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ON, ONA, ONO: TRANSLATING GENDER NEUTRAL PRONOUNS INTO CROATIAN

Summary

Gender neutral pronouns have become prominent in languages such as English (they/them) or Swedish (hen). They are sometimes used in public discourse in order to indicate that no gender is above one another. However, there is also a group of people sometimes using they/them as their preferred pronouns. This group has embraced the term non-binary as a way to describe their gender, meaning they see themselves as neither predominantly male nor female, but as being outside of the male-female gender binary. The aim of this paper is to examine how non-binary people prefer to be addressed in Croatian in order to determine how a translator should approach translating gender-neutral pronouns from English into Croatian, which uses grammatical gender along with gendered pronouns. Even though the majority of non-binary people prefer to use they/them pronouns in English, Croatian is different because it is a fusional language, and its use of cases means that a speaker has to adjust the verb, noun or adjective they use in a sentence according to grammatical gender. Through interviews conducted with Croatian natives identifying as non-binary, and by analyzing examples of translation of non-binary pronouns into Croatian, this study will try to provide ideas for translators trying to find an accurate and appropriate translation for gender neutral pronouns, as well as look into reasons why some forms of pronouns in the Croatian language may not be the best option for translating the language of non-binary people based on their own responses.

Key words: translation, non-binary, grammatical gender, English, Croatian

INTRODUCTION

Non-binary is a gender identity of people who identify themselves outside of the gender binary of the masculine and feminine gender, as neither male nor female, as both, or as varying degrees of masculine or feminine. It is a fairly new concept, and not much research has been conducted on this issue, especially in the field of translation. The aim of this paper is to examine how Croatian translators might translate gender neutral pronouns, and which pronouns Croatian non-binary natives use. The first section of the paper deals with the pronoun most often associated with non-binary people – the singular *they*. It also deals with grammarians' criticism throughout the years, and why it might be a better alternative to the generic *he* pronoun recommended by some grammarians. In the second section, some historical examples of non-binary gender

identity, as well as the contemporary definition of non-binary gender identity, will be discussed. The following section will be on the typological differences between English and Croatian, namely on the difference in grammatical gender or lack thereof, and how these differences influence the translation process. Furthermore, the results of the interviews with Croatian non-binary natives will be shown. The following sections will deal with the notions of translation equivalence and the various theories behind it, as well as the cultural shift, and how it impacts queer translation. The final section will give an analysis of examples of translating the singular *they* pronoun into Croatian, as well as the text with such examples.

THE SINGULAR *THEY* PRONOUN

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the singular *they* pronoun emerged in Middle English in the 14th century, a century after the plural *they* pronoun came into use (Baron 2018). The plural *they* pronoun was borrowed from Old Norse in the 13th century ("They"). This shows that there was a need for a singular pronoun used for an antecedent which is unknown or unspecified. The following are examples of early uses of the singular *they* pronoun.

"Eche on in **þer** craft ys wijs." (Wycliffe qtd. in the University of Michigan Middle English Dictionary)
"Hastely hiȝed eche... **þei** neyȝþed so neiȝh …þere william & his worþi lef were liand i-fere." (William and the Werewolf qtd. in Baron, 2018: n.p.)

In these examples, various authors use the singular *they* pronoun in a way which has been a matter of debate for many centuries after it was first recorded, although it had been in use since the 14th century. According to Baron (2018), in the 18th century, grammarians started to point out that the singular *they* pronoun is an error because a plural pronoun cannot take a singular antecedent, but the *you* pronoun was also plural before it became singular, which proves that this kind of shift in meaning is possible. One of the possible reasons why grammarians were opposed to the singular *they* pronoun, along with the previously mentioned reasons, is the fact that the singular *they* pronoun was used interchangeably with the generic *he* pronoun, which had also been used for both sexes in Middle English. In fact, many English grammars prescribed the use of the generic *he* pronoun for both sexes instead of the singular *they* pronoun ever since the 18th century. One of the first to prescribe this rule was Anne Fisher (1789: 118), stating, "The *Masculine Person* answers to the *general Name*, which comprehends both *Male* and *Female*; as, *any Person who knows that he says*". Her grammar was the first grammar to be published by a woman, and it became very popular, which could have contributed to the popularity of this rule. In 1850, the British Parliament passed on an Act which led to the use of the generic *he* pronoun in all laws (Miller, 1994), possibly due to her suggestion.

The generic *he* pronoun

The generic *he* pronoun, albeit considered grammatically correct by some, was widely criticized as not being inclusive and showing abject bias toward men, male-centered language, and therefore, a male-centered society. The generic *he* pronoun was also recommended by William Lily in his grammar for English students of Latin, *A Short Introduction to Latin*, stating, "The Masculine Gender is more worthy than the Feminine, and the Feminine more worthy than the Neuter" (Lily qtd. in Baron, 2015, n.p.). This quote on the "worthiness of gender", as he calls it, may seem offensive to the contemporary reader, but it is important to note that this rule was meant to be interpreted only in the context of grammatical gender, not in the context of gender as a social construct, as it has come to be considered today. English grammarians applied this Latin rule to English in the 18th century (Baron 2015). The 18th century was a period when women were not allowed to vote, and were usually considered lesser than men. As the issue of women's suffrage became more prominent, so did the issue of the generic *he* pronoun. Some suffragettes even used this rule to their advantage, with Anna Johnson saying, "[T]he English language is destitute of a singular personal pronoun, third person, of common gender; but usage sanctions the employment of "he," "him" and "his" as of common gender. Therefore, under "he" women can certainly register." (qtd. in Baron, 2015: n.p.)

Even though prescriptive grammars indicate that using the generic *he* pronoun is considered correct and easily understandable, there are some examples which show that constructing a phrase using the generic *he* pronoun may lead to misunderstanding. Consider this example:

"If a student asks politely, the teacher will answer **his** question."

This example shows a typical variation of a classroom rule. This kind of phrase would be perfectly clear in a setting where a teacher is lecturing in an all-male school, in a classroom filled with male students. But imagine a situation where a teacher tells their classroom filled with students of both sexes this phrase. This phrase would probably be clearly interpreted by a classroom filled with older students, who have already learned about the generic *he* pronoun, and who have been told their entire lives that using the generic *he* pronoun for both sexes is correct. But how would younger children react to this phrase? Would girls feel offended? Or would it be better to say "their question" or "his or her question"? Some might suggest we should use the generic *she* pronoun in order to make the girls feel more included. But what if there are students in that class who do not feel comfortable with either pronoun? Would it be better to use the singular *they* pronoun so that the teacher can make sure everyone feels included? Another example where insistence upon the generic *he* pronoun leads to oddity to consider is the following one:

"When we get abortion law repeal, everyone will be able to decide for **himself** whether or not to have an abortion." (Franks, 2012: 206)

The person stating this phrase could have used 'herself' but instead they opted for the generic *he* pronoun, as advised by grammars at the time. If the speaker was to use the singular *they* pronoun and change 'himself' to 'themselves', there would be less or even no misunderstanding at all.

The contemporary use of the singular *they* pronoun

During the last couple of decades, the singular *they* pronoun has become more and more appropriate to use for referring to someone whose gender is unknown, or when the antecedent is 'somebody', 'no one in particular', or 'everybody'. But recently, the singular *they* pronoun has become the preferred pronoun of some non-binary and genderqueer people. These people identify as outside of the gender binary, and instead of addressing themselves using masculine or feminine pronouns, they prefer to be addressed using the singular *they* pronoun. The Anglophone society is becoming more and more accepting of non-binary people, and therefore, of the singular *they* pronoun being used to address them. However, there is some criticism. Due to a variety of reasons, some people consider it strange to use the singular *they* pronoun when referring to just one particular person, and it sometimes lead to *misgendering*. Misgendering is a type of identity misclassification (McLemore, 2014: 53) which may be intentional or unintentional. In this study, McLemore has shown that the transgender individuals have mostly reported that they have sometimes experienced misgendering, and 30.4% reported being misgendered often. 34.8% have reported feeling very stigmatized when being misgendered (ibid.).

In the recent years, efforts have been made to make the singular *they* pronoun, used by non-binary people as their preferred pronoun, more prominent in society, and in linguistics. The definition of the singular *they* pronoun used to refer to non-binary people was added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2019. The American Dialect Society chose the singular *they* pronoun as their word of the year in 2015, and explained their decision by saying: "While editors have increasingly moved to accepting singular *they* when used in a generic fashion, voters in the Word of the Year proceedings singled out its newer usage as an identifier for someone who may identify as non-binary in gender terms (Mariott, 2015: n.p.)."

However, the singular *they* pronoun was not and is not the only pronoun used by people who identify as non-binary. The following section will look into the concept and the history of gender non-binary more closely, and delve into other pronouns possibly used in the same context as the singular *they* pronoun when referring to someone identifying as a gender non-binary.

NON-BINARY GENDER IDENTITY

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that 'sex' refers to biological sex, and it is related to all of the biological characteristics we associate with sex (primary and secondary sexual characteristics). Gender identity, however, refers to "an individual's sense of their gender, which may differ from their sex assigned at birth, from their gender expression, and from the way other people perceive their gender" (Beemyn and Rankin, 2011 qtd. in Davidson, 2016: 4). It is distinct of sex, but also related to it, a "translation of biological realities into social expectations for "men" and "women" ". (Beemyn and Rankin 2011; Sausa 2002, qtd. in Davidson, 2016: 4)

Non-binary, *genderqueer*, *agender*, *Two-Spirit*, *genderfluid, bigender* or *gender non-conforming* are some of the terms used for and by people who identify outside of the gender binary of the masculine and feminine gender, as neither male nor female, as both, or as varying degrees of masculine or feminine. What makes a non-binary person non-binary is the fact that they do not see themselves as having a gender identity of a "man" or a "woman", but as being outside of the gender binary set by social expectations for men and women.

Examples from historical records

One of the earliest written records of humanity, Mesopotamian myths, reference types of people who are neither male nor female. These included eunuchs, women who could not and would not have children, men who live as women, intersex people, and gay people, among others. It seems that anyone who did not fit into the traditional role associated to either masculine or feminine gender was considered neither male nor female. Leick mentions a hymn to Inanna, a Mesopotamian goddess of love, sensuality, fertility, procreation, and war, described as "the ritual of acceptance of liminal sexuality under the aegis of the goddess" (1994: 159), which features the *sag-ur-sag*, who emphasize their ambiguous gender by wearing male and female clothing and ribbons. The Egyptian story of the creation of gods starts with Atum, who is male and female, who through asexual reproduction creates two other being. According to *Merriam-Webster* (2019: n.p.), "in the 17th century, English laws concerning inheritance sometimes referred to people who did not fit a gender binary using the pronoun it". The term Two-Spirit is used as an umbrella term that encompasses sexual and gender diversity in the Indigenous Americas. In India, the *hijra*, who are born with male reproductive organs or intersex, who have a feminine gender expression, have a third gender marker in their documents. In Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, women who take the vow of chastity and wear male clothes in order to live as men in a patriarchal society are called *burrnesha*.

These examples show that people have always existed outside of the gender binary, but it is not always easy to determine who should be considered non-binary throughout

history. "Conceptualizing non-binary history is inherently problematic. Not only do identity terms change rapidly, but gender as a concept is fairly new. Behaviors and styles that might be labeled non-binary today had no such labels even in the fairly recent past (McNabb, 2017: 13)."

Other contemporary gender-neutral pronouns

Non-binary people today often usually use gender neutral pronouns, such as the aforementioned singular *they* pronoun, but some of them use masculine and feminine pronouns, or other pronouns with which they feel the most comfortable. Along with the singular *they* pronoun, there are other pronouns suggested or recorded throughout history, which may be used by some people who identify as non-binary. In 1789, William H. Marshall recorded the existence of the singular pronoun *ou*, and traces it to the Middle English epicene *a*, the reduced form of the Anglo-Saxon *he* (he) and *heo* (she) (Baron 2018). Since the 19th century, there have been many proposals of pronouns which might be used in this context. Baron mentions *thon*, coined by Charles Crozat Converse, meaning "that one", which was included in certain dictionaries and still has some users (ibid.). The pronoun *ze*/*hir*, and its slightly less productive derivatives *ze*/*zir* are also used. Other less productive pronouns include Spivak pronouns *e* (older version) and *ey* (newer version), humanist *hu*, *per*, *ve* and *xe*.

The blog Gender Census has an annual survey of people who do not identify in terms of the gender binary. In 2019, they got 11,242 responses to a survey that ran from 25 February to 30 March. The participants were given checkboxes to choose from. The majority of the participants said they identify as non-binary (66.6%). 79.5% of participants said they would be happy if people used the singular *they* pronoun for them, 30.8% opted for the pronoun *he*, 29 % chose the pronoun *she*, and 10.3% said they avoid pronouns. *Xe*, Spivak *e*, *ze*, and *it* were chosen by less than 8% of the participants, with *xe* having the highest percentage – 7.2%. Neopronouns such as *ne*, *ve*, *ey*, *ae* and *thon* were all selected by less than 1% of the participants. The results of this survey show that even though there is no unilateral third gender option, non-binary has been chosen by two thirds of the participants, and that the singular *they* pronoun is the closest to the standard pronoun that could be used for those who identify as non-binary. We should not rush to conclusions and expect every person who does not identify as masculine or feminine to use the singular *they* pronoun, but data show that this pronoun is prevalent in the majority of the cases. However, the participants of this survey were only given questions on their preferred pronouns in English, which has a range of previously mentioned gender neutral pronouns. The following section will examine the typological differences between English and Croatian and possible reasons why Croatian has no equivalent for the singular *they* pronoun that might be used in the same context.

GRAMMATICAL GENDER IN ENGLISH AND CROATIAN

Linguistic typology deals with the study and classification of languages, focusing on the structural and functional features of languages. Criteria for classification include syntax (word order), morphology (word structure) and phonology (sound pattern). Linguistic typology differentiates between analytic languages, which have a lower morpheme to word ratio, as well as a higher use of helping words, and a less flexible word order, and synthetic languages, which may use inflection or agglutination to express syntactic relations between sentences. Inflection means adding morphemes to a root of the word in order to assign grammatical property to that word, and agglutination is the combination of two or more morphemes into one word, which may give information on the grammatical category of the word. The four subtypes of synthetic languages are agglutinating languages, fusional languages, polysynthetic languages, and oligosynthetic languages.

Along with other Slavic languages, Croatian is classified as a fusional language. Fusional or inflected languages use a single inflectional morpheme to denote multiple grammatical, syntactical or semantical features. As a fusional language, Croatian has declension (seven cases – nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, locative, vocative and instrumental), as well as conjugation. Since fusional languages are morphologically rich, they do not require a strict word order. The word order in Croatian is not fixed, but it is also not entirely free. English, a mixed language, has one fusional ancestor, German, but it has lost many fusional characteristics over the years, and it is now considered closer to analytic languages. However, some fusional characteristics have remained, such as the conjugation of verbs, where the difference is only in the third person singular/first and third person singular for the verb "to be". Pronouns in English also show fusional characteristics of cases, as they still have both genitive and accusative forms. Since English is not a morphologically rich language, word order is fixed.

Each language has its own challenges when it comes to gender neutral language. English, as it has been previously discussed, has the singular *they* pronoun, as well as other possible pronouns which could be used when referring to a non-binary person. Croatian, however, does not have a pronoun which can be used in the same way the singular *they* pronoun is used when referring to a non-binary person. Since Croatian is a morphologically rich fusional language which uses many inflections showing grammatical gender, it is more difficult for a speaker in a certain situation to construct a sentence in Croatian that has just one instance of grammatical gender.

Croatian

Croatian differentiates between masculine, feminine and neuter nouns. Usually the masculine and feminine is used for people and other living beings, and the neuter is usually used for inanimate objects. Nouns are used to express the gender of a person in

Croatian. According to Babić (1995, qtd. in Mihaljević 2013: 361), in order to express the gender of a person, the suffixes *–ica*, *-ka*, *-inja*, and *–kinja* are used to form feminine nouns, and the suffixes *–ac*, *-ak*, and *–an* are used to form masculine nouns. This is called motal word formation. The products of motal word formation are called motal pairs, and the only difference in meaning is the gender of the person they denote. The meaning of the noun remains the same. Examples of motal pairs are *učitelj – učiteljica* (teacher-MASC/teacher-FEM), *psiholog – psihologinja* (psychologist-MASC/psychologist-FEM), *mačak – mačka* (tomcat/cat). Some motal pairs in Croatian are not created using the aforementioned suffixes, but rather, they are completely different, such as in the example of opposites *otac – majka* (father/mother). Adjectives in Croatian agree with the nouns they describe in case, number, and gender, which means they are also susceptible to motal word formation.

Third-person pronouns in Croatian are gendered, just like in English. There are three third-person pronouns in Croatian. The pronoun *on* is used to denote third-person, singular, masculine, in the nominative case. The pronoun *ona* is used to denote third-person, singular, feminine, in the nominative case. Finally, the pronoun *ono* denotes third-person singular, neuter, in the nominative case. These pronouns also have a plural form – *oni* (third-person plural, masculine, nominative), *one* (third-person plural, feminine, nominative), *ona* (third-person plural, neuter, nominative).

Some of the Croatian tenses are gendered, the most commonly used one being the Croatian perfect tense, perfekt. It consists of two verbs, the auxiliary verb, which is the present tense of the verb "to be", and the past participle of the main verb. The past participle has different gender-related endings: the nominative, singular, masculine *–o*, the nominative, singular, feminine *–la*, and the nominative, singular, neuter *–lo*. The plural forms are also different. There is the nominative, plural, masculine *–li*, the nominative, plural, feminine *–le*, and the nominative, plural, neuter *–la*. A male Croatian speaker might utter a sentence "Spavao sam", meaning "I slept", and the female Croatian speaker might utter: "Spavala sam", with the same meaning. The only difference is the gendered past participle.

Speakers of fusional languages such as Croatian, as well as other synthetic languages which are morphologically rich and express grammatical gender, may have more difficulty in determining how to refer to a person who identifies as non-binary since they do not have a formal equivalent of the singular *they* pronoun. Some languages have tried to come up with their own gender inclusive pronouns which may be used for non-binary people as well.

Gender neutral expressions in other languages: Swedish and Spanish

Swedish has an alternative gender neutral personal pronoun *hen*, which may be used instead of the feminine *hon* (she) and *han* (he). It was first proposed in 1966, and once

again in 1994. Modeled after the Finnish pronoun *hän*, a gender neutral personal pronoun used in Finland since Finland does not have gendered third-person pronouns. In 2015, *hen* was included in the 2015th edition of The Swedish Academy Glossary (SAOL) "constituting the (unofficial) norm of the Swedish language" (Benaissa 2014; Fahl 2014 qtd. in Sendén et al. 2015). However, it took a very long time for the pronoun to become accepted and come into widespread use, and some manuals of style still advise against it. The Language Council of Sweden recommended that *hen* should not be used, "since it could be irritating and conflict with the content in the text" (Sendén et al. 2015: 2).

But Swedish is not a fusional language like Croatian. Typologically speaking, Spanish is much closer to Croatian, as it is also a fusional language. There have been some attempts to make Spanish more gender neutral, and at the same time, more gender inclusive. Spanish also has grammatical gender, just like Croatian. In Spanish, the suffix *–o* is usually used for masculine pronouns, nouns and adjectives, and the suffix *–a* for feminine pronouns, nouns and adjectives. When a person is referring to a group which consists of both men and women, or when referring to someone whose gender a speaker does not know at the time of speaking, the masculine form is preferred for nouns and pronouns (the pronouns *el/ellos* are used, as opposed to the feminine pronouns *ella/ellas*). This way of address is also preferred in Croatian, although there have been some attempts to make language more inclusive.

One of the suggestions to make Spanish more inclusive was using the suffix *–x*, which is often seen in the gender neutral neologism Latinx (plural Latinxs), used to refer to people of "(…) Latin American origin or descent (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina)" ("Latinx"). This term is used by LGBTQ and feminist Latinxs who use it as an inclusive term. As Frances Negrón-Muntaner describes it, "(…) Latinx is calling attention to issues of gender and LGBT inclusion and marginalization in a broad way" (Armus 2015, n.p.). Along with the suffix *–x*, people also use the @ sign (Latin@). But it is only possible to use this sign in writing. Its shape, which looks like both the letter o and the letter a, is very inclusive, but his sign has no official pronunciation. The other issue with the @ sign is that is it still very binary. The feminine and masculine suffixes *–a* and *–o* are the only ones being used, which possibly reinforces the gender binary. One other possible solution is saying both the masculine and feminine nouns/pronouns/adjectives, but this takes time to pronounce or write, and it may turn out to be a very clumsy solution when used in a longer text which contains many instances of grammatical gender. This issue is also present in Croatian as well, and it can also be observed in English (hence the replacement with the shorter and more practical singular *they*).

Difficulties

There have been no initiatives such as the ones described above in Croatia, and therefore, no measures were undertaken in order to make Croatian more gender

neutral, and therefore, more open toward non-binary people. There have been some regulations, such as the European Union issues guidelines ("Rodno neutralni jezik u europskom parlamentu") for avoiding using only the masculine forms when referring to an unknown antecedent or when the antecedent is 'everyone'. This is a great step forward, but just as we can see from the example of Spanish, gender neutral language, as well as gender neutral pronouns, are very difficult to realize in fusional languages.

That being said, grammatical limitations do not stand in the way of a person's identity. Despite the fact that the Croatian language does not have a gender neutral pronoun like English does, there are still people in Croatia who identify as non-binary, and who are looking for a way to express their gender identity through language. The following section will explore some of the possible linguistic solutions.

HOW NON-BINARY PEOPLE EXPRESS THEIR GENDER IDENTITY IN CROATIAN

As it has been discussed in the previous section, Croatian is a fusional language that has no formal gender neutral expressions which could be used by the non-binary community in Croatia. In order to approach translating gender neutral pronouns into Croatian, it was important to see what expressions Croatian non-binary natives use to express their gender identity, as well as which pronouns they use in Croatian. Therefore, we conducted detailed interviews with three Croatian non-binary natives.

The interviews were conducted during June 2019. Two separate interviews were conducted, one with the first and second participant (P1 and P2), and the second one with the third participant (P3). The participants were told the interview is anonymous, and that the findings from the interview will the given in a way that does not reveal their identity. The interviews lasted for 90 minutes, and they were recorded. The recordings are stored in a safe location in order to maintain the participants' anonymity. All of the participants are between 20–30 years of age.

All three participants are native speakers of Croatian. They confirmed they speak English, and that they use the singular *they* pronoun when referring to themselves in English, but that, since Croatian has no gender neutral pronoun like singular *they* in English, they use gendered pronouns in Croatian.

The first participant (P1) said that their biological sex is male, and used the masculine pronoun *on*. When asked on their opinion about other pronouns, they said that they also believe that 'ono' would make a good gender neutral pronoun, noting that in Croatian, *ono* is often used in the context of describing a child, giving an example that can often be found in teacher's notes when describing how a child understood the task at hand:

P1: " Ono je savladalo gradivo."

This can be translated as "They [the child-NEUTER] understand the material". This is further corroborated by the fact that in Croatian, the noun "dijete" (child), is in neuter, even though neuter is usually used for inanimate objects. However, other participants did not agree with them, and stated they feel the pronoun *ono* is derogatory and used to describe inanimate objects.

The second participant (P1) said their biological sex is male, and used the feminine pronoun *ona*. They noted they tried to use the plural form *oni*, but it often led to confusion when speaking for a longer period of time, and therefore opted for the feminine pronoun *ona*. They noted, however, they still feel comfortable using the pronoun *oni* as well. This participant also expressed they use the archaic verb forms aorist and imperfective referring to past events, which are not gendered in Croatian. This was the only participant who explicitly stated they use these verb forms as a way of avoiding gendered language. From Žic-Fuchs and Tuđman-Vuković (2008: 118), we know that aorist and imperfect are being used in texts. It is quite possible that this form is returning to wider use in Croatian and sing this form would not be strange to hear. During the interview, the participant did not use these archaic verb forms.

The third participant (P3), whose biological sex is female, uses the masculine pronoun *on*. Their replies were similar to the replies given by P2. Both P2 and P3, which use pronouns that describe a gender identity different from their biological sex, described instances where they were misgendered, both accidentally and on purpose. They said being misgendered causes them a great deal of discomfort and sorrow, especially when coming from a person who is close to them. This indicates that there is still unwillingness toward acceptance of non-binary people into society, especially when they use pronouns for genders different from their biological sex. They also noted people do not even accept their gender identity, as they are often told it is made up, not real, or "something off of Tumblr", as P3 described it.

All participants suggested trying to avoid using gendered language by using nouns, and according the other forms to the noun that was used, such as the noun "osoba" (person-FEM), which corresponds to feminine grammatical gender, and therefore, using it in a phrase means agreement in feminine grammatical gender when needed. This may take some adjustment, because when writing a longer text or speaking for a long time, the person has to make sure to use the feminine grammatical gender every time it is required. In the case of previously mentioned motal words, using the noun "osoba" is not always possible since motal words also require agreement in their respective grammatical gender.

When the participants were asked whether or not they think a new gender neutral pronoun which would be used by non-binary people in Croatia should be developed, they said that they would probably try to use it, but that they think not all people would accept it. Pronouns are a closed group of words, and changing them take time and effort, since new words are rarely added. But, as it can be seen from the case of the Swedish

pronoun *hen*, it is possible if given enough time and effort. So far there have been no recorded attempts in creating a gender neutral pronoun in Croatian. This makes a translator's job very difficult when translating gender neutral pronouns from a source English text into Croatian, which will be discussed in the following sections.

TRANSLATION EQUIVALENCE

In order to think about possible solutions for translating English gender neutral pronouns into Croatian, we must first discuss the theory of equivalence. Equivalence, although considered controversial by some, is important in translation. In theory of equivalence, the main notion is that the source text and the target text have the same value, or that they are equivalent on some level. A text is considered equivalent when it has the same value in both the source and the target text (Pym 2007). There are multiple definitions of equivalence which will all be considered when analyzing examples of translation.

Nida and Taber (1982) claim that, as no two languages are identical, either in meaning of symbols or in the way these symbols are organized into phrases and sentences, there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. The overall effect can be relatively close, but there can be no sameness in detail. Nida distinguishes between formal correspondence, which "(…) distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard" (Nida and Taber 1982: 201), and dynamic equivalence, where the impact of the wording should be the same on the target and source audience, noting: "Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faitful" (ibid.: 200).

Catford (1965), who had a more linguistic approach to translation than Nida, argues that there are two kinds of equivalence, formal correspondence and textual equivalence. "A textual equivalent is any TL form (text or portion of text) which is observed to be the equivalent of a given SL form (text or portion of text). A formal correspondent, on the other hand, is any TL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the 'economy' of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL" (Catford 1965: 27). This approach is not very useful when analyzing translation, as it is not really relevant when assessing translation equivalence given the fact that formal correspondence does not take context into account. Catford was criticized by many for his linguistic way of approaching translation equivalence, and ignoring other factors important for translation, such as text, culture or situation, notably by Snell-Horby (1988: 19-20), who said Catford's definition of textual equivalence is "circular".

CULTURE, IDEOLOGY AND TRANSLATION

In their essays *Translation, History and Culture*, Bassnett and Lefevre dismiss more linguistic theories of translation, which "have moved from word to text as a unit, but not beyond" (Bassnett and Lefevre 1990:4). They reject "Painstaking comparisons between originals and translations" (ibid.: 11) outside of their cultural environment. They look at the interaction between translation and culture, the way culture impacts and constraints translation, as well as the larger issues of context, history and convention.

Lefevre focuses on "(…) issues such as power, ideology, institution and manipulation" (Lefevre 1992: 2), and how those forces influence rewriting a translation, which can be out of "ideological" (conforming to or rebelling against the traditional ideology) or "poetological" (conforming to or rebelling against the dominant poetics) motivation (ibid.: 9). He also adds that the literary system in which translation functions is controlled by the two main factors, the professionals within this system, and patronage outside of it (ibid.: 15). He identifies three elements to this patronage – the ideological component, the economic component, and the status component (ibid.). He states that patronage has most power in the operation of ideology, whereas the professionals have most influence in determining the poetics (ibid.), and then says: "On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out." (ibid.: 39) Therefore, we can conclude that Lefevre believes the ideological component is the most important one, which, in the end, determines the direction a translation will go.

Queer translation

In his study, *Translating Camp Talk*, Keith Harvey analyzes the French translation of Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, and remarks a significant number of lexical and textual changes in the French translation, such as: 1) using the same pejorative word (*tante*) for the pejorative 'pansies' and more positive 'queen', 2) translating the phrase 'to be gay' by using the pejorative *en être* ('to be one of them'), avoiding using the French word meaning gay, 3) either not translating or using a negative collocation for hyperbolic camp collocations (1998/2012: 354-9). The TT uses negative collocations for positive concepts denoting gay identity, or even completely avoids using them. Harvey believes that this issue lies in the target culture, and how it shows a "(…) relative absence of radical gay (male) theorizing in contemporary France." (ibid.: 359). Another example that Harvey analyzes is a translation of a French novel into American English, the novel by Tony Duvert (ibid. 360-364), where the translator's additions and lexical choices intensify the camp language, suggesting that the reason for such changes lies in

commercial pressure from US publishers, who support gay writing, and who wanted to assure that the book got better reception.

We can conclude that the target culture and its current ideology is also reflected in queer translation and that queer translation may suffer some changes, both positive and negative, based on the dominant ideology at the time. Both of these cases show translator's interventions which are not purely a result of linguistic differences, but also, to a greater extent, a form of censorship conducted by the translators in order to make their translations more commercially available by adapting to the dominant ideology at the time, conforming what Lefevre has stated on the conflict of linguistic and ideological/poetological considerations.

Possible issues

When a translator encounters a source text which contains elements of source culture different from those of the target culture, they often find themselves in the midst of a dilemma. On the one hand, they must ensure that the message comes across to the recipients of the target text, and therefore, that dynamic equivalence is ensured. On the other hand, due to the lack of these concepts in the target culture, more often than not due to the influence of the dominant ideology, which may be less liberal in the target culture than the source culture, a translator must make sure that their translation does not lead to confusion among the target text recipients who have not seen this concept. At the same time, if a translator wishes to be ethical and inclusive, they must not censor the message or else no equivalence will be achieved, and it would no longer be translation, it would become adaptation. Since there is no concept of a singular, gender neutral pronoun like *they* in Croatian, when a translator encounters this pronoun, or any other gender neutral pronoun, they must strive to get the concept across, and not simply look for the corresponding category in the target language, but it is more difficult than it may seem at first. The following section will look into specific examples of gender neutral pronouns, and how they were or could be translated.

EXAMPLES OF TRANSLATIONS

Examples from journal articles

When singer Sam Smith came out as non-binary in 2019, many Croatian news portals reported on it. But these news reports pointed out one crucial difference between English and Croatian, the fact that Croatian does not have a gender neutral pronoun, equivalent to the singular *they* in English. When Croatian news portals reported on their coming out as non-binary, they regularly reported that their pronouns are now *they* and *them*, and they took the liberty to translate the singular *they* pronoun into Croatian *oni*,

third person plural, which could work as a literal translation of the pronoun *they* when used as third person plural, but which is not typically used as a gender neutral pronoun the same way the singular *they* pronoun is used. It seems that they achieved formal correspondence, as Catford puts it, and placed the TL category in the same place as it was previously occupied by the SL category, but they have in no way achieved dynamic equivalence, as it seems they managed to achieve formal equivalence, which leads to misunderstanding or difficulty in understanding.

Further evidence for this can be seen in the comments, in which some people started poking fun at the fact that they "asked" to use the pronoun *oni*, asking if they want to pay more taxes since they are more than one person, or saying that *oni* can only be used in the plural. These articles provoked many insults on the basis of them wanting to be special, not knowing whether or not they want to be male or female, calling them a "special snowflake", as well as other insults and instances of hate speech, which are not appropriate for academic discourse (the reader may look them up themselves, if they possess sufficient knowledge of Croatian).

The case of Sam Smith and the way their coming out was reported shows that people do not respond lightly to using the pronoun *oni* outside of third person plural, as well as the fact that Croatian people are either less familiar with the concept or non-binary, or are less open toward it, which was also confirmed during the interviews with the participants, who stated they get offended based on their gender identity. The participants also noted that using the pronoun *oni* often leads to confusion when speaking. Since these articles caused a primarily negative reaction, one possible reason for them doing so could be the fact that the authors of these articles simply chose to give the pronoun *oni* a new usage, a usage which has not been previously sanctioned by the Croatian-speaking public. It is a sign that simply replacing the pronoun *they* with a more generic pronoun *oni* might not work. Another issue is the fact that the pronoun *oni* is not entirely gender neutral. It is used to denote either groups of men or mixed groups, therefore it is used predominantly for men, and it still shows grammatical gender.

One other important issue that these articles shed light on is the fact that, even though the press explicitly stated that Sam Smith uses the pronoun *oni*, the authors of these articles used masculine grammatical gender whenever they talked about them in the article, which can be seen from this line: "Britanski pjevač Sam Smith zatražio je da se o njemu govori rodno neutralnom zamjenicom 'oni' navodeći da je 'cijeli život u ratu sa svojim rodom'." (Hina, 2019). The reporters probably felt it was easier to construct sentences in Croatian using masculine grammatical gender, in order to avoid confusion. Maybe it would have been better if they stuck to using the pronoun they decided upon, *oni*, in order to show its possible use for a non-binary person.

Another example of reporting on gender neutral pronouns in Croatian was when London Aquarium Sea Life posted about a baby penguin, the child of a lesbian penguin couple, Marama and Rocky, who adopted it. They stated that the penguin is non-binary.

When Croatian press reported about it, they wrote that "he" is very cute. Instead of using the word "mladunče" (chick-NEUTER), the author used "mladunac" (chick-MASC). The author did later use the word "mladunče". In this case, it would have been possible to use the pronoun *ono* throughout the article, since English also sometimes uses the pronoun *it* when referring to animals, but it seems the author shifted between using *on* and *ono*. As some participants stated they found this pronoun derogatory, it might not always be the best choice, but it would show that it is possible to fully use the pronoun 'ono' in this context.

When Merriam-Webster chose the singular *they* pronoun as their word of the year in 2019, Croatian news reported on it, saying that the singular pronoun *oni* is Merriam-Webster's word of the year, along with the explanation that non-binary people mostly use this pronoun. They also mentioned Sam Smith coming out as non-binary, addressing them using masculine grammatical gender. Once again, we see that the singular they pronoun was translated using *oni*, but there are no examples of its use.

Examples from film

John Wick Chapter 3: Parabellum has a non-binary main antagonist called the Adjudicator. The actor, Asia Kate-Dillon, who is also non-binary, asked for the character to be non-binary, and to use the singular *they* pronoun. In the movie, there are no indications as to whether or not the character of the Adjudicator is non-binary. This is one possible reason as to why, when this movie was subtitled for Croatian cinemas, the translator used feminine pronouns and feminine grammatical gender in their subtitles for this character. In the Croatian version of the movie, the Adjudicator is translated as 'Sutkinja' (judge-FEM). In the English version of the movie, there are no instances of gendered language, and no character uses a singular *they* pronoun when talking about the Adjudicator. They have managed to avoid gendered language in English, but in Croatian, grammatical gender was impossible to avoid from the very first line that this character says on screen.

As stated earlier, there are no explicit indications that the Adjudicator identifies as non-binary in the movie, and the plot of the movie never places their gender identity into focus, so the translator chose to use the pronoun *ona* and feminine grammatical gender. According to the preferred pronouns of Croatian non-binary natives who also use gendered pronouns, opting for the pronoun *ona* is not necessarily a bad choice. Since the Adjudicator's gender identity was never the focus of the movie, if the translator were to opt for the pronoun *oni*, which had already proven to not always be the best choice, it might have led to confusion, and the focus of the viewer would be shifted from the movie to the fact that the translation has the plural pronoun *oni* used in a previously unsanctioned way.

Another possible translation that the translator could use, given the fact that there is no gender neutral expression for adjudicator in Croatian, would be to use the archaic aorist and imperfective forms when given the chance. Instead of translating "Adjudicator" with "Sutkinja" (judge-FEM), the translator could have avoided using the same lexical category and replace the noun "sutkinja" with "Dođoh vam presuditi." This is an example where aorist, the archaic verb tense that was mentioned by P2 during the interviews, is used. Since there are multiple occasions when the word adjudicator appears, such as in the line "There is an adjudicator here to see you" (00:32:18-00:32:21), aorist would not work in all of the cases.

When it comes to Croatian translation, both the Adjudicator and Sam Smith were addressed using masculine or feminine pronouns, which matched their biological sex, even though they could have also been addressed using feminine and masculine grammatical gender, respectively, or even using the plural pronoun *oni*, which was stated to be Sam Smith's preferred pronoun. We know this is possible from the results given by the interviews, where two participants used pronouns gendered differently from their biological sex.

Reactions from speakers

Since it seems that the first instinct Croatian speakers have when encountered with the singular *they* pronoun is to proclaim it is translated as *oni*, it seems that it might be possible to add another meaning to this pronoun. However, since the majority of the people does not encounter this pronoun used in any other context outside of the translation as the singular *they* pronoun, and since pronouns are a closed group of words, to which is it hard to add new words, it seems that the pronoun *oni* does not serve as a dynamic equivalent of this pronoun. It also seems that, due to the dominant ideology which does not really pay much attention to non-binary people, even in cases when the news report on non-binary people or when non-binary people appear on television, reporters and translators find it easier to avoid using the plural pronoun *oni*, followed by resorting back to using gendered language. This is an indicator that, before we can start talking about translating gender neutral pronouns such as the singular *they*, which will probably become more and more prominent as more and more non-binary people are becoming visible in Anglophone society, we must also consider making non-binary people more visible in our society as well. If we do not try to educate the public on who non-binary people are and how to talk to them respectfully, we can only resort to either using gendered language with varying degrees of luck, or completely avoiding gendered language.

CONCLUSION

Evidence that the singular *they* pronoun has existed in the English language dates back all the way to the 14th century, and evidence of non-binary people dates back to 2000 BCE, when Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths talked about people who are neither male nor female, or those who are both. Despite prescriptivist efforts to make the generic *he* pronoun a replacement of the singular *they* pronoun under the influence of Latin, the singular *they* pronoun has prevailed, and it is now used both as a gender neutral pronoun for an unknown antecedent, or as the preferred pronoun of many non-binary people in the United States. Since Croatian is a fusional language which has more traces of grammatical gender than English does, and uses inflections denoting grammatical gender in more instances than English does, and since there is no official gender neutral pronoun in Croatian, Croatian non-binary people resort to using gendered pronouns *–on* or *ona*. This, however, does not mean that they are not non-binary, as non-binary people do not necessarily have to use the singular *they* pronoun.

When a translator is faced with translating the singular *they* pronoun used by a non-binary person, they also often resort to using gendered language, even in cases when, elsewhere in the text, it explicitly stated that the person is non-binary and uses the singular *they* pronoun. This is not necessarily wrong, but there are other possible ways to avoid gendered language. A translator could use the archaic verb forms, aorist and imperfective, which do not have inflections denoting grammatical gender in Croatian. Some translations of the singular *they* pronoun also suggest that the singular *they* pronoun translates to *oni* in Croatian, but it is not always the best choice as it sometimes elicits confusion, or even anger, of the target text recipient. Non-binary gender identity, especially non-binary gender identity of Croatian natives, is still a topic that is not often represented in scientific research. There are many possibilities for future research of this topic, both in the field of translation and language studies in general.

There is no perfect, correct way to translate gender neutral pronouns into Croatian. The most important aspect a translator needs to take into account is context. Each translation is different, and it is impossible to state which lexeme is the perfect translation for gender neutral pronoun. A translator should keep in mind that they are representing a marginalized group, and by avoiding the fact that the translated text is about a non-binary person, they are adhering to the ideology that suppresses those people, and it may lead to more discrimination.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions

1. Please introduce yourselves.
2. How do you see your gender identity?
3. Which pronouns do you use and why did you choose them?

4. Do you speak English? If you do, is the pronoun *they* your preferred pronoun in English?
5. What is your opinion on Croatian pronouns? Which and how many do you consider appropriate?
6. If a new, gender-neutral pronoun was created in Croatian, would you be willing to use it?
7. Do you think others would be willing to use this new pronoun?
8. Have you experienced situations where you use pronouns other than the preferred pronouns you stated? Why?
9. How does that make you feel?
10. Have you ever experienced misgendering? What do you do in situations like that?