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Is the Russian *Luna* the Same as Polish *Księżyc*? Sense and Nonsense in Translation and Reception of Grammatical Gender

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to investigate the importance of grammatical gender in conveying meaning and what difficulties this grammatical category can cause for translators. For the purpose of the study, a fairy tale was created in Russian, the axis of which is grammatical gender, which affects the meaning of the text. Interestingly, all nouns of a given gender in the original correspond in the translation to equivalents that are relevant to the story but are of a different gender. The change of gender modifies the message of the fairy tale, and inconsistency in its use disrupts the meaning of the story. In order to see what consequences the decisions made by the translators have on the reader's reception, three translations produced by students of Russian Studies were subjected to audience evaluation. As a result of this experiment, it was found that grammatical gender determines the physical and psychological characteristics of the characters and their behaviour, contributes to the creation of the world depicted, affects the reception of the text, and is thus a category that cannot be used unreflectively.
Keywords: grammatical gender in translation, translation for children, gender in translation, Polish, Russian.

Introduction

It would seem that difficulties with the correct use of grammatical gender, especially cases of inconsistency in this regard, apply only to foreign lan-

guage acquisition. However, it is interesting whether it can be an obstacle in the process of translation. As Jolanta Lubocha-Kruglik rightly states, the beginning of the translator's problems can begin within the confines of their own language. In order to be translated, some language games, where non-obvious connotations arising from gender associations play a role, must be correctly understood in the original.[1] But can grammatical gender turn out to be a problem serious enough to decisively affect the quality of translation? The dissimilarity of grammatical systems can be, as Lubocha-Kruglik points out, a challenge for the translator. If – to use familiar examples – death is a masculine noun in German – *der Tod* – how is one to translate the title of the song "Death is a woman"?[2] And if in the title of a volume of poems by Boris Pasternak, the feminine noun *жизнь/zhizn'* ('life') becomes a sister (*Сестра моя – жизнь/Sestra moya – zhizn'*) (My sister, life),[3] should sister remain in the Polish translation as well? The problem here is that in Russian 'life' can easily be personified as a sister because in Russian both nouns are feminine, while in Polish *życie* ('life') is neuter.[4] Thus, in Polish the neuter

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[1] Cf. Jolanta Lubocha-Kruglik "Co nam przeszkadza w tłumaczeniu, czyli jeszcze o barierach w przekładzie" [What Hinders Us in Translation: More on Barriers to Translation], in *Przestrzenie przekładu* [Spaces of Translation], eds. Jolanta Lubocha-Kruglik, and Oksana Małysa (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 16–18.

[2] A song by the band Bracia.

[3] 1917 edition.

[4] The genre systems of Polish and East Slavic languages have become the subject of numerous analyses. See, for example, Alla Kravchuk, "Gramatyczna kategoria rodzaju w języku polskim i ukraińskim: paralele i kontrasty a glottodydaktyka" [The Grammatical Category of Gender in Polish and Ukrainian: Parallels and Contrasts and Glottodidactics], *Rozprawy Komisji Językowej Łódzkiego Towarzystwa* Naukowego [Proceedings of the Language Commission of the Łódź Scientific Society], vol. LVIII (2012): 151–167; Marian Jurkowski, "Rodzaj gramatyczny rzeczowników obcego pochodzenia w języku polskim i ukraińskim" [Grammatical Type of Nouns of Foreign Origin in Polish and Ukrainian], *Prace Filologiczne*, vol. XLII (1997): 81–90; Edyta Pałuszyńska, "Kategoria rodzaju gramatycznego w systemie językowym, dyskursie i glottodydaktyce" [The Category of Grammatical Genus in the Linguistic System, Discourse and Glottodidactics], *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Kształcenie Polonistyczne Cudzoziemców*, vol. 26, eds. Grażyna Zarzycka, Beata Grochala, and Iwona Dembowska-Wosik (2019): 413–423, https://doi.org/ 10.18778/0860-6587.26.28; Alina Kępińska, *Kształtowanie się polskiej kategorii męsko- i niemęskoosobowości* [Shaping of the Polish Category of Masculine and Non-masculine Personhood] (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006); Hanna Komorowska, *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych* [Methodology of Teaching Foreign Languages] (Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2005). On the generic equivalence and non-equivalence between Polish and Russian in model terms, see Tatiana Kwiatkowska, "Gramatyczna kategoria rodzaju dla zapożyczeń w języku polskim: paralele i różnice" [The Grammatical Category of Genus for Loanwords in Polish: Parallels and Differences], *Acta Polono-Ruthenica* 19 (2014): 217–229.

gender *życie* does not evoke any associations with either a sister or a brother.[5] It is worth adding that in Czech, on the other hand, it is a masculine noun – *život*.

We should restate a following question, originally posed by Tatiana Kwiatkowska; do we associate genus only with formal criteria of particular categories or extralinguistic reality in general?[6] The problem assumes particular importance in the case of fables, fairy tales, many children's poems and fantasy works, in which objects, plants, animals and other elements of nature, abstract concepts or celestial bodies are subjected to vivification and anthropomorphisation, and consequently given masculine or feminine gender and gendered characteristics attributed to genders. Given the widespread differing understandings of masculinity and femininity, gender changes in translation can significantly impact the content and tone of such texts.

The purpose of this article is to explore the following questions:

— What difficulties does the translator encounter in translating a Russian text into Polish that differs significantly in terms of gender in the original language and the target language?

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[5] Both Polish and Russian are languages in which the category of grammatical gender plays an important role. It is assigned to every noun, and is reflected in adjectives, pronouns and the past forms of verbs. See Anna Dąbrowska, Urszula Dobosz, and Małgorzata Pasieka, *Co warto wiedzieć. Poradnik metodyczny dla nauczycieli języka polskiego jako obcego na Wschodzie* [What You Need to Know. A Methodical Guide for Teachers of Polish as a Foreign Language in the East] (Warszawa: Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, 2010); Wiesław T. Stefańczyk, *Kategoria rodzaju i przypadka polskiego rzeczownika. Próba synchronicznej analizy morfologicznej* [The Category of Genus and Case of a Polish Noun. An Attempt at Synchronic Morphological Analysis] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2007); Zofia Zaron, *Aspekty funkcjonalne polskiej kategorii rodzaju. Charakterystyka fleksyjna* [Functional Aspects of the Polish Genus Category. Flexion Characteristics] (Warszawa–Puńsk: Wydawnictwo "Aušra", 2004). Undoubtedly, an important difference between Polish and Russian is also the functioning of plural forms, which is more complex in Polish. This division is a traditional view. About more recent classifications, in which, for example, the basis of the division is the dependent cases of the complement and the accusative. In Russian, the gender of plural nouns – except for the genderless *pluralia tantum* – is determined according to their gender in the singular. See Anna Seretny, and Wiesław T. Stefańczyk, "Współczesne ujęcia kategorii rodzaju gramatycznego w polszczyźnie a praktyka (glotto)dydaktyczna – wprowadzenie" [Contemporary Approaches to the Category of Grammatical Genus in Polish and (Glotto)didactic Practice – an Introduction], *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 1 (19) (2017): 72–85; Wiesław T. Stefańczyk, "Rodzaj gramatyczny w polszczyźnie i w językach wschodniosłowiańskich. Rozważania na marginesie biernika" [Grammatical Genus in Polish and East Slavic Languages. Considerations on the Margin of the Passive], *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Kształcenie Polonistyczne Cudzoziemców* 28 (2021): 105–116.

[6] Kwiatkowska, "Gramatyczna kategoria rodzaju dla zapożyczeń w języku polskim: paralele i różnice," 217.

— How do the translator's decisions affect the meaning of the texts?
— What consequences do the translation decisions made have on the reader's reception and evaluation of the translation quality?

The fable created for the purpose of this article will serve as the research material.

Discussion of the Fable, Translation Versions and Survey Results

A survey was conducted to find out participants' opinions regarding three Polish translations of a fable about the Moon originally written in Russian[7] (Version 1, Version 2, Version 3), produced by male and female students of Russian Studies. As Wiesław T. Stefańczyk argues, "[m]imo bliskości genetycznej i typologicznej istnieje wiele zasadniczych różnic między polszczyzną a językami wschodniosłowiańskimi" [in spite of typological and genological proximity, Polish language and East Slavic languages exhibit numerous differences].[8]

The original fable I invented about the Moon is a text whose characters are of feminine gender, chosen not by chance and which perform a key function in the story. The Moon is a noun of this very gender in Russian, while the corresponding Polish word is masculine (*Луна*/ *luna* and *księżyc*). Below the original Russian text is given, followed, for the benefit of readers who do not know Russian, by a relatively literal translation into English. In this translation the gender of all the relevant nouns, as well as adjectives and past-tense verb forms that agree with them, are given in brackets.

Here is the fairy tale:

<div align="center">Сказка о Луне</div>

Давным-давно, в вышине небесной, жила **Луна**. **Она вращалась** вокруг Земли, светя ночным светом и наблюдая за всем, что происходило на планете. Но с течением времени Луне стало скучно. Она устала быть одинокой в своем небесном королевстве.

Однажды Луна **решила**, что пора что-то менять. Тогда **она надела красивое**, голубое платье. Потом **приготовила** своё волшебное волокно и **начала** наносить на лицо макияж. **Покрасила** свои длинные ресницы и полные губы.

Ведь она была женщиной! Когда Луна **закончила**, **заглянула** в зеркало и **улыбнулась**. Теперь **её лицо** было настоящим произведением искусства.

Луна **решила** спуститься на Землю и найти себе **подруг**. Медленно **она опустилась** с небесных высот и **приземлилась** на берег моря. Первыми, кто заметил её приход, были **изящная треска**, ловкая **сельдь** и зубастая **акула**. Луна **рассказала** им о своей жизни на небесах, о том, как ей не хватает настоящих **подруг**. Однако все **подруги** решили, что Луне было бы трудно жить в море. Тогда на пляже появилась **морская черепаха**, которая **предложила Луне** свою дружбу. Вскоре к этой веселой группе присоединились **белая крыса** и райская **птица**, **которая** даже **начала танцевать** под светом Луны. К игре присоединились также рыбки, плескаясь и кружась в воде, словно подружки на свадьбе. В группу **веселых девочек хотел** присоединиться даже **дождевой червячок**. Подруги сказали, что хотя **он** и не девочка, **он** может проводить время вместе с ними.

Так **Луна нашла не** только **друзей**, но и узнала, что её свет способен разнообразить и веселить жизнь на Земле. С тех пор каждую ночь она спускается, чтобы встречаться со своими **подругами** и подарить им свой волшебный свет.

<div align="center">Tale about the Moon (<i>fem.</i>)</div>

Once upon a time, in the highest heavens there lived the **Moon** (*fem.*). She **revolved** (*fem.*) around the Earth, shining her nocturnal light and watching what happened on the planet. But as time, went by the Moon grew tired and bored of being alone in her celestial kingdom.

One day the Moon **decided** (*fem.*) that it was time to change something. So **she put on** (*fem.*) a beautiful blue dress. They she **prepared** (*fem.*) her magical fibre and **began** (*fem.*) to put make-up on her face. She **painted** (*fem.*) her long eyelashes and full lips. After all, she **was** (*fem.*) a **woman**! When the **Moon** (*fem.*) **had finished** (*fem.*), she **looked** (*fem.*) in the mirror and **smiled** (*fem.*). Now her face was a real work of art.

The Moon (*fem.*) **decided** (*fem.*) to descend to Earth and find herself some (female) **friends**. She slowly **descended** (*fem.*) from the heavenly heights and **landed** (*fem.*) on the seashore. The first to notice her arrival were a **graceful** (*fem.*) **cod** (*fem.*), an **agile** (*fem.*) **herring** (*fem.*) and a **toothy** (*fem.*) **shark** (*fem.*). The Moon (*fem.*) **told** (*fem.*) them about her life in the heavens and about how she did not have enough (female) **friends**. However, all her (female) **friends** decided that it would be difficult for the Moon (*fem.*) to live in the sea. Then a **turtle** (*fem.*) appeared (*fem.*) on the beach, who **offered** (*fem.*) the Moon her friendship. Soon a **white** (*fem.*) **rat** (*fem.*) joined this merry group, and then a **bird of paradise** (*fem.*), who even **started** (*fem.*) to dance by the light of the Moon (*fem.*). Some little fish also joined the dancing, splashing and swirling in the water, like bridesmaids at a wedding. An **earthworm** (*mas.*) even **wanted** (*mas.*) to join the group of merry girls. The (female) friends said that even though **he** was (*mas.*) not a girl, **he** could spend the time together with them.

So the **Moon** (*fem.*) found not only **friends**, but she also **realised** (*fem.*) that her light was capable of diversifying and brightening up life on Earth. Since then she has come down every night to meet her (female) friends and give them her magic light.

Bored with her lonely life in the heavenly skies, the heroine descends to Earth to find friends. Before doing so, she puts on beautiful make-up and a blue dress. These actions appear in the text to emphasise the typical behaviour of the Moon's gender. The search for friends takes place among creatures representing the same gender as the main character. Thus, various fish appear (a cod, a herring, a shark), several land animals (a sea turtle, a white mouse, a bird of paradise), all feminine in Russian. A worm (*дождевой чер-вячок/dozhdyevoy chervyachok*) wants to join the group of playful women, who, despite his different gender, meets with the favour of the female friends and is invited to play together. The tale was structured in such a way that it contains (with the exception of one) female characters whose grammatical gender is also feminine, whereas their Polish equivalents are of masculine gender, to see how male and female Polish students of Russian studies would cope with its translation.

As can be seen from the above synopsis of the fable, it is a short story about loneliness, the search for friendship, and how important friendship is for everyone, regardless of their place in the world, and that with mutual kindness, tolerance and understanding, very different people can become friends.

A group of 19 male and female students[9] were given the task of translating a fairy tale. From the translations obtained, I selected three, which I submitted to 31 other students.[10] The young male and female translators were asked to evaluate the quality of their translations of the fable by pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of each version with a clear instruction to focus on the characters appearing in the fable. This was not only a prompt for male and female participants in the study, but also an indication not to focus on other areas that could be evaluated. The male and female students were further asked to rank the versions from the one they liked the most to the one they liked the least, and give reasons for their choice. Each text represented a different idea regarding the fable's message.

In the following section of the study, I will present the three selected translations, which differ significantly from each other, and discuss the ways in which they were translated and the ratings indicated in the opinions. In each case, the Polish translation is given, followed by an English translation including indications of the genders of the relevant nouns in Polish, as well

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[9] I discuss the problems associated with this task in another article. The students represented the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the University of the National Education Commission in Kraków, and the University of Lodz (I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Marcin Dziwisz and Prof. Anna Bednarczyk for their help).

[10] Students at the University of Silesia in Katowice; I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Oksana Małysa for her help in conducting the survey.

as the adjectives and verbs that agree with them. Note that in the first version, while *Księżyc* ('moon') is masculine, the translator personifies it as feminine.

Version 1

Dawno, dawno temu, na niebie, **żył Księżyc**. **Krążyła** wokół Ziemi, świecąc nocnym światłem i obserwując wszystko, co działo się na planecie. Ale z biegiem czasu **Księżycowi** się to znudziło. **Zmęczyła** się samotnością w swoim niebiańskim królestwie.

Pewnego dnia **Księżyc zdecydowała**, że pora coś zmienić. **Założyła** piękną, niebieską sukienkę. Następnie **przygotowała** swoje magiczne włókno i **zaczęła** nakładać na twarz makijaż. **Pomalowała** swoje długie rzęsy i pełne usta. W końcu **była kobietą**! Kiedy **Księżyc skończył**, **spojrzała** w lustro i **uśmiechnęła się**. teraz **jej** twarz była prawdziwym dziełem sztuki.

Księżyc postanowiła zejść na ziemię i znaleźć **przyjaciółki**. Powoli **opadła** z niebiańskich wysokości i **wylądowała** na brzegu morza. Pierwszym, kto zauważył jej przybycie, był **pełen wdzięku dorsz**, **zwinny śledź** i **zębaty rekin**. **Księżyc opowiedziała** im o swoim życiu na niebie, o tym, jak brakuje jej prawdziwych przyjaciół. Jednak wszyscy przyjaciele uznali, że **Księżyc nie będzie mogła** żyć w morzu. Wtedy na plaży pojawił się **żółw morski** i **zaoferował Księżycowi** swoją przyjaźń. Wkrótce do tej radosnej grupy dołączył **biały szczur** i **rajski ptak**, który nawet **zaczął** tańczyć w świetle Księżyca. Ryby również włączyły się do zabawy, pluskając się i wirując w wodzie jak druhny na weselu. Nawet **dżdżownica chciała** dołączyć do **grona wesołych dziewczyn**. Znajomi powiedzieli, że chociaż **nie jest dziewczynką**, to może spędzić z nimi czas.

W ten sposób **Księży**c nie tylko **znalazła** przyjaciół, ale także **dowiedziała się**, że jej światło może urozmaicać i bawić życie na Ziemi. Od tego czasu co wieczór przychodzi spotkać się z przyjaciółmi, by dać im swoje magiczne światło.

[Once upon a time, long ago, in the sky, **lived** (*mas.*) the **Moon** (*mas.*). **She orbited** (*fem.*) the Earth, shining her nocturnal light and observing everything that was happening on the planet. But as time passed, the **Moon** (*mas.*) got bored with this. **She grew tired** (*fem.*) of being alone in her celestial kingdom.

One day the **Moon** (*mas.*) **decided** (*fem.*) it was time to change something. **She put on** (*fem.*) a beautiful blue dress. Then **she prepared** (*fem.*) her magic fibre and **began** (*fem.*) applying makeup to her face. **She painted** (*fem.*) her long eyelashes and full lips. After all, **she was** (*fem.*) **a woman**! When the **Moon** (*mas.*) **finished** (*mas.*), **she looked** (*fem.*) in the mirror and **smiled** (*fem.*). Now **her** face was a real work of art.

The Moon (*mas.*) **decided** (*fem.*) to come down to earth and find some (female) **friends** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*). **She** slowly **descended** (*fem.*) from the heavenly heights and **landed** (*fem.*) on the seashore. The first to notice her arrival were a **graceful** (*mas.*) **cod** (*mas.*), an **agile** (*mas.*) **herring** (*mas.*) and a **toothy** (*mas.*) **shark** (*mas.*). The **Moon** (*mas.*) **told** (*fem.*) them about her life in the sky, and how she lacked **real friends** (*mas. pers. pl*). However, **all** (*mas. pers. pl*) the **friends** (*mas. pers. pl*) **decided** (*mas. pers. pl*) that the **Moon** (*mas.*) **would** (*fem.*) **not be able to** live in the sea. Then a **turtle** (*mas.*) **appeared** (*mas.*) on the beach and **offered** (*mas.*) **the Moon** (*mas.*) his friendship. Soon the happy group was joined by a **white** (*mas.*) **rat** (*mas.*) and **a bird of paradise** (*mas.*), which even **began** (*mas.*) to dance in the moon-

light. Some fish also joined in the fun, splashing and twirling in the water like brides-
maids at a wedding. Even an **earthworm** (*fem.*) **wanted** (*fem.*) **to** join the **merry
girls** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*). Her friends said that although it **was not a girl**, it could
spend time with them.[11]

In this way the **Moon** (*mas.*) not only **found** (*fem.*) some friends, but also **learnt**
(*fem.*) that her light could make life on Earth more interesting and entertaining. Since
then, she has come to meet her friends every evening to give them her magical light.]

In an earlier paragraph, I used the phrase "a different idea regarding the fa-
ble's message". An idea seems to be sadly lacking in this translation. Rather,
the author's choices are governed by chance, and the fairy tale completely
fails to convey the idea of the original. The lack of consistency in grammatical
type puts readers in a rather uncomfortable situation at the beginning of the
text – the ambiguity regarding who the hero/heroine of the fairy tale is: the
moon (*mas.*) *lived* (*fem.*), orbiting the *Earth* (*fem.*). It quickly turns out that it
is a woman, although after putting on a dress the *Moon finished* (*mas.*) and –
unexpectedly – *looked* (*fem.*) *in the mirror*. The female friends she looks for
– and not, crucially, *przyjaciele* ('friends': this masculine personal plural form
is also used for a group of mixed gender) – are, as it turns out, a graceful
codfish, an agile herring and a toothy shark, all of which are of masculine
gender in Polish and, as such, have little in common with female characters,
as do the masculine nouns turtle, white rat and bird of paradise. In this het-
erogeneous world, *even an earthworm* (*fem.*) suddenly appears, who *wanted*
(*fem.*) *to join the ranks of cheerful girls*. However, the text does not mention
such a group, and it is unclear why, in relation to the female protagonist, the
word *nawet* ('even') is used.

The fairy tale was referred to by the participants and participants of the
study. Among the advantages of this translation were noted:
— it preserved elements of the plot,
— simple language,
— it renders the mood of the fable.

Male and female respondents listed many more disadvantages of this un-
successful translation:
— confusion of the reader by inconsistent use of gender,
— absurd, illogical introduction of the earthworm,
— illegibility, incomprehensibility,
— inconsistency,
— excessive literalism,
— incorrect Polish,
— the feminine gender of the heroine conflicts with the content of the work,

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[11] Because of the pro-drop nature of Polish and the grammar of indirect speech, in the Polish
text the gender of the earthworm is not marked in this sentence.

— chaos,

— referring to the moon as a woman.

Comments about the lack of logic and consistency appeared in no fewer than 25 surveys. Violation of grammatical consistency was therefore considered the biggest flaw in the text. Male and female students emphasised the lack of logic, some in rather harsh terms. The violation of grammatical rules affected the transmission of meaning. The fable is not about a girl looking for female friends, and the image of carefree women splashing in the water and playing on the beach, who include one male friend in their fun, is not what is presented to the reader. Despite the preservation of the sequence of sentences that constitute the original text, this translation gives the impression of chaos and ambiguity.

Version 2

Dawno, dawno temu, w obłokach **żył Księżyc**. Krążąc wokół ziemi **świecił** swoim nocnym blaskiem, z zaciekawieniem obserwując wydarzenia na planecie. Jednak po pewnym czasie zaczęło mu się nudzić. **Miał** dość samotności na swoim niebieskim królestwie.

Pewnego razu **postanowił** to zmienić. **Ubrał** na siebie[12] elegancki, niebieski płaszcz, a następnie **przygotował** magiczną piankę i **postanowił** się ogolić. **Jego** twarz była teraz gładka i przystojnie wyglądająca. W końcu **poczuł się jak mężczyzna**! Na koniec **spojrzał** w lustro i szczerze się **uśmiechnął** do **samego** siebie. **Jego** twarz przedstawiała istne dzieło sztuki!

Księżyc postanowił zejść na Ziemię i znaleźć **przyjaciół**. Powoli **opuścił się** z niebios, trafiając na brzeg morza. Pierwszymi, którzy zauważyli jego przybycie, byli **pełen elegancji dorsz**, **przebiegły śledź** i **zębaty rekin**. **Księżyc opowiedział** im o swoim życiu w niebie i o tym, jak brakuje mu prawdziwych **przyjaciół**. Wszyscy jednak doszli do wniosku, że ciężko **mu** będzie żyć w morzu. Wtedy na plaży **pojawił się żółw morski** i zaoferował mu swoją przyjaźń. Wkrótce do tej wesołej grupy **dołączył biały szczur** i **rajski ptak**, **którzy zaczęli** nawet tańczyć w świetle księżyca. Ryby również dołączyły do zabawy, pluskając się i wirując**. Bawili się** jak na weselu! Nawet **dżdżownica chciała** dołączyć do wesołej grupy. Nie mieli nic przeciwko wspólnej zabawy, nie zważając na to, że **dżdżownica jest dziewczyną**.

Tak właśnie **Księżyc odnalazł** nie tylko **przyjaciół**, ale **zdołał** rozbawić i urozmaicić życie na Ziemi. Od tej pory, każdego wieczoru schodzi na Ziemię na spotkanie, aby podarować im swój magiczny blask.

[Once upon a time, in the clouds there **lived** (*mas.*) **the Moon** (*mas.*). Circling the earth, **he shone** with his nocturnal glow, curiously observing events on the planet. However, after a while he became bored. **He was fed up** with the loneliness on his celestial kingdom.

Once, **he decided** (*mas.*) to change that. **He put** on an elegant blue coat, then **prepared** (*mas.*) a magic foam and **decided** (*mas.*) to shave. **His** face was now smooth and handsome looking. **He** finally felt like a **man**! Finally, **he looked** (*mas.*)

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[12] *Ubrał na siebie* [put on himself] is incorrect Polish, but this error has not been corrected.

in the mirror and **smiled** (*mas.*) sincerely at **himself**. **His** face presented a veritable work of art!

      The Moon decided (*mas.*) to descend to Earth and find **friends** (*mas. pers. pl.*). **He** slowly **descended** (*mas.*) from the heavens, ending up on the seashore. The first to notice his arrival were a **cod** (*mas.*), **full** (*mas.*) **of elegance**, a **c unning** (*mas.*) **herring** (*mas.*) and a **toothy** (*mas.*) **shark** (*mas.*). The **Moon** (*mas.*) **told** (*mas.*) them about his life in the heavens and how he lacked **true** (*mas. pers. pl.*) **friends** (*mas. pers. pl.*). However, they all came to the conclusion that it would be hard for **him** to live in the sea. Then a **turtle** (*mas.*) **appeared** (*mas.*) on the beach and offered him his friendship. Soon the merry group was joined by a **white** (*mas.*) **rat** (*mas.*) and **bird of paradise** (*mas.*), **who** (*mas.*) even **began** (*mas.*) dance in the moonlight. Some fish also joined in the fun, splashing and twirling. **They** (*mas. pers. pl.*) **were having fun** (*mas. pers. pl.*) like at a wedding! Even an **earthworm** (*fem.*) **wanted** (*fem.*) to join the merry group. They did not mind playing together, not minding that the **earthworm** (*fem.*) **was** (*mas.*) **a girl**.

      This is how **the Moon** (*mas.*) not only **found** (*mas.*) **friends** (*mas. pers. pl.*), but **managed** (*mas.*) to amuse and diversify life on Earth. Since then, every evening he has come down to Earth for a meeting to give them his magical brilliance.]

By using the Polish equivalent (*księżyc*, which is masculine) of the Russian noun *луна* (luna), which means 'moon', the fable is transported into a world of male characters. The translator therefore adjusts the main character's behaviour to the Moon's gender. Thus, the Moon puts on not a blue dress, but a blue coat, does not put on make-up, but shaves his face and looks handsome. On Earth, he looks for friends and finds them. They are a cod full of elegance, a cunning herring, a toothy shark, a turtle, a white rat and a bird of paradise, i.e. the same characters whose gender in Version 1 of the fable was illogical, conflicting with the search for female friends. Here, however, their presence is justified and consistent with the meaning of the fable. Similarly, the fact that *even an earthworm*, which is feminine, wants to *join the merry group*, which is made up of boys, is apt and does not surprise readers. Consequently, a thoughtful change of the grammatical gender of heroine to hero was sufficient, and essentially similar solutions to those in Version 1 resulted in a completely different message.

And how did the survey participants comment on these solutions?
Advantages:
— swapping the hero's gender while preserving the sense of the fairy tale,
— the name of the hero is adapted to the gender,
— the introduction of an earthworm, the grammatical gender of which harmonises with the content of the fable,
— creativity of translation,
— consistency of the text,
— simple and accessible language,
— ingenuity of the translator.

Disadvantages:
— departure from the original, great interference with the plot,
— changing the sense of the original,[13]
— different gender of the main character,
— changed the character of the protagonist.

In the responses collected, the same feature of the fable appears once as a disadvantage and once as an advantage of the text (the gender of the protagonist), which indicates the divergence of evaluations and proves the subjectivity of individual perception. Male and female participants in the study emphasised both the stylistic features of the fable and the logic of the message. They appreciated the creativity and ingenuity of the translator. The remark about the "changed character of the protagonist" is important, because, despite the consistency in terms of gender of the translation in relation to the original, the consequence of such a choice and placing the narrative in a male-dominated world is the different shaping of perceptions about the characters. Here we have a man bored with life and seeking companionship, and only one woman among a group of men; compare this to how it would be if it were about a woman and her friends joyfully and carefreely having fun, with a single man joining them. What is striking in the world of this fable is the image of male figures merrily dancing, splashing and twirling, which in our heterosexual culture raises rather homosexual associations, quite different in the case of a group of women having fun. In other words, this new meaning was added to this translation, thus distorting the meaning of the original.

Version 3

Dawno, dawno temu wysoko na niebie żyła planeta, zwana satelitą – był to **Księżyc** o imieniu **Luna**. **Obracała się ona** wokół Ziemi, świecąc nocnym światłem i obserwując wszystko to, co działo się na tej planecie. Lecz z biegiem czasu **Luna zaczęła** się nudzić. **Była** już **zmęczona** samotnością w swoim niebiańskim królestwie.

Pewnego razu **Luna zdecydowała**, że nadszedł czas na zmiany. Na początek **założyła piękną, niebieską suknię**. Potem **przygotowała** swoje magiczne włókno i **zaczęła nanosić makijaż** na twarz. **Pomalowała swoje długie rzęsy i pełne usta.** Przecież **była kobietą**! Kiedy **Luna skończyła**, **spojrzała** w lustro i się **uśmiechnęła**. Teraz **jej** twarz była prawdziwym dziełem sztuki.

Luna zdecydowała zejść na Ziemię i znaleźć sobie przyjaciółki. Powoli **spuszczała się** z przestrzeni nieba i końcu **wylądowała** na brzegu morza. Pierwszymi, kto zauważył jej przyjście, były: **elegancka makrela**, **zwinna flądra** i **zębata orka**. **Luna opowiadała** im o swoim życiu na niebie i o tym, jak jej brakuje prawdziwych **przyjaciółek**. Jednak wszystkie **przyjaciółki zdecydowały**, że **Lunie** byłoby trudno

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13 A pilot survey conducted before the study included the phrase: *I associate guys dancing together with gay men.*

mieszkać w morzu. I wtedy na plaży **pojawiła się morska żółwica**, która **zaofero-wała Lunie** przyjaźń. Niedługo do tej wesołej grupy **dołączyła biała mysz** i **rajska ptaszyna**, **która zaczęła** tańczyć w świetle **Luny**. Do zabawy dołączyły również **rybki**, które **pluskały się** i **wirowały** w wodzie jak **przyjaciółki** na weselu. Do grupy **wesołych dziewczyn chciał** również dołączyć **deszczowy robaczek**. **Przyjaciółki powiedziały**, że mimo że **nie jest dziewczynką**, to i tak może spędzać czas na razem z nimi.

W taki sposób **Luna** nie tylko **znalazła przyjaciółki**, ale również **dowiedziała się**, że *jej* światło jest w stanie urozmaicić i przy tym rozweselić życie na Ziemi. Od tego czasu co noc schodzi na Ziemię, żeby spotkać się ze swoimi **przyjaciółkami** i podarować im swój magiczny blask.

[Once upon a time, high in the sky, there lived a planet called a satellite – it was a **moon** (*mas.*) named **Luna** (*fem.*). **She revolved** (*fem.*) around the Earth, shining her night light and observing everything that happened on the planet. But as time passed, Luna **began** (*fem.*) to get bored. **She was** (*fem.*) **tired** (*fem.*) of being alone in her celestial kingdom.

Once, **Luna decided** (*fem.*) it was time for a change. To begin with, **she put on** (*fem.*) a **beautiful** (*fem.*) **blue** (*fem.*) **gown** (*fem.*). Then **she prepared** (*fem.*) her magic fibre and **started** (*fem.*) applying makeup (*mas.*) to **her** face. **She painted** (*fem.*) **her** long eyelashes and full lips. After all, **she was** (*fem.*) a **woman** (*fem.*)! When **Luna finished** (*fem.*), **she looked** (*fem.*) in the mirror and **smiled** (*fem.*). Now **her** face was a real work of art.

Luna decided (*fem.*) to come down to Earth and find some friends. **She** slowly **descended** (*fem.*) from the sky space and finally **landed** (*fem.*) on the seashore. The first to notice her arrival were **an elegant** (*fem.*) **mackerel** (*fem.*), an **agile** (*fem.*) **flounder** (*fem.*) and a **toothy** (*fem.*) **orca** (*fem.*). **Luna told** (*fem.*) them about her life in the sky and how **she** lacked any real (female) **friends**. However, all the (female) **friends decided** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) that it would be difficult for **Luna** to live in the sea. And then a **turtle** (*fem.*) **appeared** (*fem.*) on the beach and **offered** (*fem.*) **Luna** friendship. Soon the merry group **was joined** (*fem.*) by a **white** (*fem.*) **mouse** (*fem.*) and **a bird of paradise** (*fem.*), **who** (*fem.*) **began** (*fem.*) to dance in **Luna's** light. Some **fish** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) also joined (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) the fun, **they** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) **splashed** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) and **twirled** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) in the water like (female) **friends** at a wedding. An **earthworm** (*mas.*) also **wanted** (*mas.*) to join the group of merry **girls**. The (female) **friends said** (*non-mas. pers. pl.*) that even though (he) was not a **girl**, (he) could still hang out with them.[14]

That's how **Luna** not only **found** (*fem.*) (female) **friends**, but also **learnt** (*fem.*) that **her** light was able to make life on Earth more interesting and cheerful at the same time. Since then, every night she has descended to Earth to meet her (female) **friends** and give them her magical glow.]

In the earlier version, there was a consistency within the direct equivalents of the chosen characters. The above suggestion is to retain the gender of the original characters and their grammatical gender. The heroine is, as in the

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[14] Because of the pro-drop nature of Polish and the grammar of indirect speech, in the Polish the gender of the earthworm is not marked in this sentence.

initial text, Luna, who, tired of loneliness, one day made up her face and put on a blue dress, found friends – an elegant mackerel, an agile flounder, a toothy orca, a she-sea turtle, a white mouse and a bird of paradise, all of which are feminine in Polish. The group of girls lets an e a r t h w o r m join in the fun, even though it is not a girl, since in this Polish translation the masculine form *deszczowy robaczek* is used, instead of the feminine *dżdżownica* which appears in the other translations. Animals of completely different species appear, for each of them corresponds to the gender of the character from the initial text. Despite the switch of nouns, everything is coherent, sensible and thoughtful.

And what is the evaluation of female students? The following advantages have been highlighted:
— creativity,
— lightness of the message,
— naturalness,
— the name Luna, which means moon, or preservation of the name,
— the consistent conversion of all characters to female,
— the introduction of the worm as a character of a different gender is consistent with the plot,
— it renders the mood of the fairy tale,
— lyricality,
— comprehensibility,
— preservation of the sense of the original text.
Disadvantages:
— Luna is an obsolete form in the Polish language,
— the characters introduced are completely different from the original ones.

Of all the translations included in the study, there was not one that enjoyed greater appreciation than the above. Among the comments there was even the phrase: *I love this translation!* It is clear that sustaining the story of the fable – about a bored girl looking for friends to spend time together – required some lexical and gender modifications. Swapping characters to reflect their gender most often appealed to the evaluators. The femininity of the depicted world is related to the reader's reception. The feminine world is associated with lightness, delicacy, which affect a similar impression in the reception of the entire text, with lyricism and naturalness emphasised in the comments. Significantly, such qualities appeared only in the case of this one translation. The preservation of the sense of the original text was appreciated. Criticism included the replacement of the original characters with others and that the name Luna is obsolete.[15]

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[15] In the translations collected throughout the experiment, in one of the proposals, the forms *Pan* and *Pani* (which correspond approximately to English Mr and Miss/Mrs) appeared next

In the second task, respondents were asked to rank the translations according to which they liked best. 18 people unequivocally indicated Version 3 as the best, while ten people preferred Version 2. Two votes indicated that both versions were equally good. Translation 1 was overwhelmingly considered to be the poorest. The opinions expressed are confirmed by the advantages given above, which are most numerous in the case of Version 3, and the disadvantages most numerous with regard to Version 1.

Let us consider the two translations that gained the most votes in terms of conveying the meaning of the fable. If we consider that it is about loneliness, which is overcome by friendship with others, then no doubt both Version 2 and Version 3 express such a meaning. However, in the first case it is about male friendship, in the second female friendship, which usually differ in form. As research shows, for female friendships, frequent, close contact and long, frank conversations, emotional bonding and mental support are important. Men, on the other hand, do not need such closeness but value joint activities with competitive elements, such as playing sports, going to training sessions, watching matches or computer games.[16] Dancing on the beach in the moonlight certainly deviates from stereotypical male behaviour in our culture (unless under the influence of intoxicants), and is much more suited to women, whose dance processions are common in folk games, for example. Undoubtedly, Version 3 has the advantage in this regard, capturing the sense of the story much better than Version 2, as was reflected in the opinions of the respondents.

Conclusions

The survey undeniably proves that grammatical gender is an extremely important category in translation, especially when the source and target languages differ in this respect, as is sometimes the case in Russian and Polish. This is evidenced by the difficulties described in this article in rendering the meanings of Russian fables in Polish. The unsuccessful translation (Version 1) used in the study is one of many examples of such mishaps in the material collected, which I do not present in full due to the limitations of the article's length. In these cases, the translators showed a misunderstanding of the idea of the original and the paramount importance of giving fairy tale characters a gender consistent with grammatical gender. In the same way that the

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to each of the character's names, which made it possible to easily convey the feminine and, where required by the text, the masculine gender. This idea should be considered justifiable.

[16] Adrianna Lipiarz, "Różnice w przyjaźni między kobietami a mężczyznami" [Differences in Friendship between Men and Women], *EUPHIRE*, January, 10, 2022, https://euphire.pl/artykul/kobieca-i-meska-przyjazn-czym-sie-roznia/.

translator of Version 1 did not understand this, the underestimation of the role of grammatical gender and its impact on the meaning and reception of the text is evident in evaluations of the translation in which the participants criticised even the changing of animal species. This prompts the conclusion that this category should not be ignored in the translation process.

It is clear that systemic differences *a priori* force the use of words in translation whose gender is not the same as in the original. However, it happens that it is in this category that associations related to the nature of gender are embedded. Once again, let us return to the image of the playful female friends and compare it with that of the playful male friends. Let us include in our imagination one boy in the group of playful girls and one girl in the group of playful men. And further – the image of frolicking women and frolicking men. Are these images the same? And when does gender begin to rule the logic of the text? We can see negligence in this regard. One translation has become – purely through the unreflective use of gender-specific nouns and often other mismatched parts of speech – completely illogical and ungrammatical. Thus, it happens that grammatical gender – as in the fairy tale under consideration – becomes the dominant, most important value, which the author plays with in the text, and the failure to sustain this game distorts its meaning, leading to nonsense and destroying its coherence.

In conclusion, grammatical gender in a literary text and in its translation:
— can become dominant,
— determines the physical and mental characteristics of characters and their behaviour,
— creates the world presented,
— affects the reception of the text,
— is a category that cannot be used unreflectively.

It should be noted that grammatical gender is only relevant in the case of the gender of anthropomorphised characters. The most important issue in the translation of the text that forms the focus of this study is to choose between two options:
— Should we be guided to leave the original gender of the main character, as was the case in Version 3 – at the expense of replacing some nouns with others?
— Should one go by the grammatical gender of the nouns in the target language, at the expense of changing the gender of the main character, as in Version 2?

The preference for Version 3 shows that the majority of female respondents considered the preservation of gender, and thus the meaning of the fairy tale, to be more important than grammatical consistency with the original.

Translated by Anna Wylężałek and David Lilley

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Czy rosyjska *luna* to polski *księżyc*? Sensy i nonsensy w przekładzie i recepcji rodzaju gramatycznego

Abstrakt: Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie, jakie znaczenie ma rodzaj gramatyczny w przekazywaniu znaczeń oraz jakich trudności ta kategoria gramatyczna może przysporzyć tłumaczom. Na potrzeby badania została stworzona w języku rosyjskim bajka, której osią jest rodzaj gramatyczny wpływający na sens tekstu. Co ciekawe, wszystkim istotnym w bajce rzeczownikom danego rodzaju w oryginale odpowiadają ekwiwalenty innego rodzaju w przekładzie. Zamiana rodzaju modyfikuje przekaz płynący z bajki, niekonsekwencja w jego użyciu burzy wymowę opowiadania. Celem sprawdzenia, jakie konsekwencje dla recepcji czytelniczej mają podjęte przez tłumaczy decyzje, ocenie odbiorców poddano trzy tłumaczenia wykonane przez studentów rusycystyki. W wyniku tego eksperymentu stwierdzono, że rodzaj gramatyczny decyduje o fizycznych i psychicznych cechach postaci i ich zachowaniach, kreuje świat przedstawiony, wpływa na recepcję tekstu oraz jest kategorią, której nie można używać bezrefleksyjnie.
Słowa kluczowe: rodzaj gramatyczny w przekładzie, przekład dla dzieci, gender w przekładzie, język polski, język rosyjski.

Ist die russische *luna* der polnische *księżyc*? Sinn und Unsinn bei der Übersetzung und Rezeption des grammatischen Genus

Abstract: Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es zu untersuchen, welche Rolle das grammatische Genus bei der Übertragung spielen kann und welche Schwierigkeiten es für Übersetzer darstellt. Für die Studie wurde ein Märchen in der russischen Sprache erstellt, in dem das grammatikalische Genus bedeutungsträchtige und sinntragende Inhalte erhielt. Interessanterweise entsprachen alle Substantive eines bestimmten Genus im Märchen den Äquivalenten eines anderen Genus in der Übersetzung. Der Wechsel des Genus verändert die Botschaft des Märchens bzw. entstellt den Sinn des Textes. Um herauszufinden, wie sich die Entscheidungen von Übersetzern auf die Rezeption auswirken, wurden drei von Studenten der Russistik angefertigte Übersetzungen einer Publikumsbewertung unterzogen. Dieses Experiment bestätigt, dass das grammatikalische Genus die physischen und psychologischen Eigenschaften der Figuren und ihr Verhalten bestimmt, die dargestellte Welt schafft, die Rezeption des Textes stark beeinflusst und zu einer reflexionserfordernden Kategorie gehört.
Schlüsselwörter*:* grammatikalisches Genus in der Übersetzung, Übersetzung für Kinder, Geschlecht in der Übersetzung, Russisch, Polnisch.