

“Beautiful Flesh and Blood Women” or just beautiful: Women’s representation in French and Lithuanian subtitles of *Sex and the City*

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Abstract

This study investigates the representation of women in French and Lithuanian subtitles of the popular American TV series *Sex and the City*. It seeks to determine whether Lithuanian subtitles reinforce or dilute the Western feminist perspectives portrayed in the series compared to the original English and subtitled French versions. Through comparative analysis, considering the subtitling practices of both countries, this interdisciplinary study at the intersection of audiovisual translation and gender studies draws inspiration from Anne-Lise Feral’s work (2011a). This study employs a qualitative analysis of the original English version and its French and Lithuanian subtitles for selected episodes of the mentioned series to understand how subtitles shape the representation of women across different cultural contexts. This research compares Lithuanian and French subtitles to assess the under-researched area of gender studies and AVT in Lithuania against the more developed field in France. The findings reveal that Lithuanian subtitles tend to alter the source text more than French subtitles, potentially presenting a slightly different portrayal of women than intended by the creators, perpetuating outdated stereotypes. This research sheds light on the influence of subtitling on the interpretation of feminist discourse in media across different cultural contexts.

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1. Introduction

Audiovisual works have been translated into other languages for several decades, but it was not until the late twentieth century, coinciding with technological advancements and the emergence of new audiovisual modes, that a significant increase in audiovisual translation (AVT) research occurred. Consequently, AVT gradually transitioned from the margins to the center of the academic debate in translation studies, participating in a many interdisciplinary research (Remael 2010). Within the realm of AVT, interdisciplinary research involves the collaboration of various fields, such as linguistics, psychology, film studies, history, etc.

This research focuses on the emerging intersection between gender studies, particularly driven by feminist theories and activism, and audiovisual translation, a connection that began to emerge in the early years of the twenty-first century. The analysis is grounded in one of the prominent approaches to examining gender-related themes in audiovisual products, as outlined by Von Flotow & Josephy-Hernández (2018). This approach emphasizes feminist elements in Anglo-American audiovisual products and their translation into Romance languages, in this case, French.

The aforementioned gender-focused approach in AVT focuses primarily on examining translated audiovisual components sourced from English films or television series; many of which belong to the *chick flick* genre (Von Flotow & Josephy-Hernández 2018, 300). These productions often embody characteristics associated with postfeminism, including romance and femininity, girlpower, as well as sexual empowerment (Ferriss & Young 2008). The romantic comedy drama *Sex and the City* portrays the lives of four women living in New York City. The series offers a rich tapestry of discussions on sexuality, relationships, and the challenges faced by women in both their personal and professional lives. For the purpose of this analysis, the first season of the popular chick flick television series *Sex and the City*, created by Darren Star for Home Box Office (HBO) in 1998, will serve as the primary subject of examination. The present paper draws its inspiration and main theoretical framework from the analysis published by Anne-Lise Feral in 2011. Feral's research delved into the nuances of subtitling and dubbing practices in conveying certain elements related to American feminism, expressed by female characters in the French version of the series. Employing a systematic approach, the researcher selected examples from the aforementioned series, *Sex and the City*, and made observations on how prevailing patriarchal constructs and gender perceptions influence the portrayal of women’s discourse in audiovisual products.

It is noteworthy that gender studies in Lithuania are still in their infancy, characterized by limited public awareness and often marginalized

discussions on women's rights, juxtaposed against traditional values. Therefore, an examination of the Lithuanian translation of audiovisual material from a gender perspective holds significant relevance.

The current paper seeks to analyse the same linguistic elements explored by Feral (2011a) in Lithuanian subtitles and to compare them with their counterparts in the French subtitles. Following this introduction, Section 2 will explore AVT practices, particularly subtitling, in France and Lithuania, emphasizing the prevalence of these methods in each country. Then, in Section 3, an overview of the development of gender perspectives in AVT, including the contextual framework in each of the countries analysed, will be provided. Section 4 will outline the research material and methodology, along with the methods for comparing gender representation, used in this study. In Section 5, the analysis of selected examples will be presented, focusing on how the French and Lithuanian subtitles represent women compared to the original English version. Ultimately, Section 6 will discuss the findings, their implications for gender representation in AVT, and suggest potential areas for future research, concluding the paper.

2. Subtitling in France and Lithuania

While the study conducted by Feral (2011a) entails both French dubbing and subtitling of the same series, the current work compares the French and Lithuanian subtitles. The decision not to include dubbing is based on the fact that in Lithuania, unlike in France, it is not a frequently utilized AVT mode.

In the context of cinema, subtitling prevails across most of Europe, including Lithuania, where dubbing in Lithuania is primarily reserved for animated content aimed at children. Otherwise, France presents a more complex landscape where both subtitling and dubbing coexist. The standard distribution of foreign films in France involves making them available in several subtitled versions and others in dubbed releases. But despite that, merely a few cinemas provide films in both versions. The usual practice is to utilize dubbing, and subsequently audiences are more commonly exposed to dubbed than subtitled translations (Media Consulting Group Report 2011). This reflects France’s enduring cultural attachment to dubbing, a tradition dates back to the early 20th century when it was introduced to make foreign films more accessible to a wider French-speaking audience. In addition, subtitles in the French context are usually associated with a more educated, intellectual, and affluent audiences (Feral 2011a, 392).

In terms of television, dubbing has been the predominant practice in France for decades. However, the rise of streaming platforms and the influence of international content, particularly from the English-speaking

countries, has gradually shifted this trend. Younger audiences, increasingly accustomed to streaming platforms offering subtitled content. This shift, particularly noticeable with the younger generation, suggests a change in the cultural perception of subtitling, which was once considered niche or elitist. In Lithuania, voice-over remains the most common AVT practice for television. However, cable television frequently employs subtitling, even though its impact on the average Lithuanian viewer due to its comparatively smaller audience remains limited. It has therefore been observed that Lithuanian public broadcaster's efforts to air subtitled films often result in negative feedback from viewers and a decline in ratings. (Koverienė & Satkauskaitė 2017, 26). Nevertheless, a gradual shift is occurring, particularly when the source language is English. This contrast in Lithuanian television broadcasting practices is noteworthy: it highlights the differing attitudes and preferences toward AVT methods within the country. The younger generation leans towards the original English version or Lithuanian subtitles. Although films and TV series with subtitles on Lithuanian television have not yet become mainstream, such influence is growing.

To sum up, the situation in France is somewhat peculiar, as both film distributors and viewers continue to favour dubbing, but a considerable demand for subtitled films remains (O’Sullivan & Cornu 2019, 23). As for Lithuania, voice-over of TV series and films remains prevalent, particularly on television, although audience preferences are changing, as younger viewers increasingly favour subtitled audiovisual production, while the older generation prefers voice-over.

3. Gender perspectives in AVT

The representation of gender roles in films and television serves as a lens through which audiences interpret reality. Uncovering the intersection between gender studies and AVT helps understand these portrayals. Gender-focused audiovisual translation (AVT) studies have increasingly gained attention, with scholars exploring how translation practices shape and reflect perceptions of gender. De Marco (2012, 67) points out that scholars specializing in cinema studies began exploring gender-related issues, such as women’s portrayal in films, perceptions of female sexuality, and surrounding stereotypes. As highlighted by Von Flotow and Josephy-Hernández (2018, 296), it was not until the early 2000s that gender-focused theories began emerging within AVT itself. Scholars have started indirectly delving into research that addresses gender-driven biases, including gender-driven biases, the reception of female voices in broadcasting media, viewers' assessments of reliability and assumptions based on gender, the use of sexualized language by characters, and the depiction of female personages in films (a more extensive overview of such research is accessible in De Marco 2012, 67-68). In the evolving landscape

of translation and AVT studies, there has been an increasing focus on how the translation of written and audiovisual texts shapes the portrayal and perception of gender. This focus has gradually shifted from literary to audiovisual translation, expanding discussions on how gender can be explored across various audiovisual genres. While translation analysis typically emphasizes patriarchal dominance, De Marco (2016, 1-4) highlights that insufficient attention is placed on examining how cinema portrays diverse gender identities through various mediums such as thought, dialogue, and physical gestures. Subtitling offers unique challenges and opportunities for gender representation. Unlike dubbing or voice-over, which allow for more creative manipulation of content, subtitles are bound by space and time constraints, can sometimes lead to omissions or alterations that unintentionally reinforce or erase gender-related nuances.

The comparative nature of this study suggests examining more targeted contexts. Over the last decade, there has been an increasing academic focus on how AVT intersects with gender-related research in French cinema and television. The contributions of several influential figures to this convergence deserve acknowledgment, including Anne-Lise Feral (2011a, 2011b, 2018), Luise von Flotow (2018), Luis Pérez-González (2018), and Sophie Chadelle (2019). By contrast, this interdisciplinary field remains significantly under-researched and remains largely unexplored. According to the author, there are no established figures of influence in this domain in Lithuania yet. Given the wide exposure of Lithuanian audiences to global media through subtitled content, this gap in research is particularly important.

The exploration of the mentioned intersection reveals that media inevitably reflects and influences societal perceptions of gender, and highlights the issues linked to it. Therefore, there is ongoing significance in exploring gender stereotypes within cinematic narratives to revise how they are depicted, perceived, and then presented across the varied contexts of different countries.

4. Research material and methodology

Feral’s analysis, which forms the basis of the current study, is divided into three parts: *Feminist culture*, *Gender equality: The public sphere*, and *Feminist rhetoric*. Due to the overlapping nature of these themes, the present paper will analyse selected elements sequentially. Employing a qualitative interpretative method, the study will explore the examples, which include French subtitles, selected and analysed by Feral (2011a) from the first season of *Sex and the City* alongside corresponding examples from the Lithuanian subtitled version of the series available online on the television platform “Telia Play”. Although the French subtitles are sourced

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from Feral’s (2011a) analysis, time codes and segmentation details are not available. Consequently, the examples are presented without this level of detail. The focus of this study remains on the content and translation choices, which are the central components of the analysis.

The first season of *Sex and the City* premiered in 1998 and consisted of 12 episodes. It introduces the audience to the main character Carrie Bradshaw, who writes a sex column for a fictional publication, and her three best friends: Miranda Hobbes, a lawyer with a Harvard degree; Charlotte York, a respected art dealer; and Samantha Jones, the owner of a public relations firm. The show addresses themes of romance and sexuality, while also examining the characters’ journeys through the complexities of life in Manhattan.

With regard to the French subtitles of the series, the author remains unknown to the author of this paper. As for the Lithuanian subtitles, the situation is somewhat peculiar. At the end of the first, second, and third episodes, Marius Šernas is credited as the subtitler. In the fourth episode, the subtitler’s name disappears, leaving only the company’s name: “Subtitled SDI Lithuania (www.sdimedia.com)”. The fifth and sixth episodes indicate either the company or the subtitler, and finally, at the end of the seventh and eighth episodes, another subtitler, Ramūnas Bakšys, is credited. It is apparent that “Telia Play” partnered with a large company, “SDI Media”, to produce subtitles. As noted by one of the media localization researchers, “[t]he workflows are more complex than ever, and the time-to-market [...] is just getting shorter and shorter.” (Botkin 2021). Regarding the year of the translation, no specific information is provided. However, considering the organizational change from “SDI Media” to “Iyuno” in 2021, it is assumed that the subtitles were created before this reorganization.

Depending on the length of the article, only examples that exhibit differences or nuances between the target texts, or between the source and target texts, were selected for analysis. Instances where the target texts retained the source text’s message were not considered. Each example will be provided in a table, including the source text, both target texts, and the Lithuanian back translation in square brackets, given that Lithuanian is a relatively uncommon language. This setup will facilitate the application of the comparative method, enabling a thorough examination and comprehension of the similarities and differences to assess equivalence among the discovered cases related to women’s representation. Due to the scarcity of similar studies in Lithuania, the focus is on women as the primary category of analysis. This approach, often used in gender studies, will be examined in conjunction with AVT, following the framework applied by Feral (2011a). The study aims to compare the source text with its subtitled version(s) and to interpret their impact on potential viewer perception.

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5. Navigating through gendered narratives in *Sex and the City*

The example from the first episode involves a self-reliant, confident, and assertive character, highlighting the paradoxical and contradictory nature of the confluence of neoliberalism and postfeminism. While women’s sexual desire, power, and independence are glorified, traditional gender roles are simultaneously promoted. This creates a paradox where women are encouraged to embody both conventional norms and empowerment, distorting reality to appear more appealing or less problematic than it actually is and idealizing a narrow and normative representation of privileged women’s experiences and accomplishments (Martínez-Jiménez 2023, 2817-2818).

The first instance occurs at a party when one of her closest unmarried female friends, Samantha (Kim Cattrall), and the series’ protagonist Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker), notice Mr. Big (Chris Noth), a rich and mysterious man. Before Samantha, whose self-esteem is already exceedingly high, attempts to approach him, she boosts her confidence by reminding herself of her modelesque beauty and adds the utterance provided in Table 1.

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Plus I own my own business. | En plus, je possède ma propre entreprise. | Be to, turiu nuosavą verslą. [BT: Also, I have my own business.] |

Table 1. Example 1 from the episode 1, *Sex and the City*

Upon thorough examination, the French translation appears to better retain the ideas of self-reliance and ownership compared to the Lithuanian one. In the Lithuanian case, the verb “turiu” is a general term for possession or utilization. However, a verb emphasizing exclusive legal ownership and responsibility would be more appropriate, given the context, the source text, and Samantha’s tone. The attempts to compensate for the mitigation of the original significance denoting ownership with the adjective “nuosavą” are apparent, but not entirely sufficient. Furthermore, it is worth briefly mentioning that the difference in subtitle length could reflect different expectations or subtitling norms in each language. The potential influence of these components, however, requires further examination. Such inquiries would benefit from exploring how subtitlers navigate these factors and how they affect the final translation.

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The second episode reveals numerous problematic translation choices. In the primary example from this episode, the four main female characters discuss unrealistic beauty standards, and Carrie reflects on the topic, noting the utterance in Table 2.

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|--|---|
| I find it fascinating that four beautiful flesh and blood women could be intimidated by some unreal fantasy . I mean look, look at this. Is this really intimidating to any of you? | Je trouve incroyable que quatre belles femmes avec les pieds sur terre puissent être intimidées par un fantasma . Regardez. Est-ce que ça vous intimide? | Kaip žavinga. Keturias gražias moteris baugina kažkokia nereali fantazija . Tik pažiūrėkit. Ar tai tikrai jus gąsdina? [BT: How charming. Some unreal fantasy intimidates four beautiful women. Just take a look. Does this really intimidate you?] |

Table 2. Example 1 from the episode 2, *Models and mortals*

In the French subtitles, the original idiom “flesh and blood”, which Carrie uses to refer to her friends, is rendered as “les pieds sur terre”, conveying the idea of women who are composed and adept at handling challenging situations. In the Lithuanian version, however, such phrasing is omitted, leaving the audience with a single, rather superficial characteristic: their beauty (“gražias moteris”). Despite these drawbacks, it is noteworthy that the notion of unattainable beauty standards remains expressed in both French and Lithuanian versions, through the terms “fantasma” and “nereali fantazija”, respectively.

Shortly thereafter, Carrie’s narrative voice emerges as she expresses her thoughts while dining and conversing with her friends. Thus, the audience begins to hear Carrie’s reflective narration (see Table 3).

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| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|--|--|
| Suddenly I was interested. If models could cause otherwise rational individuals to crumble in their presence, exactly how powerful was beauty? | J’étais intéressée tout à coup. Si les mannequins faisaient perdre les pédales à des individus rationnels , quel était le pouvoir de la beauté? | Staiga, man tapo įdomu. Jei modeliai gali priversti žmogų nemėgti savo išvaizdos , koks galingas yra grožis? [BT: Suddenly I became interested. If models can force a person to dislike their appearance, how powerful is beauty?] |

Table 3. Example 2 from the episode 2, *Models and Mortals*

While both the French and Lithuanian subtitles illustrate the detrimental impact of conventional beauty standards on women’s self-esteem and body confidence with phrases like “faisaient perdre les pédales” and “gali priversti žmogų nemėgti savo išvaizdos”, the Lithuanian version omits the significant adjective “rational”, which would help counter the prevailing stereotype of labelling women as overly emotional and less credible individuals. Additionally, the initial phrase of this example exhibits inconsistent syntax and a punctuation mistake, reflecting a noticeable lack of quality and attention to detail. The observed deficiencies may be attributed to the low translation rates, along with the high demand and rapid delivery expectations. However, this hypothesis would require further investigation.

The concluding instance from this episode appears after Miranda (Cynthia Nixon), known for her rational, ambitious, and cynical nature, discovers that her date has an obsession with dating only models. During a dinner conversation, the four ultimate best friends discuss the disadvantages they face due to unfair beauty standards, and Miranda passionately shares her opinion on the topic (see Table 4).

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Miranda</i> : We should just admit that we live in a culture that promotes | <i>Miranda</i> : Notre culture impose des canons de beauté impossibles. | <i>Miranda</i> : Mūsų kultūroje skatinami iškreipti grožio standartai. |

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| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>impossible standards of beauty. <i>Carrie:</i> Yeah, except men think they’re possible. <i>Miranda:</i> Yeah.</p> | <p><i>Carrie:</i> Sauf que les hommes les croient possibles. <i>Miranda:</i> Oui!</p> | <p><i>Kerė:</i> Taip, bet vyrams jie tinka. <i>Miranda:</i> Taip. [BT: <i>Miranda:</i> In our culture, distorted standards of beauty are being promoted. <i>Carrie:</i> Yes, but they suit men. <i>Miranda:</i> Yes.]</p> |
|---|--|--|

Table 4. Example 3 from the episode 2, *Models and Mortals*

What immediately stands out is how Carrie’s response is conveyed in Lithuanian subtitles: the French translation opts for a direct expression of the main idea; the Lithuanian translation renders the informal “Yeah” in a formal manner. As a result, the entire phrase carries a slightly altered meaning. Instead of implying that men believe unrealistic beauty standards are “possible”, it suggests they find these standards “suitable” for themselves. It appears the translator may have focused primarily on the subtitles themselves, potentially neglecting the other two components of translation – the spoken word and the image. The interplay of all three components, along with the viewer’s ability to see, comprehend and interpret them, defines the core attributes of the audiovisual medium (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007, 9). Additionally, the French version utilizes orthographic markers to convey Miranda’s raised tone, which the audience can hear, while the Lithuanian version fails to capture both her informal way of speaking and her raised voice. These observations contribute to existing concerns regarding quality of Lithuanian translation.

A few following examples from the fourth episode illustrate how details regarding women’s education are depicted. In the first instance, Charlotte (Kristin Davis), known for her polite, loyal, and traditionalist demeanour in the series, sits among her best friends in a taxi, stunned by her boyfriend’s inappropriate and vulgar request. In the midst of their discussion on controversial at the time sexual practice, Charlotte turns to Samantha in confusion, with a shocked expression, and interjects (see Table 5).

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| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| I went to Smith . | J’ai été éduquée dans une école de filles! | Aš studijavau universitete. [BT: I studied at university.] |

Table 5. Example 1 from the episode 4, *Valley of the Twenty-something Guys*

For both French and Lithuanian audiences, the name “Smith” needed to be modified, given its lack of cultural relevance in both contexts. In the French subtitles, the name of the prestigious liberal arts college (founded primarily for women only) has been erased and transformed into a girl’s school. This change reduces its intended level of education, contributing to a slightly archaic feel, but embracing the notion of exclusively female education environment (Feral 2011a, 394). Conversely, in Lithuanian subtitles, the educational level is elevated (“college” transitions to “university”) with no reference to the female-only environment, simply because solely women’s educational institutions are largely unpopular and outdated in Lithuania, particularly in higher education contexts.

In the narrative surrounding Smith College, Charlotte’s persona represents the archetype idealized by the institution: a symbol of women’s education and progress that fosters meaningful careers and lives. Therefore, translation must not only analyse dialogues, but also align with the intended meaning and purpose.

A further instance will also pertain to educational details of another character. It occurs when Carrie seeks Miranda’s insight into whether the man, she is interested in, perceives her as a significant romantic interest or merely has felt obliged to ask her out. Miranda, after carefully assessing a message left on a voicemail to the phone, finally says (see Table 6):

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|--|--|
| I have no idea. And I finished first in my litigation class. | Je n’en ai aucune idée. Et j’étais première en cours de litiges. | Nežinau. Nors esu igudus. [BT: Nežinau. Although I’m skilled.] |

Table 6. Example 2 from the episode 4, *Valley of the Twenty-something Guys*

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The French translation preserves the heroine’s accomplishments as a law student, contrasting with the Lithuanian version, which unfortunately fails to convey any reference to her academic background. Instead, the Lithuanian target text may evoke various interpretations, because the adjective “įgudus” is generic and offers little specificity. However, considering the context of the scene, these subtitles initially suggest that Miranda has experience in areas and scenarios that involve interpreting male behaviour, helping, and supporting her friends, or providing relationship advice. Furthermore, in Lithuanian, a shortened ending in verbs, as seen with “įgudus”, suggests a more casual, informal tone, which actually might be appropriate for the context of the situation.

The pattern observed in an earlier instance reappears in a similar case in the fifth episode. It manifests when Charlotte visits a well-known artist’s farm to observe his latest work. As she gets out of her car, she expresses with great enthusiasm that meeting him was the highlight of her career. He responds by acknowledging his surprise that someone of her age is familiar with his works. With evident astonishment, she declares (see Table 7):

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|--|--|
| I studied you in college! | Je vous ai étudié à l’université! | Domėjaus jumis koledže. [BT: I was interested in you in college.] |

Table 7. Example 1 from the episode 5, *The Power of Female Sex*

In both subtitled texts, references to educational attainment are preserved, but presented differently. The French version utilizes the equivalent term “l’université” that corresponds to the English concept of “college” within the national context. In the Lithuanian version, the term “koledžas” is used, which refers to the institution of higher education in English-speaking countries. However, this term does not adapt well to the Lithuanian context, and is instead translated literally. The previously employed term “universitetas” or the potential term “kolegija” (which implies a slightly lower academic status) would better reflect the Lithuanian academic context. Lithuanian subtitles display varying terminology throughout the episodes, creating inconsistency in character portrayal and development.

Additionally, the most problematic aspect distinguishing Lithuanian subtitles from others analysed in this paper is the use of the verb

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“domėjaus.” This term introduces a nuanced implication, suggesting a process of discovery or satisfying curiosity, which can be misinterpreted as applying to the artist himself rather than his works. It also softens the otherwise meticulous process of studying. Therefore, careless translation can heavily influence and distort the perception of the audience. Therefore, it is crucial for the translator to maintain objectivity when evaluating the characters, their development, and dialogues, while carefully noting every detail that contributes to such portrayal.

The commonly heard and deep-rooted stereotype in society is that women’s perceived lack of ambition correlates with their lower career success. Such structural issue occurs in the subtitles, too, in the scene where the four female friends gather at Carrie’s pad, playing poker (by the way, it is worth noticing this emphasis, since poker historically has been associated with male dominated environment). During their discussions about the ways of using sexuality, the least demanding Charlotte desires to exhibit the artist’s work at the gallery, but worries about possible demands for reciprocation (see Table 8).

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|--|---|--|
| So, if I could get him to show at the gallery, it would be an incredible coup. | Si je pouvais le convaincre à exposer à la galerie, ça serait un coup incroyable. | Būtų nuostabu, jei jis surengtų parodą galerijoje. [BT: It would be wonderful if he held an exhibition at the gallery.] |

Table 8. Example 2 from the episode 5, *The Power of Female Sex*

Thus, unlike in the French subtitles, where Charlotte’s impact is even strengthened by the verb “convaincre”, the Lithuanian ones display a lack of her own influence on the display of the exhibition, excluding her aspiration and effort to make the artist’s work available for the public to see. The translation does not align with the creators’ objective to highlight women’s empowerment through additional semantic contexts.

The same episode also features a scene where Miranda angrily confronts Samantha’s gendered statement that “men give, women receive” (see Table 9):

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| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|---|--|--|
| That’s exactly the kind of argument men have been using since the dawn of time to exploit women. | C’est le vieil argument des hommes pour exploiter les femmes. | Šį argumentą vyrai naudoja nuo neatmenamų laikų. [BT: Men have been using this argument since time immemorial.] |

Table 9. Example 3 from the episode 5, *The Power of Female Sex*

By excluding the reference to women’s exploitation by men, Lithuanian subtitles, unlike the source and French target texts, downplay the problematic nature surrounding this issue. Miranda’s tone and facial expressions highlight the necessity of mentioning this, but the omission may be due to strong censorship of sensitive sexual references (Chiaro 2007; Scandura 2004 in Feral 2011b, 185). It seems paradoxical that certain moments, despite the strong title of the episode, are still translated in a demeaning manner. Yet, as widely acknowledged, art frequently mirrors society, and it is evidenced by the subtitles of the series. According to Rakauskienė, Krinickienė, and Servetkienė (2020, 218-232), the income disparity among women continues to depict poverty with a distinctly “female face”. Gender inequality in the European Union intensifies during times of crisis, particularly due to disparities in pay, increased violence against women, and difficulties in balancing work and personal life. As discrimination primarily targets women in the 30-39 age group, like those depicted in the series, there is increased importance in translating information with greater empathy and sensitivity.

In the sixth episode, after spending the night together, Mike (Michael Port) reveals his career ambitions to Libby (Heather Barclay). However, unlike the other texts under scrutiny, the Lithuanian version inaccurately translates Mike’s words (see Table 10).

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| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Mike: I’m a creative director of an ad agency,</i> but eventually I’d love to have my own shop. <i>Libby: I’d love to have my own shop, too.</i></p> | <p><i>Mike: Je suis directeur créatif dans une agence de pub,</i> mais je voudrais monter ma propre affaire. <i>Libby: Je voudrais aussi monter ma propre affaire.</i></p> | <p><i>Maikas: Nesu reklamos agentūros vadovas.</i> Bet norėčiau turėt savo dirbtuvę. <i>Libė: Ir aš.</i> [BT: <i>Mike: I’m not a director of an ad agency. But I’d like to have my own workshop.</i> <i>Libby: Me too.</i>]</p> |

Table 10. Example 1 from the episode 6, *Secret Sex*

Although the stereotype that women are unable to pursue their professional goals is not endorsed here, the mistranslation regarding Mike’s career aspirations reinforces previous assumptions about poor translation quality and insufficient scrutiny by the translator.

The penultimate example of this analysis will present and help investigate the contrasting attitudes towards women's education. Thus, while Carrie's voice narrates the events she missed during her time away from her friends, the audience observes those moments one after another. Table 11 shows one of them portraying Miranda and the things she was occupied with.

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Miranda had worked on a successful merger.</p> | <p>Miranda avait travaillé sur une fusion importante.</p> | <p>Mirandai pasisekė sujungti 2 įmones. [BT: Miranda got lucky to merge 2 companies.]</p> |

Table 11. Example 1 from the episode 7, *The Monogamists*

The Lithuanian translation evidently presents a less favourable attitude towards women’s professional accomplishments. The verb “pasisekė” reinforces the stereotype that a woman's career progression

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depends mainly on success, implying that they need to invest less effort compared to men. Even if Lithuanian syntax generally calls for a verb, this situation and context require a verb to highlight and express Miranda’s effort, focusing on the action over success. In contrast, the French translation recognizes working woman’s efforts and achievements, and even emphasizes the importance of it by opting for the adjective “importante”, instead of “successful” as in the source text.

The final example in this study links back to the initial case of the analysis, revealing a parallel idea that is modified, specifically mitigated, rather than maintained in both target texts. As they lay in bed, Charlotte’s boyfriend Jack (Joseph Murphy) asks her (Table 12):

| ORIGINAL | FRENCH SUBTITLES | LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES |
|--|---|--|
| <p><i>Jack:</i> What are your fantasies? <i>Charlotte:</i> God, I’d love to own my own gallery.</p> | <p><i>Jack:</i> Quels sont tes fantasmés? <i>Charlotte:</i> J’adorerais avoir ma propre galerie.</p> | <p><i>Džekas:</i> Apie ką tu svajoji? <i>Šarlotė:</i> O Dieve. Norėčiau turėti savo galeriją. [BT: <i>Jack:</i> What do you dream about? <i>Charlotte:</i> Oh God. I’d like to have my own gallery.]</p> |

Table 12. Example 1 from the episode 8, *Three’s a Crowd*

The dialogue reflects Charlotte’s effort to articulate a sense and intent of ownership, shown through the expressions “ma propre” in French and “savo” in Lithuanian. However, both translations could have enhanced this idea by focusing more on the self-reliance implied by the verb “own”, which in the present case remains generalized (for more information see Table 1). The recurrent punctuation mistakes in Lithuanian subtitles, such as the absence of a comma before addressing someone (e.g., “God”), suggest the translator’s lack of attentiveness, and indicate a rather mediocre quality.

6. Conclusions

The intersection of audiovisual translation and gender studies is vital for navigating linguistic, cultural, and social nuances while maintaining the integrity of the original content. This approach fosters a more inclusive and respectful translation landscape, ensuring accurate representation of the

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translated product. Translators must be vigilant to avoid perpetuating stereotypes about women, reflecting a commitment to social progress and gender equality.

The comparative study revealed that unfortunately, it is not always the case. The translations into French and Lithuanian demonstrate differing degrees of accuracy regarding the source text. The French subtitles more frequently preserve the information and ideas from the source text compared to the Lithuanian subtitles. The Lithuanian version often omits, generalizes, or replaces expressions that could strengthen women’s professional or educational achievements and reinforce their representation. This tendency raises critical questions about the underlying causes of such translation. It could reflect broader societal or cultural attitudes towards gender roles and representation, or it could be a lack of sensitivity or awareness among subtitlers about the importance of accurately representing women, which points to a need for gender-conscious trainings and guidelines in audiovisual translation. The impact of it goes beyond the translation itself, as such translations contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

Regarding quality, the two target texts differ significantly: the French subtitles are consistent and well-integrated into the context, while the Lithuanian ones contain numerous minor and substantial mistakes and inconsistencies. Translators should employ techniques that maintain content without compromising the text’s quality and coherence.

The analysis also raises the question of whether male subtitlers can accurately portray the topics, concerns, and experiences of female protagonists. If the answer is positive, male translators should focus on gaining a deeper understanding of contextual information.

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