხევალი" has an additional significant connotation in Georgian, and can also be interpreted as a 'concubine, mistress, odalisque', a woman who lives with a man, has a lower status than his wife and whose children are usually considered illegitimate. Offred subconsciously compares herself to a woman in such a role "We are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category" (Atwood 1985: 176). Thus, the Georgian translation of the word "handmaid" into "მხევალი" seems the best solution for the title of Atwood's dystopia to indicate Offred's role and position in her Commander's home.

However, I find it rather hard to agree with the word "წიგნი" (book) used in the title of the Georgian translation of the dystopia. The novel ends with the conference held in 2195 dedicated to Gileadean studies. At the conference meeting, Professor Pieixoto informs his audience about the discovery of the thirty cassette tapes where Offred's story was recorded alongside music for camouflage purposes. The transcription of the texts was completed quickly, and thanks to Professor Pieixoto, organized rather

[3] https://www.orthodoxy.ge/tserili/biblia_sruli/dzveli/dabadeba/dabadeba-30.htm

coherently (Atwood 1985: 380). Women in Gilead were forbidden to write or read, and Offred could not talk to anyone as she could not trust anyone, but she needed to express her thoughts and preserve her memories. Restoring her past through associative leaps helped her survive and keep the memories of her loved ones alive.

The word "tale" in the title *The Handmaid's Tale* also refers to Chaucer's renowned *The Canterbury Tales* (Atwood 1985: 381). The intertextuality of the title is a key aspect of the book as the message of the paratext will surely resonate with a skilled reader who is able to identify the multiple meanings within the text. In Chaucer's collection of twenty-four stories, 'tale' refers to a story about an individual human experience. The characters whose occupation or social status is indicated in the titles of their personal stories tell the readers about their lives (*The Knight's Tale, The Miller's Tale, The Cook's Tale,* and so on). Merriam-Webster's definition of the word "tale" is "a usually imaginative narrative of an event" which can also imply "an intentionally untrue report", or "a series of events or facts told or presented".[4] Thus, the word "tale" suggests a story that could happen and then be retold. Moreover, in his speech Professor Pieixoto refers to Professor Wade and explains one more reason why they decided to title Offred's story "The Handmaid's Tale":

> The superscription "The Handmaid's Tale" was appended to it by Professor Wade, partly in homage to the great Geoffrey Chaucer; but those of you who know Professor Wade informally, as I do, will understand when I say that I am sure all puns were intentional, particularly that having to do with the archaic vulgar signification **of the word tail;** that being, to some extent, the bone, as it were, of contention, in that phase of Gileadean society of which our saga treats. (Atwood 1985: 381)

They are speaking about a **homophonic** pun "tale – tail", the word "tail" in vulgar slang has an offensive meaning such as "a girl's ass" or "a female sex object". It is clear that in most cases it is impossible to find an exact translation or even equivalent for a source-language pun. However, the translator totally misinterprets this passage, translating the title of the dystopia "The Handmaid's Tale" as "მხევლის წიგნი" (*The Handmaid's Book*) by drawing an analogy with *The Book of Job*, part of the Hebrew Bible:

[4] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tale

> „მხევლის წიგნად“ იგი პროფესორმა უედმა მონათლა. ნაწილობრივ იმიტომ, რომ მიენიშნებინა მისი მსგავსებაზე ბიბლიიურ იობის წიგნთან (*The Book of Job*); თუმცა, ისინი, ვინც ჩემსავით ხშირად ხვდებიან პროფესორ უედს არაფორმალურ გარემოში, დამერწმუნებიან, რომ იგი ყველაფერში ქვენა აზრს დებს და ახლაც, ეჭვი არ მეპარება, სიტყვა „წიგნი“ (Book) იმ სკაბრეზული კონტექსტის გათვალისწინებით შეარჩია, რომ ყველა მამაკაცი „კითხულობს ქალს იმ კონკრეტულ მომენტში, რომელიც ჩვენს წინამდებარე საგაში გალაადის სოციუმის მთავარ კონფლიქტს ქმნის. (ეტვუდი 2015: 229)

Thus, in the Georgian translation, a key intertextual link (Geoffrey Chaucer and his book) is ignored, and accordingly, the idea of the Atwoodian pun is also lost. In the target text, the pun offered by the translator implies that “a woman is like a book which a man can easily read”. Translating the word “tale” into “წიგნი” (a book), the translator applies the discursive creation technique, “to establish a temporary equivalence that is totally unpredictable out of context” (Molina and Albir 2002: 510). However, it seems somewhat incorrect to employ the word ‘book’ in the Georgian title of the novel as it conveys a mistaken idea. The free translation of the word “tale” in the title and inappropriate changes made to the source text result in a vulgar semantic error.

The opening line of the book starts with the first-person plural pronoun “We”. The theme of the plural self is crucial in dystopian novels, as exemplified by the title of the most influential dystopia written by Yevgeny *Zamyatin in 1920–1921*. *It* is simply *We*. “We” signifies a mob mentality or herd instinct when people become easily influenced by propaganda. They are driven by different feelings or emotions (fear, stability, security, and greed) and prefer to join the crowd, adopting its behaviors and actions while neglecting their own personal feelings and needs. As a result, the majority is controlled and forced to do things they would not consider under normal circumstances. First-person plural pronouns are often repeated in the source text, moreover, they are highlighted in italics: “By *we* she means *me*” (Atwood 1985: 175); “There is an *us* then, there’s a *we*” (Atwood 1985: 218); “Our skin gets very dry. For some reason I said *our* instead of *my*” (Atwood 1985: 203). In some instances, the subjective pronoun “we” is omitted in the Georgian translation of Atwood’s dystopia,

as the subject can be indicated by various person markers on the verb and impersonal sentences are a linguistic norm in Georgian. Employing the linguistic compression technique in such cases seems (Molina & Albir 2002: 510) problematic as the pronoun "we" needs a more powerful representation in the target text.

The reader does not know the real name of the protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale,* an important part of her identity. She is merely Offred, a possession of Fred, who is forced to adopt the name of the Commander. Similarly, the other handmaids' names are Ofglen, Ofwarren, and Ofcharles. The translator finds a good solution for translating their names into the target language. She uses the suffix 'ის' /is/ of the genitive case which is used mainly to show possession in Georgian, and adds the ending 'ა'/ა/ which gives the names an archaic sound. So Offred's name in the Georgian text is "ფრედისა" which sounds like Fredissa, and accordingly, Ofglen becomes Glenissa and Ofwarren is Warenissa. By using the methods of linguistic amplification "to add linguistic elements" (Molina & Albir 2002: 510), the translator preserves the implied meanings of the Handmaids' names for the target text. Additionally, they sound natural in the target text as they retain foreign pronunciation similar to other international names such as Clarissa, Mantissa, Melissa, Alissa, etc.

As mentioned above Atwood's dystopia presents a woman's view of the totalitarian and theocratic regime in the Republic of Gilead, a female narrator's "herstory" completely changes the themes and motifs of the traditionally masculine dystopian genre:

> With *The Handmaid's Tale* her [Atwood's] choice of a female narrator turns the traditionally masculine dystopian genre upside down, so instead of Orwell's analysis of the public policies and institutions of state oppression, Atwood gives us a dissident account by a Handmaid who has been relegated to the margins of political power. This narrative strategy reverses the structural relations between public and private worlds of the dystopia, allowing Atwood to reclaim a feminine space of personal emotions and individual identity, which is highlighted by her first-person narrative. (Howells 2006: 164)

There is no doubt that Atwood's primary task is to address the violations of women's rights under a fundamentalist regime, but her dystopia concerns pressing political, social and environmental issues as well. Speaking about

her book, she emphasizes that her purpose, first of all, was to explore the roots of any kind of dictatorship: "Stories about the future always have a *what if* premise, and *The Handmaid's Tale* has several. For instance: if you wanted to seize power in the United States, abolish liberal democracy, and set up a dictatorship, how would you go about it? What would be your cover story? (Atwood 2018). The roots of Gilead's fundamentalist regime can be traced to the theocracy of 17th-century Puritan New England "which would need only the opportunity of a period of social chaos to reassert itself". That is why the authorities of the futuristic Gilead in her dystopia use religious language to promote their ideology and manipulate women and ordinary people in general. The names, specific phrases and citations from the Bible help them shape people's minds and thoughts in the way they need. Thus, one of the main challenges faced by the translator was finding the equivalent translation of Atwood's neologism and ironic implications based on religious terminology. Christian cultural similarities simplified her task and as in the case of the word "handmaid" and the first epigraph of the book, she did not need to conform these words and passages to the target language. She applied the established equivalent technique (Molina & Albir 2002: 510) and used the canonical Georgian text of the Bible, the Mtskheturi manuscript in old Georgian. This technique is used in translating certain neologisms when existing lexical items are employed in a way that differs from their denotational meaning (Newmark 1988: 122). The figurative meaning of such neologisms is the same in both languages and quite understandable for the Georgian reader. They are the names of the stores "All Flesh", "Lilies of the Field", "Loaves and Fishes", "Milk and Honey" („ყოველი ხორციელი", „ველის შროშანი", „თევზი და ფუნთუშეული", „რძე და თაფლი"); the names of the religious sects "Angels of the Apocalypse", "Angels of Light", "Baptist guerrillas" ("აპოკალიფსის ანგელოზები", "სინათლის ანგელოზები", "ბაპტისტი პარტიზანები"). In addition, the translator considers it necessary to reference the gospels of Matthew and Luke in the footnotes as the sources for her translation of these phrases.

In some cases, the Georgian translator uses the borrowing translation technique and some of Atwood's neologisms remain unchanged in their phonetic structure, for instance, "Pornomarts" („პორნომარტები"), and "Libertheos" („ლიბერთეოსები"). The international pronunciation and meaning of these wordplays make them easily understandable.

In translating neologisms such as "Exercises", "Ceremony", and "Testifying" („ვარჯიში", „ცერემონია", „აღიარება") when new meanings are given to the words expressing various activities or actions, the translator employs a calque translating technique. According to Molina and Albir, the calque technique is the "literal translation of a foreign word or phrase; it can be lexical or structural" (Molina & Albir 2002: 510). The same technique is used in translating derived words like "Unbaby", "Unwoman", "Birthmobile", "Compuchek", "Compucount", "Compudoc", "Compunumber", and "Computalk" („არჩვილი", „არქალები", „მშობიარომობილი", „კომპიუმეტრი", „კომპიუმთვლელი", „კომპიუდოკი", „კომპიურიცხვი", „კომპიუმთქმელი"), as well as in certain collocations with new connotations "The Manhattan Cleanup", "Lady in waiting", and "Feels on Wheels" („წმენდა მანჰეტენზე", „მომლოდინე ქალებისათვის", „გრძნობები ბორბლებზე"). In all these examples, the calque technique used by the translator is absolutely justified, the Georgian translation of Atwood's neologisms conveys their figurative meaning to the reader.

The meaning of several Atwoodian collocations is effectively preserved in the target text by applying the discursive creation technique (Molina & Albir 2002: 510). For instance, in Gilead society with its traditional gender role ideology, homosexuality is termed "gender treachery". This collocation is translated into Georgian as "სოდომის ცოდვა" ('the sin of Sodom'), with the use of the biblical phrase giving the target reader an accurate understanding of the offense of the men who were executed by hanging. This phrase also perfectly fits the archaic religious language of Gilead. „Growing Souls Gospel Hour" is translated as „ნორჩ სულთათვის ქადაგების საათი" (Hour of Preaching to Young Souls). The neologism "particicution" which refers to the beating and tearing apart of male criminals by Handmaids is translated as "ლინჩიკუცია". The stem of the word "ლინჩიკუცია" is a "lynch law" and the end is "კუცია" the pronunciation of which in Georgian resembles the English phrase "cutting into pieces". Such an equivalent of the word "particicution" in the text of the target language makes the reader easily imagine or feel the barbarism of the public executions carried out by women. In the collocation "Women's Salvagings" the word "salvagings" is a euphemism for executions. The collocation is translated into Georgian as "ქალთა სალხინებელი" (Women's Purgatory) and the word "purgatory" serves the same special purpose perfectly. The Atwoodian neologism "Prayvaganzas" refers to the meetings

when the people of Gilead gather to hear a sermon, celebrate arranged marriages, or the conversion of young fertile nuns into Handmaids. During the ceremonies, people try their hardest to show devotion to the great causes of the Republic of Gilead. "Prayvaganzas" is a combination of the words "pray" and "extravaganza". The translation of this word into the target language is "ვედრებიადა", where the stem "ვედრება" means "to implore, to plea". The suffix "იადა" refers to mass sports competitions associated with what is called a motivating word. They may be proper names, geographical terms, or the names of institutions and sports events (Olympiada, Spartakiada, Universiada, Alpiniada). By combining the stems "ვედრება" and the suffix "იადა" the translator created an effective Georgian neologism that accurately conveys the meaning of Atwood's neologism "Prayvaganzas". In the Georgian translation, it is a place where people compete with each other in praying and demonstrating their loyalty to the regime.

One of the crucial challenges for translators of *The Handmaid's Tale* is to find accurate equivalences for the numerous wordplays or puns in the source text. Atwood creates her wordplays and puns by playing with the grammar, spelling, or pronunciation of the words, while also ensuring that they are context and culture-oriented. It is hard not to agree with Chiaro when she argues that "Anyone who has ever tried to tell a joke in a language other than his or her own will know how easy it is for it to get lost in translation simply because what often seems so amusing in one language may just not be funny in another" (Chiaro 2017: 414). According to Chiaro, the strategies that the translator has to apply while translating wordplays and puns into the target language are the same as those in general translation: to leave them unchanged, to replace them with new ones, to find equivalent idiomatic expressions or simply to omit them (Chiaro 2010).

The translator successfully overcomes the difficulties of translating some wordplays by using the discursive creation technique, replacing the source phrases with temporary equivalent expressions. The following passage offers an effective solution to this challenge:

> It's strange, now, to think about having **a job. Job.** It's a funny word. It's a job for a man. Do a **jobbie,** they'd say to children, when they were being toilet-trained. Or of dogs: he did a job on the carpet…

The Book of Job

> All those women having jobs: hard to imagine, now, but thousands of them had **jobs,** millions. (Atwood 1985: 224)

The wordplay is "a job – Job – jobbie – did a job on the carpet – The Book of Job". In the target language, the translator uses the word "საქმე" which means "a job" or "occupation" and then instead of "The Book of Job" employs the word „შესაქმე", which is also connected to the Bible, to the Book of Genesis, meaning "creation, the foundation of the world". Thus, the translator retains the source text's archaic language and the religious allusion that occurs to Offred when she remembers her past life and women having jobs.

> ახლა აღარც კი მჯერა, რომ ჩემი საქმე მქონდა. „საქმე". რა სასაცილო სიტყვაა. საქმე კაცის საქმეა. „მოდი მოისაქმე საყვარელო", ბავშვებს ეუბნებიან ხოლმე, როცა უნიტაზზე დაჯდომას ასწავლიან. ან ძაღლებზე ამბობენ „ისევ ხალიჩაზე მოუსაქმებია".
>
> შესაქმე.
>
> ყველა ქალს ჰქონდა თავისი საქმე. (ეტვუდი 2015: 229)

Another difficult challenge for the translator is conveying wordplays built on confusing English grammar rules and verb forms. In the following passage Atwood constructs her homophonic wordplay with the verb "lie" and its past tense "lay"; at the same time, the verb "lay" is the infinitive of a completely different verb with another semantic meaning:

> The difference between **lie and lay.** Lay is always passive. Even men used to say, I'd like **to get laid**. Though sometimes they said, I'd like **to lay her.** (Atwood 1985: 7)

In the target language, the translator finds a very accurate equivalent translation of these verbs: the verbs 'მიგდება' (throw, cast, fling) and 'მიდება' (place, set). These Georgian verbs have similar pronunciations and also effectively convey the semantic meaning of the wordplay for the target reader.

> განსხვავება მიგდებასა და თავის მიდებას შორის ის არის, რომ მიგდება ვნებითი გვარისაა. კაცებიც კი ასე ამბობდნენ: „წავალ, მივეგდები". ხანდახან ჩვენზეც ამბობდნენ, ამას საწოლზე მივაგდებდიო. (ეტვუდი 2015: 50)

Regrettably, some of Atwood's witty wordplays fail to reach the target reader in the Georgian translation. Untranslatability is a common problem in translation which mostly arises from linguistic or cultural differences. The following Atwoodian pun is an example of the linguistic untranslatability of the vocabulary. Offred is upset that she can no longer read and write as it is forbidden for the women of Gilead and feels envious of the Commander who has a rich library and collection of pens. Seeing the pens on the Commander's desks she recollects the phrase indoctrinated into the Handmaids' minds at the Centre:

> **Pen Is Envy,** Aunt Lydia would say, quoting another Centre motto, warning us away from such objects. (Atwood 1985: 241)
>
> კალამი, შესაშური რამაა, ამბობდა დეიდა ლიდია. ცენტრის ერთ-ერთ ლოზუნგს გვახსენებდა, გვაფრთხილებდა, მავნებელ საგნებზე არ გვეფიქრა". (ეტვუდი 2015: 249)

"Pen Is Envy" is a pun on "penis envy", an idea in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, according to which at some stage in their development young girls experience anxiety about not having a penis. The homophonic pun in the source language highlights that the women in Gilead are not allowed to do things that men do, for instance, reading and writing, which are only men's privileges. Accordingly, that arouses envy in them. Regretfully, it proves impossible to transfer the implication of this pun to the reader of the target text and the translator has to ignore it. The same omission strategy is employed in the next passage when Offred does not take Moira's presentation seriously and starts joking about it. Offred skillfully plays with the words and makes a pun on 'date rape' (the topic of Moira's presentation), exploiting the different meanings of the collocations of 'a date fruit' and the French word '*rapé*' which means grated or shredded:

> What's your paper on? I just did one on date rape. Date rape, I said. You're so trendy. It sounds like some kind of dessert. Date Rapé. (Atwood 1985: 50)
>
> რაზეა შენი პრეზენტაცია? მე პაემნისას ძალადობაზე გავაკეთე. პაემნისას ძალადობა, ვამბობ მე, როგორი მოდური ხარ. ისე კი პაემანთა უმეტესობა ისედაც ძალადობაა.(ეტვუდი 2015: 51)

Atwood's witty pun is perfect, emphasizing Offred's smartness and intelligence as well as her (and the majority's) passiveness and indifference

to the current political or social events which finally lead to the rise of the theocratic regime. However, the translator has to apply an omission strategy leaving out some details of the source language since it is sometimes impossible to capture the nuances. The example mentioned above may be referred to as a case of linguistic untranslatability.

Cultural differences also result in the untranslatability of the wordplay based on the name of the fish species "Arctic char". At the symposium on Gileadean Studies, Professor Pieixoto starts his speech with a homographic pun on the cold-water delicacy "Arctic char", the word "chair" in the sense of 'chairman' and an old-fashioned word 'charwoman', a cleaning woman who comes into a house to perform domestic work for a few hours a day or a week. In modern American English, the term 'maid' has largely replaced 'charwoman'.

> I am sure we all enjoyed our charming **Arctic Char** last night at dinner, and now we are enjoying an equally charming **Arctic Chair.** I use the word "enjoy" in two distinct senses, precluding, of course, **the obsolete third.** (Laughter). (Atwood, 1985: 381)

> დარწმუნებული ვარ, წუხელ ვახშამზე სიამოვნებით შეექციეთ ცხარე პიკულს, დღეს კი არანაკლებ სიამოვნება მოგგვარათ ჩვენმა ცხარე სპიკერმა. სიტყვა სიამოვნება აქ ორაზროვნად ვიხმარე, თუმცა, მისთვის მესამე, მივიწყებული მნიშვნელობის მინიჭება, რასაკვირველია, აზრადაც არ მომსვლია. (ეტვუდი 2015: 395)

The translator finds an effective solution for the wordplay on the words "Arctic Char" and "Arctic Chair". Instead of translating them literally, she uses the technique of discursive creation and finds suitable equivalents to maintain the tone of the irony. "Arctic Char" is translated as "hot (spicy) pickle" and, accordingly, "Arctic Chair" as a "hot chairman". However, the ironic implication in Pieixoto's words about 'the obsolete third,' reflecting his dismissive attitude toward Offred and her tale, is lost for the target reader.

Due to the different grammar structures of the English and Georgian languages, the target reader is unable to grasp Professor Pieixoto's other ironic wordplay on the words "history" and "herstory". As previously stated, Gilead's theocratic regime is shown from a feminine perspective and Pieixoto notes with mockery that Offred's "herstory" isn't a "history". In his

opinion, “she could have told us much about the workings of the Gileadean empire” rather than her personal feelings and experiences (Atwood 1985: 393). This specific semantic element in the source text is lost to the reader because of linguistic untranslatability. There is no feminine gender in the Georgian language and instead of “herstory” there is simply “story” in the target text.

There are several passages where the translator seemed not to grasp the wordplay and failed to convey it accurately. For instance, speaking about the handmaids’ outfit (a red dress and a white cap with huge wings) Offred comments: “Some people call them habits, a good word for them. Habits are hard to break” (Atwood 1985:33). This implies that she cannot get rid of the ugly red outfit she has to wear and the more complex idea is that Handmaids cannot break a law, protest or reject their servile condition. The idiomatic expression “Habits are hard to break” is replaced by the Georgian expression “ზოგი მათ ‘ჰაბიტს’ ეძახის. მღვდელი ხომ ჰაბიტშიც იცნობა” (ეტვუდი 2015: 35). The established equivalent of the idiomatic phrase მღვდელი ხომ ჰაბიტშიც იცნობა” in English is “It’s not the gay coat that makes the gentlemen”[5]. Thus, the translator’s choice to translate the phrase “Habits are hard to break” into Georgian this way seems completely irrelevant.

5. Conclusion

The Georgian translator of *The Handmaid’s Tale* largely succeeds in overcoming various translation challenges, such as maintaining contextual accuracy and proposing original alternatives for the female characters’ names. Due to the Christian cultural similarities between the source and target cultures, the translator effectively conveys the archaic language of Gilead and finds suitable equivalents for the author’s neologisms and wordplay based on religious terminology. Most omissions in the target text result from linguistic untranslatability, which creates specific difficulties for the translator in conveying certain nuances of the dystopian context. The qualitative contrastive analysis demonstrates that the most frequently used translation techniques are calque, borrowing, discursive creation, established equivalent, linguistic compression, and linguistic amplification.

[5] idioms.tsu.ge

The analysis of the Georgian translation of *The Handmaid's Tale* also reveals some semantic flaws in translating the author's wordplays and several important intertextual allusions. Nevertheless, the reader receives a relevant translation of the source text, allowing for the correct understanding of Atwood's dystopia. This type of analysis may be valuable for future translations of Atwood's works as well as the other pieces of prose.

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Received: 28 May 2024
Accepted for publication: 21 October 2024