

Experimenting with anti-languages:  
moving towards the de-gendering of  
French through translations of  
narrative conversations

Laure Romanetti

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Social Practice UNITEC New Zealand, 2015**

## DECLARATION

### **Name of Candidate: Laure Romanetti**

This thesis, entitled 'Experimenting with anti-languages: moving towards the de-gendering of French through translations of narrative conversations' is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Social Practice.

### *CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION*

I confirm that:

**This Thesis Project represents my own work;**

**The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.**

Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: No UREC : not applicable, no human subjects were interviewed for this study

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## **ABSTRACT**

French is a highly gendered language in which the masculine gender is favoured over the feminine one. To social practitioners, linguists and feminists, this situation constitutes an injustice. The primary purpose of this thesis is to challenge grammatical rules put in place in order to maintain the masculine gender in a position of dominance. Using translations of narrative therapeutic conversations I partly de-gender my native tongue. Two research questions are asked, the first one inquiring about the techniques

used to de-gender, and checking whether these techniques are compatible with discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. The second question involves a comparison of two translations belonging to two different paradigms recognised by translation studies. Could this comparison uncover inequalities potentially and intrinsically conveyed by the French language? Data for this thesis consists primarily of transcripts and two translations of these transcripts: one 'negotiated' and one 'cultural'. Data also includes a reflective journal and peer review comments. The data were investigated through critical discourse analysis methods. It was concluded that the French language participates in gender imbalances leading to social injustices detrimental to both genders. The study also reveals that de-gendered French, identified as an 'anti-language' – a concept that is sometimes used in narrative therapy work – is compatible with narrative therapy practices and acts as an antidote to the social injustices uncovered by the comparison of the translated conversations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Helen Gremillion. Her support and knowledge were a continuous source of motivation. My immense gratitude also goes to my second supervisor, David Epston, without whom this project would not have happened. His legendary enthusiasm and generous support at difficult times, particularly when technology was failing me, were priceless. For the purpose of this thesis David Epston wholeheartedly allowed me to use transcriptions of his work. As a co-founder with Michael White of Narrative Therapy, I could not have dreamt of a better supervisor.

Besides my supervisors, I would like to thank my peer reviewers, Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun, Elizabeth Feld, and Catherine Mengelle, all of them Narrative Practitioners. Their open minds and feedback were a continuous source of joy.

I would also like to thank the peers who spent hours checking my translation work: Corinne Le Pavec and Christian Graffeuille. Their input, curiosity and willingness to challenge some of my decisions were invaluable.

My deepest gratitude goes to a very special woman, Emeritus Professor Edwige Khaznadar. Her work, her determination, her formidable spirit and her willingness to share her immense knowledge are an everlasting source of inspiration for me.

I also want to thank my students; they have taught me as much as I have taught them. Amongst them are a wonderful group of men and women who each week attend the Beach Haven Community House.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family, particularly my husband Christian and my two teenage boys Noé and Olivier who, on a regular basis, test my ideas around language and gender. On the other hand, they have to bear my feminist views of the world, and I know it is not always easy for them.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Picture this; imagine someone who would cultivate the French language.

What is called the French language.

Someone whom the French would cultivate.

And who, as a French citizen, would be, moreover, a subject of French culture, as we say.

Now suppose, for example, that one day this subject of French culture were to tell you in good French:

“I only have one language; it is not mine”. (Derrida, 1996, p. 2)

This is how Jacques Derrida started his book *Monolingualism of the other or the prosthesis of origin*. These lines have haunted me for many years; they deeply resonate with my experience of the French language, a gendered language in which genders are not treated equally. Derrida's words embody the spirit of this research. After reading his book and as a speaker of several languages, I embarked on a voyage, represented in this current project, to discover which language might be mine and why. This voyage took me through several fields of academia, starting with translation studies. Translations allow for a comparison of languages and therefore a more thorough critique of the translated language. For this thesis I decided to translate into French, conversations taking place in English between a therapist and his clients. In principle, I could have used any text but I am a narrative therapist and conversations happening in the counselling room are of great interest to me; I saw this research as a way to deepen my own understanding of what takes place in a therapeutic setting. Furthermore, for reasons which will be explained later, narrative conversations constitute a perfect field of inquiry for this research. Therefore, I started translating English transcripts of conversations and realised that I had to complete three different translations of the same conversation before I was satisfied with the result of my work as a translator and a therapist. The last translation is written in a language which I now claim to be mine: de-gendered French. It is subtly different from French as it is used today, but as detailed in this thesis I believe this delicate change to be important because it is more inclusive of genders. Eager to see how others felt about de-gendered

French, and in a spirit of collaborative inquiry, I asked other therapists and linguists to comment on my findings. Their reflections form part of my analysis.

It will be helpful to consider a wider perspective before entering into the detail of this project. Wherever they live, humans communicate mainly through the use of language: thousands of different idioms are spoken on every continent. Language constitutes a strong link between individuals; nowadays, the media refers to the 'English speaking world' or 'la francophonie', or 'lusophone countries'. Not only do people speak the same language in their countries, but people have gathered around their native tongues outside of their homelands: Chinatowns have evolved on all continents; “Little Italy” or “les écoles françaises” are to be found outside of Italy or France. Quite evidently a given language links people who can speak it together wherever they live, but this research will try to demonstrate that an idiom is more than a link. This project is concerned with the role the French language plays in the construction of one's identity: how grammatical constructions are imprinted in one's brain and as such, how they colour one's world view, or as Derrida puts it, how they “cultivate” a person.

The neuroscientist Dr Jill Bottle-Taylor (2008) teaches us that thinking is the price we pay for having a language. Lera Boroditsky (2010, p 1), coming from the field of neuro-linguistics, explains “how language shapes thoughts”. Languages enable thinking and thoughts can generate ideas. As a result, many have manipulated language in order to obtain privileges or power. In recent years this idea has been exploited by companies or politicians in order to sell goods and generate immense wealth, or to be elected and obtain great power. The manipulation of language is not a new idea: this research will briefly go back in time, to seventeenth century France, and look at how one clergyman with enormous political power and one grammarian came together and decided that the masculine gender<sup>1</sup> would be favoured in the French language. To illustrate this statement, I would like to cite the inscription on one of the greatest monuments in Paris, Le Panthéon. On its façade are written the words: “Aux Grands Hommes, la Patrie Reconnaisante” which can be translated as: “The Homeland is Grateful to its Great Men”. In the monument is buried Marie Curie (as can be seen from the pictures I took during my last trip to the French Capital<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> French has two grammatical genders: the masculine and the feminine.

<sup>2</sup> See pictures on page 11.



Figure 1: Le panthéon



Figure 2: Columns of the Panthéon monument

# LE PANTHÉON

## Aux grands hommes de la nation

- ▣ En 1744, le roi Louis XV fait vœu de consacrer un édifice prestigieux à Geneviève, sainte patronne de Paris, qu'il confie à l'architecte Soufflot. En 1791, le monument est transformé en Panthéon national, destination civique dont il est définitivement investi en 1885 lors de l'inhumation de Victor Hugo. La crypte abrite les tombeaux des grands hommes de la nation, dont Voltaire, Emile Zola, Jean Moulin, Marie Curie. Architecture néo-classique, décors peints et sculptés du XIX<sup>e</sup> s., reconstitution de l'expérience du Pendule de Foucault de 1851, complètent la visite.
- ▣ In 1744, King Louis XV expressed his desire to dedicate a prestigious building to Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris. The architect Soufflot was commissioned to undertake this project. In 1791, the monument was turned into the national Pantheon: the burial of Victor Hugo in 1885 enshrined this secular use of the building. The crypt holds the graves of the great men and women of the nation including Voltaire, Emile Zola, Jean Moulin and Marie Curie. The full tour takes in the neo-classical architecture, painted and sculpted decorations from the nineteenth century and a reconstitution of Foucault's 1851 pendulum experiment.
- ▣ En 1744, el rey Luis XV hace la promesa de consagrar un edificio de prestigio a Geneveva, patrona de París, que confía al arquitecto Soufflot. En 1791, el monumento se transforma en panthéon nacional y su destino cambia.

Figure 3: Inscription at the entrance of the Panthéon monument

Just as the Panthéon was built centuries ago and still stands today, in the same way a political decision taken in seventeenth century France still rules the French language today. This is demonstrated in the following example. As a French woman recently visiting her family in France, I came across the 30 year old grammar books of my childhood. I intended to carry out a small exercise which is not part of this study but is, nonetheless, revealing, and which encouraged me to push this research further. I read three chapters of my Year 9 school book and did 41 grammar exercises; after doing them I realised that 85% of the sentences and examples used in the exercises were in the masculine form. The remaining 15% of the sentences in the feminine form were highly gendered: women were sewing, cleaning, or crying. Surely, things had to be different in the twenty-first century. I did the same experiment with my nephew's grammar book, published in 2010. To my surprise, while the sentences in the feminine form were less gendered, and women are now represented as experiencing a greater range of emotions and engaging in more varied occupations, they still represent only 15% of the examples used for children to learn and master the French language.

This experience raised several questions. What are the consequences of such a gender biased language on its speakers? Could it be favouring the masculine over the feminine outside school texts as well? Is it possible to de-gender the French language? What would de-gendered French look like? After I immigrated to New Zealand and started to teach French as a foreign language, these interrogations became ever more salient for me, especially since I was now able to think about them in another language: English. Being a French woman, and writing this thesis in English, I was able to look at my native tongue from a different viewpoint.

Learning new idioms inevitably leads to translating, and the act of translating helps make sense of the newly learnt language through the learner's native tongue. At first translating is reassuring: it acts as proof that the sentence in the new idiom has been well understood. This is an exercise often practiced in classrooms of foreign language learners: first, a text in a foreign language is read, and then translated into the native tongue of the learners; this is the most efficient way to check if the text in the foreign language has been understood correctly. Nevertheless, as soon as the learners become more confident in their new skill, i.e. are able to speak another tongue, translating matures into a struggle and ambiguities arise. When translating a text, an individual may struggle to choose between competing interpretations, and translators often disagree with each other; these disagreements may vary from the use of one word to completely different interpretations of full sentences. Anthony Pym (2009) believes that these usually heated discussions around

translating come from the fact that translators position themselves within different paradigms of translation. This idea will be explored in more depth in the literature review.

In 2007 I encountered the work of Jacques Derrida, thanks to Professor Raylene Ramsay, professor of French at the University of Auckland. In the same year, I discovered Narrative Therapy and realised that the two founders of this practice, David Epston and Michael White, had been influenced by the work of Derrida. Feeling an impulse to mix the creative spirits of these highly respected scholars and practitioners, I came to believe that my language, French, could usefully be examined through some of the powerful ideas Narrative Therapy has to offer.

One powerful idea of Narrative Therapy is called “externalisation,” which consists of separating people from their problems. Narrative therapists spend a lot of time externalising problems. Thanks to this idea of externalisation, a problem can be seen from another perspective, outside of the person's identity. Being separated from the person, the problem may now be faced, explored, played with and even represented visually; it can start to have a life of its own and as such can be addressed critically in a very powerful way. To briefly illustrate this concept, consider the case of an angry person seeking counselling because s/he does not want to be angry anymore. The narrative therapist will quickly externalise the anger and will team up with the client to face this anger. The client with the help of the counsellor may decide to give the anger a name, a shape or anything which will help to separate her or him from the issue of anger. Once the anger has been externalised, there is no reason for the client to be angry, but good reasons to face the anger and defeat it.

In this study, I use externalisation to look at my language, French, from another perspective. My analysis uses techniques from Narrative Therapy to externalise and observe the French language I was taught, because, to me, the extreme gendering of my native tongue is a problem. In my mind, I created a picture representing the French language I speak; I could then observe this picture and question it. Hadn't Derrida already started to externalise the French language when claiming: “I only speak one language, yet it is not mine” (Derrida, 2006, p 2)? For this project I decided to create a space, in the form of a reflective journal, in which to freely explore these ideas while mixing various translations and narrative practices.

## Scope

The aim of this study is to translate Narrative Therapy conversations with a particular purpose: to partly de-gender the French language. Each original text in English is rendered into three translations in French. Each translation comes under a different paradigm identified by the translation studies field (defined below): firstly, Literal, secondly, Negotiated and thirdly, Cultural. The purpose of the third, cultural translation in this project is to explore the idea of de-gendering the French language through borrowing ideas from the Narrative Therapy field. The negotiated translations and the cultural translations are compared and analysed through critical discourse analysis methods. The idea is to move from one language to another, from English to French, in order to then explore what forces or discourses are in action within the same language.

## Research questions

This project engages the following research questions:

- Through what techniques can a text written in French be de-gendered? Are these techniques compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy?
- Does the comparative study of negotiated translations and cultural translations of English texts into French uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language? Does de-gendering undo any inequalities thus discovered?

## Choice of terminology

Since language is particularly important in a study of this nature, some definitions are called for at this point in order to avoid misinterpretations.

- De-gendering (translated as 'paritaire' in French): this research aims to introduce the feminine gender where it had previously been erased because of ideology. In some ways, this study is more a re-gendering; however, I will argue that the result of this re-gendering is a de-gendering.

Translating is at the core of this project and three types of translations will be referred to regularly. They are:

- Literal translation: one word in one language is translated by the same word in another language.

- Negotiated translation: one word in one language does not have an equivalent in another language; therefore a negotiation takes place in order to choose the best possible option for the translation.
- Cultural translation: the negotiation fails; the translator uses a word or phrase of his or her choosing and takes advantage of the translation to make a statement. By doing so, the cultural translation favours a proactive human intervention in the work of translating rather than representing the translated material as only a textual product rendered by an invisible translator.

These different types of translations will be detailed more thoroughly in the literature review.

## **Goals of the research**

Languages, translations and narrative therapy are areas of personal passion for me and have intermingled in order to create my professional working field: I am a foreign language teacher, a translator and a narrative therapist. I am conscious that these interests, as well as my position as a French woman living in New Zealand, practising narrative therapy in both English and French, have strongly influenced this project. I do not think that this study would have been possible if I had not had the chance to reflect on my native tongue from a distance, both geographically and linguistically.

I do not seek, in this study, the kind of objectivity which some researchers lay claim to: the idea of unbiased objectivity has been deconstructed by a body of feminist literature with which this project is aligned. The intention of this project is to critique an injustice and raise political awareness around the issue of gender in the French language. It is my hope that it will be of use to a wide range of professionals, for example, linguists, therapists, and community leaders, who, like me, are concerned about gender bias in society stemming from gender inequality.

The intention of this project is to attempt a de-gendering of the French language in order to bring genders together, rather than favouring one of them to the detriment of the other. The feasibility of this goal remained unclear until it was actually attempted – in the last translation (the de-gendered one). As will become clear later in the thesis, the ease with which de-gendering can be implemented in the French language came as a surprise. Thanks to various, very simple, linguistic techniques already carried out in other French speaking countries such as Canada, the de-gendering of the French language can be

achieved without difficulty. These techniques will be looked at carefully, and critically analysed in Chapter Five. We shall see that while it is not difficult to write or speak the French language in a de-gendered way, what remains challenging to overcome is the cultural resistance which opposes de-gendered French. In other words, the practice is technically easy but ideologically controversial.

Theoretically, any text written in English could have been used in this attempt to translate English into de-gendered French. I chose to use transcripts of narrative conversations because I am a narrative therapist who counsels in both of these languages. I have a personal interest in therapeutic conversations. In addition, I recognize how unusual, non-conformist, creative and flexible narrative conversations can be. Narrative therapists are encouraged to play with the language they use in the counselling room. Therefore, narrative conversations seemed like the perfect vehicle for exploring the idea of de-gendering. Thus the writing style used in this thesis, at times will embrace the spirit of narrative conversations and consequently embrace creativity and imagination.

## **Summary**

Human beings communicate mostly through the use of language. A language is a powerful link between the individuals who speak it: it creates social ties. However, this study is also interested in the internal ties a language can create and what sort of lens it might put in front of our eyes, and how it might colour our thoughts. Research in the field of neuroscience tells us that languages are the instruments which allow us to think. Through thoughts, ideas are created. One powerful idea is to manipulate languages in order to obtain power and privileges. One manipulation of interest in this study took place in seventeenth century France, when a cardinal and a grammarian decided that the masculine gender was going to be favoured in the French language. This decision changed the way French was and is written and spoken, and still bears consequences in twenty-first century France. In an attempt to observe these consequences, this study will experiment with translations of narrative conversations in order to uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by a biased use of the French language. Being a narrative therapist as well as a translator and French tutor, I am in a unique position to undertake this exploration of my native tongue.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This literature review aims to provide background information which is important for contextualising this project. It will first present the idea of de-gendering in the context of the French language. Then, it will examine how some of the theories and techniques used in discursive practices of Narrative Therapy and the idea of de-gendering can intermingle. After this it will examine the concept of anti-language and will explore whether or not de-gendered French might be considered an anti-language. Next, it will look at the state of feminism in twenty-first century France, particularly the new wave of feminists interested in linguistics, with the hope that this research will be of use to them. It will briefly examine what new ideas neurosciences might have to bring to this study. Finally, because this project is built on translated work, it will look at translation studies. The information provided in this section will create an understanding of the injustices perpetuated through gender imbalance within the French language and, at the same time, suggest ways to rectify this problem.

### a. The idea of de-gendering

#### i. An unpopular idea

French uses two genders, the masculine and the feminine, but the masculine form is considered to be the norm or 'generic' form, therefore erasing the feminine one. French grammar uses the term "le masculin générique": this means that only the masculine form is used, and the feminine form is implicitly embodied in it. De-gendering, in the French context, consists of re-introducing the feminine form where it has been removed. The idea of de-gendering is not popular amongst French intellectuals. It is mocked by the académiciens<sup>3</sup>: for example, Maurice Druon (2008) qualifies as "absurd the idea of de-gendering, 'feminising' or 'féminiser'"-- i.e. inventing a feminine form of a masculine word such as 'professeur' (the feminine form could be 'professeure', the letter 'e' marking the

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<sup>3</sup> 40 self-selected members whose role is to monitor the French language. Their selection process is very close to the one used to elect a new pope in the Catholic Church. See <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/>

feminine form). To date, only one French novelist has tried de-gendered French: Isabelle Alonso, in her novel *Roman à L'Eau de Bleu* (2012). Alonso faces regular provocative and negative comments on her writing style as well as on her character<sup>4</sup>. Those who attack her, like the *académiciens*, feel that de-gendered French sullies the idiom.

## ii. The power of the 'Académie Française'

The “Académie Française” is the name of the body in which the academicians perform; it is also the name of the building in which they meet. The body was created in 1635 by a clergyman, a cardinal named Richelieu. Richelieu’s story is interesting. He entered the life of Louis XIII, King of France, when the king was only a young boy. In fact, Louis XIII became king of France when he was only eight years old. His mother, Marie de Medici, ruled the country while her son was a child. The Catholic Church decided that it was the right time to increase its power and sent Cardinal Richelieu to 'help' the young king and his mother rule the country. In some ways, Richelieu is thought to have been the first prime minister. In his quest to control France, Richelieu created a body called the Académie Française; he seemed to have understood that in order to control his people, a ruler needed to control their language. He hired a grammarian named Claude Favre de Vaugelas in 1647. Vaugelas' thinking was clear: « Pour une raison qui semble être commune à toutes les langues que le genre masculin étant le plus noble doit prédominer toutes les fois que le masculin et le féminin se trouvent ensemble » (Vaugelas, 1647, p. 27, as cited in Labrosse, 2002, p. 170) or “For one reason which seems to be common to all languages, the masculine gender being more noble, it must predominate every time the masculine and feminine genders are found together.” Prior to Vaugelas' statement, a grammar rule called « la règle de proximité » treated both genders equally; for instance, an adjective used to describe a noun agreed with the noun closest to it in the sentence. Therefore, the gender of the noun did not matter: what mattered was the place of the noun in the sentence<sup>5</sup>. L' Académie Française imposed a new rule which systematically

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<sup>4</sup> Speaking about Alonso, here is an example of what can be read about her on the Web. Note that identically violent comments can be found in newspapers: « Sa stupidité et sa superficialité contribuent à discréditer le sens de son action, si vous êtes partisan de l'égalité des sexes, veillez à chier sur cette connasse et toutes ses amies. » This can be translated as: “Her stupidity and superficiality end up discrediting the meaning of her actions. If you are in favour of gender equality, you must defecate on this bitch and all her friends.” [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discussion:Isabelle\\_Alonso](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discussion:Isabelle_Alonso) Isabelle

<sup>5</sup> Example of this rule “of proximity”: « Mes cousins et mes cousines sont belles. » The adjective “belles” is in the feminine form because it agrees with the closest preceding noun, “cousines” which is in the feminine form as well. Whereas in the sentence: « Mes cousines et mes cousins sont beaux », the adjective beaux” is in the masculine form because the closest preceding noun is “cousins”, also in the

favoured the masculine gender, consequently systematically erasing the feminine one. This means that a group of one hundred women and one man will be referred to in the masculine form, regardless of the ordering of terms in a given sentence; in addition, a group of individuals whose gender is unspecified will be referred to in the masculine form, whether it includes women or not.

Vaugelas and thirty nine other members formed this new body which was created to control the French language. They were in charge of writing the dictionary and introducing new words as well as deciding which gender a new word might have. French is well known for the complexity of its two genders, for instance, « une table » or “a table” is feminine but « un bureau » or “a desk” is masculine. To this day, forty “immortals” or « immortels » compose the Académie Française. The average age of members is 82. One académicien needs to die for his peers to elect a new member. The first woman to have been elected was Marguerite Yourcenar; she became « une académicienne » in 1980. In the 345 years preceding her election, all académiciens had been men. There are now six women and 34 men at the Académie. The académiciens are conservative and despise the idea of de-gendering the French language. Member Maurice Druon (2008, p.35) does not hesitate to qualify any attempt to de-gender as a “cartload of nonsense” coming from “trash dictionaries,” usually the work of “ignorant feminist Huronnes from Quebec”<sup>6</sup>. Druon is an académicien who sees himself and his colleagues as the guardians of the language they rule and have been ruling for centuries. They are extremely powerful. Also de-gendered French poses a threat to their very foundation.

### iii. Power struggle

De-gendering the French language is an issue of power. Adding the letter 'e' at the end of 'professeur' is an act of resistance in contemporary France. De-gendering also raises cultural and social issues. In French culture, all French pupils from the age of two go through the « Education Nationale », the school system. Since Vaugelas, all of them have been taught from the age of six, which is when primary school starts, that “the

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masculine form. With Vaugelas' new rule, we now have: “« mes cousins (m) et mes cousines (f) sont beaux (m) » because the masculine form overrides the feminine one in all circumstances, even though it is no longer the closest to the adjective.

<sup>6</sup> The exact French sentence from académicien Druon is: “tombereau de sottises” qu'ils ont “déversées”, à l'encontre des “dictionnaires-poubelles”, Larousse et Robert, enregistrant les féminins, à l'encontre des “zélateurs” de la féminisation, “ces malfaiteurs” “d'une ignorance crasse”, à l'encontre des “Huronnes” du Québec partisans de la féminisation, etc. Druon was a symbol of the resistance expressed against what he saw as “feminizing the language”.

masculine form systematically overrides the feminine one.”<sup>7</sup> They are taught as well that grammar rules cannot and must not be bent. Dictations are performed weekly if not daily and any creativity expressed in spelling or syntax is heavily punished: in my days, before performing a dictation, primary school teachers used to claim in a loud voice: « 5 fautes égalent 0 » which means that if a child had five spelling mistakes in his or her dictation he or she got a zero. Most children collected zeroes weekly if not daily. The punishments for receiving so many zeroes varied from walking around the courtyard with the poorly executed dictation pinned on the child's back to copying a few hundred times the mis-spelt words. Needless to say none of these punishments taught the children how to spell. It did create, in many of them, a fear of writing. Nowadays, teaching methods may have changed with the arrival of a new generation of primary school teachers. But to this day, in my counselling practice, I still meet men and women who explicitly apologise to me for not writing out of fear of making spelling mistakes.

The power struggle is clear: on the one hand, in the service of the Académie Française, the school system reinforces the idea that rules, created by the académiciens, cannot be transgressed and on the other hand, a handful of Francophile scholars contravene these rules. In order to exist, de-gendering has to bend a few grammar rules, and even create new words, for these words simply do not exist in the feminine form. Regularly, in the media, a fight bursts out between the supporters and opponents of de-gendered French. These fights are always vehement. Khaznadar (2006), a feminist linguist, writes: « Il n'est pas obligatoire de continuer à obéir à cette catégorisation mentale primitive inculquée dans l'enfance, et à sa symbolisation par le langage alors que la langue française nous permet de nous en libérer » or “it is neither necessary to keep obeying this primitive mind-set taught in childhood nor is it necessary to obey its symbolisation through the use of language, especially when the French language allows us to free ourselves from it.” Khaznadar raises a point to which more attention will be given below: the French language actually does allow a more balanced use of both genders; de-gendering is within reach. For example, adding an “e” at the end of some words changes them from a masculine form to a feminine one like « docteur » and « docteure ». In other instances, a few words might have to be created, because, once again, they do not have a feminine form. For many years, linguists such as Khaznadar have thought about ways of implementing a de-gendering of the French language but these ways are still to be tried

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<sup>7</sup> The sentence in French is « le masculin l'emporte toujours sur le féminin ». It is repeated many times over in primary schools.

out more thoroughly. The samples used in this research and catalogued in Appendix 1 represent different attempts at de-gendering. These samples will demonstrate very clearly that the de-gendering process is technically easy to achieve. The practice of de-gendered French is within reach but it remains controversial. The issue, therefore, is not held within the language; rather it underlines a power struggle between those who have controlled the French language for the past few hundred years – the academicians, the school system - and those who are challenging it – feminist linguists and authors.

#### **iv. Cultural and social issues**

Following one possible rule mentioned in the previous paragraph, « professeur » is always masculine, whether or not the professor in question is male or female. « Professeur » (masc) could become « professeure » (fem), because adding an “e” at the end of a noun is an accepted way of feminising it, but this does not currently happen. Mathieu and Pierrel (2009) support the idea that the problem here is not a grammatical one but a social one: « La dévalorisation: pour beaucoup, y compris, hélas, de femmes, féminiser un nom de métier, revient à le dévaloriser; un métier féminisé perdrait alors de son prestige » (p. 3) or “for many, unfortunately, including women, to feminise a noun, especially nouns of professions discredits the profession; it then loses its prestige.” Guittienne (2009) explains that until recently, feminine nouns like « ambassadrice » or « pharmacienne »<sup>8</sup> clearly meant ‘the wife of the ambassador’ or ‘the daughter of the chemist’. The professions of « ambassadeur » and « pharmacien » are exclusively masculine, and have only a masculine form. When these positions became accessible to women in the second half of the twentieth century, women who acceded to these positions did not want to be thought to be the ‘daughter of’ or ‘the wife of’ when they were the ones in charge of the embassy or the pharmacy. Therefore, French women happily named themselves in the masculine form, which was the only way for them to achieve recognition in their newly acquired positions. This might have been a necessary step towards equality. Nowadays, it is not so surprising to see women in all spheres of society taking on responsibilities traditionally and culturally reserved for men, including those of ambassador or chemist. Even though more women take on these responsibilities, few twenty-first century French women are ready to take on the titles in the feminine form which accompany these responsibilities. Even now, if one calls a female Cabinet Minister

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<sup>8</sup> « ambassadrice » is the feminine form of « ambassadeur » or “ambassador” and « pharmacienne » is the feminine form of « pharmacien » or “chemist”.

« Madame **la** Ministre », using « la » (definite article in the feminine form), one is making a political statement. This practice has become more common with the Left of French politics since the beginning of François Hollande's term as President in 2012 but is almost unheard of amongst conservatives, who retain the traditional masculine appellation: « Madame **le** Ministre », using « le » (definite article in the masculine form).

## **v. De-gendering techniques**

Several techniques have evolved to de-gender the French language. Scholars, usually linguists, such as Khaznadar (2002) and Dumais (2008), have applied grammar rules that are already in place to feminise masculine nouns. In some precise cases, and as already stated, French grammar authorises the addition of the letter 'e' at the end of nouns, adjectives and past participles in order to express them in the feminine form, for example, « Avocat » or "lawyer" (masculine form) becomes « Avocate » in the feminine form. In bilingual Canada, a guide to "gender inclusive writing" (Martin, 2011) has been published. It recommends, for example, the following: "instead of writing 'les canadiens' to write 'les Canadiennes et les Canadiens' or even 'La population canadienne'"<sup>9</sup> (Martin, 2011, p.2). This is a simple yet effective way of including a gender which had deliberately been eliminated. To avoid sometimes anaesthetic repetitions, other guides propose using hyphens or dots to include both genders: « les employé-e-s » or « employé.e.s » to write about "employees", both male and female. In the de-gendered translations of this project, the above techniques have been explored (in Chapter 4) and analysed through discourse analysis methods (Chapter 5), thus contributing to the work of a handful of scholars.

## **vi. De-gendering, "a salutary effort" for democracies.**

Other scholars envision a world where "the habit of taking body differences as a reason for dividing human beings into two groups" (Schabert, 2010, p.72) will be over. Schabert cites Priscille Touraille and Sandra Bem who – from a socio-anthropological and a psychological perspective, respectively -- "endorse the view that the distinction between male and female should no longer organize most of our cultural practice and thought" (p.72). The sociologist Stefan Hirschauer pleads for a "turn from gender difference to gender indifference" (Hirschauer, 2006, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). He defines the

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<sup>9</sup> Les Canadiens is the masculine form of "Canadians" while les Canadiennes is the feminine form of "Canadians". La population canadienne embodies both genders, "Canadian people".

act of de-gendering as “a salutary but routine effort for democratic societies” (Hirschauer, 2006, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). “Genuine de-gendering” can take place only after gender difference has been fully brought into the open” (Lorber, 2005, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). Therefore, the first step towards de-gendering is an explicit gendering, i.e. a rendering of feminine words where they did not before exist. This is what the cultural translations of this project achieve, and the analysis of these translations demonstrates that, through this process, a partially de-gendered language arises.

In a very gendered language, such as French, one gender monopolizes the linguistic field because it is thought to be 'superior' to the other gender, and hence deserving of more linguistic space in both written and oral communication; the act of re-introducing the feminine gender each time it is possible sabotages the monopoly or hegemony of the masculine gender and undermines its so called superiority. The equal appearance of both genders in a language, which currently openly favours one over the other, would bring back a “salutary balance” (Hirschauer, 2006, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73), because if both genders are systematically and overtly used, could the notion of gender itself fall apart? Adding the missing feminine back in could make the two genders equal and thus gender could cease to be so important, hence the idea of de-gendering.

Another way in which gender balance could be expressed is through genderlessness. This view is put forward by Christine Delphi who emphasizes “the importance of the imagination for the program of conceiving and realizing a genderless world” (Delphi, 1993, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73); thus she raises the importance of genderless literature. As mentioned earlier, Alonso (2012) is a pioneer in this area. She wrote the first de-gendered novel, stretching her imagination far beyond anything achieved until then. Alonso’s book title is a representation of her stretched imagination: “Roman à l’eau de bleu” (2012)<sup>10</sup>.

## Summary

This first section of the literature review helps us understand that de-gendered French is not a popular idea among most French speakers in twenty-first century France. The well established and long lasting power of the Académie Française, exercised through tools such as dictionaries and the school system, will fight any idea, such as de-gendering,

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<sup>10</sup> The usual expression used in French is “Roman à l’Eau de Rose” which means “Cheesy Story”. The idea of a cheesy story in French is associated with feminine words such as “rose” which means ‘pink’ and ‘roses’ the flowers. By replacing this word “rose” by “bleu” or ‘blue’, Alonso pushed the reader’s thinking in a more masculine direction: blue being associated with the masculine gender.

which might favour changes in the French language. Secular traditions as well as cultural practices, such as women not being allowed in certain professions until recently<sup>11</sup>, add to the difficulties encountered. On the other hand, a few scholars, coming from disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, psychology and literature are striving towards a change in the use of language, because they see it as a “salutary effort” for democracies.



Figure 4: L'académie Française



Figure 5: Building of L'Education Nationale

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<sup>11</sup> As described above, chemists or “pharmacienne” and ambassadors or “ambassadrice” are cases in point.



Figure 6: The académiciens (the younger ones sit on the floor).



Figure 7: Le Cardinal Richelieu



Figure 8: Vaugelas

## **b. The idea of de-gendering and Narrative Therapy.**

In this section, we will first look at some of the theories and techniques used in discursive practices of Narrative Therapy: first “externalisation,” second “unique outcomes” and third “re-authoring.” I will cite excerpts of the English transcripts I have translated to illustrate these Narrative Therapy concepts, and then I intend to apply these techniques to the French language via the process of translation. In order to examine these techniques in action, each original text in English has first been rendered into three translations in French. Each translation comes under a paradigm identified by the translation studies field: firstly, Literal; secondly, Negotiated; and thirdly, Cultural. These paradigms will be detailed below in this literature review. Once the translation work was completed, samples were selected. The selection process will be thoroughly explained in Chapter 3 under “methodology and methods” (samples can be found in Appendix 1). Three samples were selected because they illustrate particularly well the idea of externalisation. Simultaneous to the translation work, a reflective journal was written, details of which will be given in Chapter 3. I include extracts from the journal here, in order to illustrate the ideas of “externalising”, “unique outcomes” and “re-authoring”. We shall see that these techniques are particularly well adapted to study and disturb a language: Narrative ideas applied to the French language have allowed me to embark on a journey where my native tongue was no longer a part of me; rather it has become an entity on its own. I kept exploring Derrida’s (1996) idea: “I only speak one language, yet it isn't mine” (p. 2). What is this language that I speak?

### **i. Externalisation**

This technique comes from the idea defended by Freedman and Combs (1996) that:

The person is not the problem but the problem is the problem. Externalisation is a practice supported by the belief that a problem is something operating or impacting on or pervading a person's life, something separate and different from the person (Freedman and Combs, 1996, p. 47).

In the therapy world, problems, such as anger, are identified and then possibly externalised. To illustrate this technique, we can look at Appendix 1, where all the samples

to be analysed in this study have been gathered. A closer look at Samples 1 and 4 will help us understand the concept of externalising.

In Sample 1, David Epston is having a conversation with a young boy called Sebastian. Sebastian could be seen as being a violent, angry boy but when David addresses him he says: "If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of him, what would anger look like? How would it look?" On a white board Sebastian draws thorns, then a cactus. His anger, or rather the anger in his life has been externalized; it has the feel and shape of a cactus. Now the effect of the cactus in Sebastian's life can be explored more openly and vividly than might otherwise be possible

In Sample 4 of this study, David Epston is conversing with Jenny and Serena. There is a problem in Serena's life which impacts on her mother's life too. David speaks about the Problem as if it were a person: it has a capital letter to its name. David says: "Jenny, most Problems have a pretty narrow version of a young person because they only know the kid in trouble and not out of trouble and probably aren't that interested in knowing about their daring, bravery and fearlessness."

We clearly see in the samples above that problems have been externalized: they have a life of their own, are given a name, a shape, a feel. The result of this technique is to locate the problem outside of the person's identity: Sebastian is not angry; he is facing a cactus which, as it turns out, has tried to rip his heart. Also, another belief narrative therapists hold in their conversations is that problems can be the result of social constructions. The 'cactus' did not grow out of nowhere; it has found a favourable ground within socio-political realities, such as, in this particular case, family violence.

In this study, the French language is seen as being the problem because it is biased. Seeing my native tongue as a problem deserved more attention. I decided to write a reflective journal in which I could explore my native tongue and the problem it represented in my mind. The reflective journal is part of this project. I wrote in this journal as I was translating the therapeutic conversations from English into French. I used the space the reflective journal was giving me to explore ideas which came to me as I was translating. As it became more and more clear, through the translation work, that gender was a problem in my native tongue, I attempted to externalise the French language I spoke in order to deconstruct it. I began to explore more deeply Derrida's (1996) quote: "Yes, I only speak one language, yet it isn't mine" (p. 2). In my reflective journal, I wrote:

At first, it (the French language) feels like a spy, working from within me, without me being aware of it. It is a spy working for the dominant group,

the power driven group, it has been implanted in my brain by those people: It tells me how to speak, how to write, therefore how to think and how to act. It is an enemy. I am a robot and the language which has been inserted in my brain drives me. This language creates my reality, a reality which does not feel right. It is inequitable. It favours male over female. I am a female, I cannot accept it, I would rather not speak it!

Following narrative practices, I externalised my native tongue, it is a “spy”. I can see it, I could draw it. As I hold this spy in my mind and face it, there appears to be a more complex story, involving politics, manipulation, all socially constructed. Further along in my reflective journal I wrote:

The externalised language looks like a crippled being, not like a spy. It looks exhausted; sad... it all seems clear now: it has been abused! It used to be fine, fair. It loved all of us who spoke it. But it was abducted! In 1647 Richelieu and Vaugelas kidnapped it; they have turned it into a reality reducing instrument. It does not want to be that way... It does not have to be that way.

## **ii. Unique Outcome**

Turning towards Narrative ideas for answers, I search for a “unique outcome”. What is a “unique outcome”? “Unique outcomes are experiences that would not be predicted by the problem saturated narrative” (Freedman and Combs, 1996, p. 47). To illustrate this idea within a therapeutic context, let's look at Jenny and Serena's story again, as it appears in Sample 2 (see Appendix 1).

Looking for unique outcomes, David asks Serena: “Your talents, abilities and what your friends think is cool about you. Jenny, I wouldn't be surprised if you wanted to know why”.

Considering the content of David's comments here, there cannot possibly be space only for the problem in Serena's response. The careful exploration of other possibilities in her life earlier in the conversation pushes David to enquire about her 'talents' and 'abilities' which will contradict the problem saturated story in which she and her mother (Jenny) have been immersed for a long time. Unique outcomes such as these can signal the start of a new narrative waiting to be developed in order to block the ever growing dominant, unpleasant story.

In this study, we know that one dominant story in the French language is the overwhelming space given to the masculine form which systematically overrules the feminine one, rendering the latter invisible. We know that this masculinisation of the French language has not always been in place but is the result of power abuse from a few privileged individuals in the seventeenth century. We know that re-gendering French, in order to make it a less gendered idiom, is possible. Could de-gendered French, therefore, be seen as a “unique outcome”? We have seen that the idea of de-gendering is slowly finding its way into literature. Like literature, Narrative Therapy taps into the imagination. We have grasped in the first sample of this study how Sebastian represents on the white board, the anger he feels as 'thorns', and as his imagination keeps working on it, the 'thorns' become a 'cactus'. From this imagined metaphor, therapy can take place. Just as readers fill in the “blind” parts of a novel, unleashing their imagination, people seeking the help of a narrative therapist will document parts of their lives which have remained untold until therapy begins: in doing so, they need to remember preferred events or “unique outcomes.” In other words, their imagination allows them to think outside the dominant, heavily documented, problem-saturated stories of their lives.

De-gendered French could be seen as a “unique outcome” in a linguistic idiom that is heavily saturated by the masculine. I am determined to disturb my native tongue from within; I am willing to use metaphors to deepen my understanding of it, to observe it. I am eager to analyse it, even tend to it. A reflective journal is the ideal place in which these ideas can take shape: I let my imagination lead me. From the spy I first thought it to be, I now saw the French language as an abused being, turned into an agent of control against its will. In the fiction created in my mind, it moved from being a spy to being a victim; again, I can see this victim very clearly, and we could have a conversation together. I am imagining this story but I am a narrative therapist and my instinct pushes me to intervene because my idiom needs help. The reality of a sexist language and the fiction elaborated in my mind are interwoven. I wrote:

In the old days, it (French) used to treat both genders equally<sup>12</sup>. It has happened before, it can happen again. This language needs to be cherished; it needs to recover from centuries of abuse. Slowly but surely, it can be rescued and restored. Its ‘therapy’ consists in finding those texts where male and female were represented fairly, where both genders had a

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<sup>12</sup> “La règle de proximité” explained in Footnote 5 was a way of representing both genders in a more equal position.

space, and transporting that text to the twenty-first century. De-gendering is the way out; de-gendering is the cure it needs.

In Narrative Therapy, it is not unusual for unique outcomes to be identified very quickly after problems have been externalised. The way out of these problems, the cure, then consists in cultivating these outcomes so that they are not so unique anymore. This is when the idea of re-authoring can get into action.

### **iii. Re-Authoring**

Once a “unique outcome” has been identified, some analysis around the idea of “re-authoring” can begin. Michael White (2007), in “Maps of Narrative Practice”, explains that he drew on Jerome Bruner's (1986) “explorations of the narrative metaphor, specifically from his analysis of literary texts”. Bruner (1986) explains:

As they [the readers] begin to construct a virtual text of their own, it is as if they were embarking on a journey without maps and yet, they possess a stock of maps that might give hints, and besides, they know a lot about mapmaking. (...) In time, the new journey becomes a thing in itself, however much its initial shape was borrowed from the past (p. 36).

Michael White develops this idea:

Similarly, when people first engage in therapeutic conversations in which they reconstruct the story of their lives, it often seems that they are departing from the familiar and embarking on journeys to new destinations without maps. And yet, as this reconstruction gathers pace, it quickly becomes clear that these people are drawing from a stock of maps relevant to journeys already taken (p. 76).

In order to reconstruct my native tongue as I want to speak it, I draw on “past journeys” and I move forward, towards the future. Could a de-gendered form of French be a “preferred way of being” of an externalised idiom? I ask myself: “What would the language, this 'crippled spy' most likely want to be like?” One possible answer to this question can be extracted from my reflective journal:

There is no doubt about it: this is how my native tongue wants to be: de-gendered. Surely, an idiom would rather be a guide, a leader, a being that

reconciles both genders of its speakers than a spy working for a minority obsessed with controlling the majority!

Once identified, a unique outcome undergoing re-authoring will “thicken”. New stories of preferred ways of being will be told. Sample 3 of this study gives us an opportunity to see what re-authoring and “thickening” can look like. Jenny, Serena’s mother, tells David how good her daughter can be. David explains that he “was provided with examples and stories of her (Serena) practices of loveliness, kindness and friendliness towards the next door neighbour's children and her cousins.” Through the telling or writing of new narratives, a new story line can begin.

Through the practice of translation, which will be examined in detail below, this study demonstrates that a text can undergo multiple transformations and through this process move towards a new storyline. My reflective journal reads:

My crippled, exhausted being takes a break, it is recovering. The reconstruction of its identity has begun. It goes to a faraway land and tries a new medicine: English. For a while, it will absorb the English language, daily, and then slowly but surely will go back to its former self: French. What will French look like then? What values will it stand for? How will it express itself?

Figure 9 shows a drawing extracted from my reflective journal. It illustrates the thinking path happening in my mind when embracing theories and techniques used in discursive practices of Narrative Therapy.

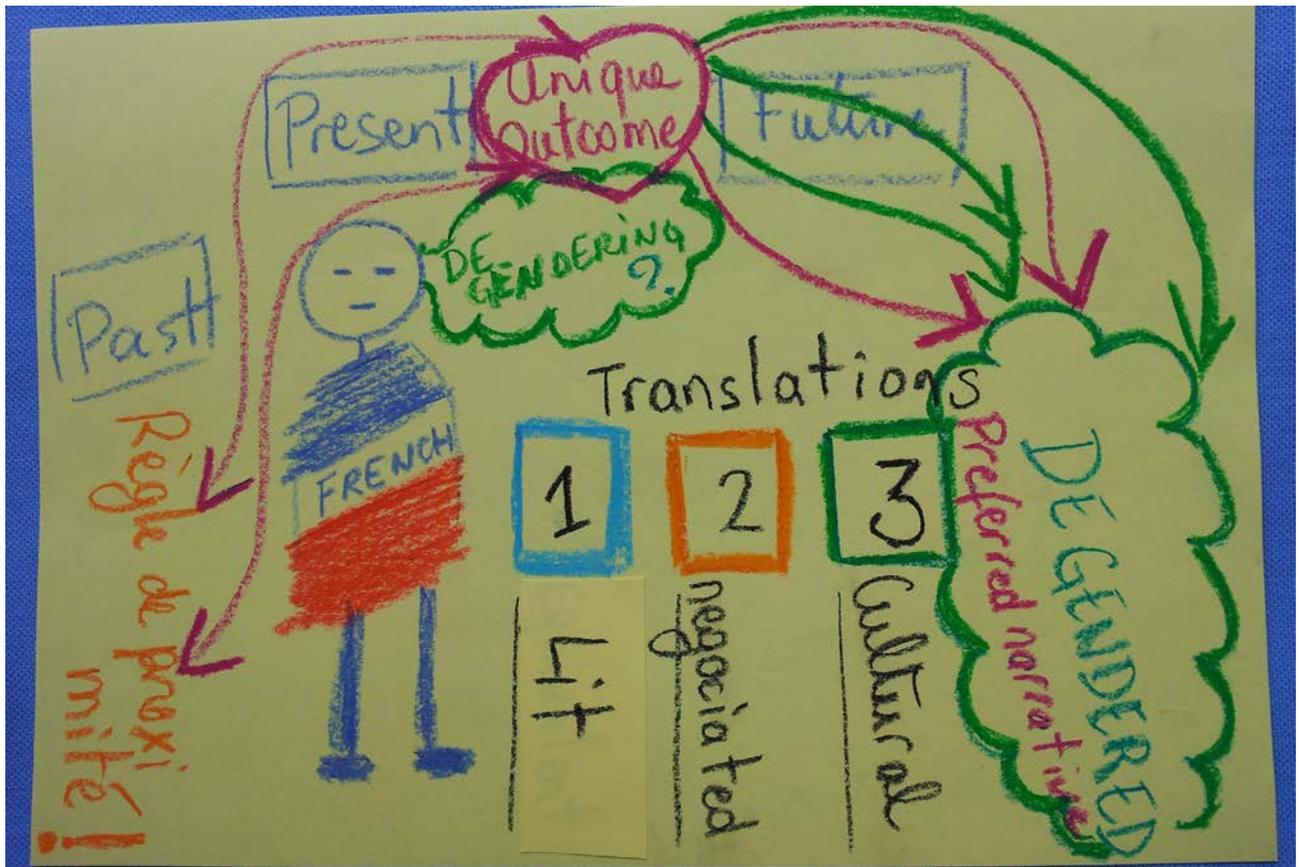


Figure 9: Drawing from my reflective journal

The French language is 'externalised', it does not have arms: it is crippled. De-gendering is just a thought, (maybe a 'unique outcome'?) in the shape of a heart. De-gendering can draw on past experiences (grammar rule of proximity). Translations are the steps to climb in order to go forward. De-gendered is potentially the preferred way to be for this being. If it is, it will grow bigger and bigger, it will 'thicken': from unique outcome to practice.

## Summary

This study is looking at disrupting the French language from within using narrative discursive practices such as "externalisation", "unique outcomes", "re-authoring" via translations. Being a translator, a narrative therapist working in English and in French, in New Zealand, I am in a unique position to explore and disturb my native tongue from within. In this project, with the help of a reflective journal and the three translations, we will see that each transformation brings the language closer to its former state, when it was not so gendered, and 'draws from a stock of maps' of journeys already taken. These transformations re-construct its identity step by step and bring to light new conclusions about its life which contradict existing deficit-focused conclusions which have been limiting

its life for many centuries. In this section, I have begun to bring an answer to the questions Derrida's phrases have triggered in me: what is this language that I speak? A spy? A victim? We shall see in Chapter Four, through critical discourse analysis that the shift, between the second and the third translation happens almost instantly. This instantaneity which brings an immediate change is also seen in the act of externalising, which is dear to narrative therapists.

### **c. De-gendered French, Narrative Therapy and Anti-Languages**

In the previous section, we looked at the idea of externalising a language, French, using discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. We saw that the idea of de-gendering can be seen as a goal consistent with narrative ideas: de-gendered French can be seen as a “unique outcome”. Narrative Therapy is considered by David Epston, one of its founders, to be an anti-language. In this section we look closely at de-gendered French and decide whether it might be an anti-language or not. We will start with the question: what is an anti-language? MAK Halliday who is at the origin of the anti-language theory, suggests an answer to this question. We will apply Halliday's nine criteria and see whether de-gendered French passes his test. We will conclude by exploring why this is important to this research.

#### **Definition**

Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, a British linguist of the twentieth century created the theory of anti-languages, in which he saw language as a social phenomenon. He writes (1976):

At certain times and places we come across special forms of language generated by some kind of anti-society; these we may call “anti-languages”. An anti-language serves to create and maintain social structure through conversation, just as an everyday language does; but the social structure is of a particular kind, in which certain elements are strongly foregrounded. This gives to the anti-language a special character in which metaphorical modes are the norm; patterns of this kind appear at all levels (...) The study of anti-languages offers further insight into the relation between language and social structures (p. 570).

He then compiled a list of nine criteria to determine if a language, or a particular way of communicating, could be thought of as an anti-language. As explained below, de-gendered French matches eight of the nine criteria.

### **i. The first criterion**

The first criterion is that an anti-language builds on the notion of an anti-society: “An anti-society is a society which is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance” (Halliday, 1976, p. 570). The practice of de-gendered French is a conscious alternative to the way this language has been practiced over the past four hundred years and is still practiced today. It is a conscious attempt to render this tongue a more equal one, reflecting the reality of modern French society. It is a way to resist the dominant, male dominated linguistic field. It is a mode of resistance towards institutions such as the Académie Française and the Education Nationale amongst others.

### **ii. The second criterion**

The second criterion Halliday identifies reads as follows: “The simplest form taken by an anti-language is that of new words for old: it is a language relexicalised” (Halliday, 1976, p.571). In therapeutic narrative conversation happening in English, new words such as “wonderfulnesses” or “unsuffering” are used as a means to resist problem saturated stories. De-gendered French is the relexicalisation of words belonging to an old way of thinking, inherited from centuries of male domination. We shall see in Chapter Five the details of this relexicalisation, but a few examples can be given here. We have already seen that « professeure » with the letter 'e' at the end of the word is an act of resistance in twenty-first century France. The systematic re-introduction of the pronoun « elle » or “she” in order to challenge the grammatical idea that the masculine form « il » or “he” is generic or neutral, participates in this relexicalisation. New words are also created, for example, « docteure » with the 'e' at the end to feminize it does not exist in French and cannot be found in dictionaries.

### **iii. The third criterion**

Halliday explains the third criterion thus: “The principle is that of same grammar, different vocabulary” (Halliday, 1976, p. 570). De-gendered French uses grammatical rules in place but pushes the application of these rules to the feminine gender. An example of

this practice can be observed in Sample 4 of this research. In this sample, which we have already seen when explaining externalisation, the conversation between David and Jenny, Serena's mother, is around the idea that problems do not care about young people's abilities. The source (English) text reads: “Jenny, most Problems have a pretty narrow version of a young person because they only know the kid in trouble and not out of trouble and probably aren't that interested in knowing about their daring, bravery and fearlessness”.

Because the reader does not know the gender of the “young people” or “kid” in this conversation, the equivalent French translation considers the “young people” or “kid” to be male; consequently, the remainder of the sentence is in the masculine form. Why? Because of a grammatical rule which states that all adjectives, past participles etc... have to agree in number and gender with the noun to which they are attached. Therefore, “daring, bravery and fearlessness” are all translated in the masculine form in the equivalent French translation: « ils (...) peuvent être audacieux, courageux et téméraires. »

On the contrary, the cultural, de-gendered translation re-introduces the feminine form. The “young people” or “kid” could be male or female, we simply do not know, therefore we stop assuming that the unknown equals masculine only and we equally name both genders. The cultural translation reads: « ils et elles (...) peuvent être audacieux, audacieuses, courageux , courageuses et téméraires. »<sup>13</sup>

The grammatical rule has not been changed; it is now applied to both genders, perfectly matching Halliday's third criteria: “same grammar, different vocabulary”<sup>14</sup>. Again, we notice that the practice of de-gendered French is easy, but remains controversial; hence the idea that de-gendered French could be seen as an anti-language.

#### **iv. The fourth criterion**

The fourth criterion stipulates that “Effective communication depends on exchanging meanings which are inaccessible to the layperson” (Halliday, 1976, p.570). We will see, later in this thesis (Chapter 5), that de-gendered French is quite subtle; people who decide to adopt it and make a conscious effort to use it are fully aware of their actions. On the other hand, while the layperson might notice a slight change when listening to or reading

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<sup>13</sup> “Audacieuse, courageuse” are the feminine forms of “audacieux, courageux”

<sup>14</sup> I would like to note here that we shall go into much more detail on this point in the critical discourse analysis undertaken in Chapter 4.

de-gendered French, s/he will not necessarily realise that one is using de-gendered French and will not pick up on the underlying layer of meaning: that of making the French language more equal. Therefore the fourth criterion is fulfilled by de-gendered French.

#### **v. The fifth criterion**

In the fifth criterion, Halliday outlines that an “anti-language is not just an optional extra, it is the fundamental element in the existence of the 'second life' phenomenon.” (Halliday, 1976, p. 574). What is this ‘second life phenomenon’? Halliday explains (1976, p. 574):

The “second life” is a reconstruction of the individual and society. It provides an alternative social structure, with its systems of values, of sanctions, of rewards and punishments; and this becomes the source of an alternative identity for its members, through the pattern of acceptance and gratification. In other words, the ‘second life’ is an alternative reality.

Clearly, de-gendered French is the fundamental element in the re-introduction of the feminine form in a language where the masculine form is hegemonic. As we will see in the analysis detailed in Chapter 4, the act of de-gendering results in an alternative social structure, which in turn leads to an alternative reality. Therefore, de-gendered French fulfils this fifth criterion.

#### **vi. The sixth criterion**

The sixth criterion states: “The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. All who employ this same form of communication are reality-maintaining others” (Halliday, 1976, p.574). De-gendered French has a mission: maintaining a reality in which both genders are represented equally. In this mission it clearly fulfils this sixth criterion and goes on to fulfil the role identified by Halliday in his next criterion.

#### **vii. The seventh criterion**

“The anti-language is a vehicle of ‘resocialisation’” (Halliday, 1976, p.575). A gender overwhelmingly absent from the linguistic field to which it belongs suffers from a value deficit. Why is it not present in this linguistic field? Is it not deemed worthy of being there? The consequences of this established, organised, maintained unworthiness are wide and

are linked to the creation of an underclass based on gender difference; this is a topic explored in the next section of this literature review. Language cannot be separated from current power structures and social organisation in general, and cannot be expressed without it; language is thus part of a feedback loop which participates in the maintenance of the lower status of the less-valued group. De-gendered French is therefore a vehicle essential to the resocialisation of the identified underclass as well as the dominant class, which will find a new position too.

### **viii. The eighth criterion**

Halliday's eighth criterion states that "there is continuity between language and anti-language" (Halliday, 1976, p.576). De-gendered French is part of the French language; it lives within it. It has always been there, but was rarely seen. It is not revolutionary in the sense that it is loud and extraordinary. Rather, it is simple and subtle, because of continuities with existing French grammar rules<sup>15</sup>.

### **ix The ninth criterion**

This criterion does not fit de-gendered French. It reads: "Like the early records of the language of exotic cultures, the information usually comes to us in the form of lists" (Halliday, 1976, p.570). One could think of vocabulary lists of newly feminised words, such as "professeure" or "docteure", but those lists are a minor component of de-gendered French.

## **Summary**

Halliday, a British linguist, developed the idea of anti-languages. He identified nine criteria to establish whether or not a language could be thought of as an anti-language. Out of the nine criteria, eight can be applied to de-gendered French. Therefore, it seems relevant and safe to say that de-gendered French is an anti-language. This is important because, according to Halliday, "the study of anti-languages offers further insight into the relation between languages and social structures" (1976, p. 570). Narrative Therapy is an anti-language; so is de-gendered French. What could be the consequences of this finding? For whom could this anti-language be of use? We will examine these questions in the next

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<sup>15</sup> These points will be detailed in Chapter 5

paragraph of this literature review when situating this research within French feminism, before moving on to translation studies.

## **d. Situating my project within French Feminism**

### **i. M.L.F. Mouvement de Libération des Femmes**

French Feminism or the « Mouvement de Libération des Femmes », translated Women's Freedom Movement, or MLF came into existence in 1970. There were a number of causes to fight for, and each decade since has seen the picking up of new fights. In the 80s, the MLF mostly denounced domestic violence and fought for free access to birth control, but one feminist group of linguists belonging to the MLF started to demand changes to the French language as well, starting with constitutional texts. They thought that if important texts issued by the government were gender inclusive, the effect would ripple down to less important texts. One committee called “la commission Roudy” was created in 1983, under the presidency of François Mitterrand, a socialist president<sup>16</sup>. The role of the committee was to speed up the process of imposing parity in the French language used in government publications. Unfortunately the committee never reached its goal due to massive and widespread opposition.

In the 90s, the MLF split into numerous feminist groups, most of which demanded more equality between genders in the workplace, the home and the political sphere. In the 2000s, mind-sets are slowly changing: the last elected government<sup>17</sup> is the first one to have an equal number of male and female Ministers which highlights the problem of inequality between genders in the French language. French is seen as a “sexist” language (Wasserman & Waseley, 2009) because professions such as “Minister” or « Ministres » do not have a feminine form. What then to call a Minister who happens to be a woman?

### **ii. De-gendering names of professions.**

A number of scholars from the field of linguistics agree that there is a problem and condemn the fierce resistance to using feminine nouns in order to speak or write about professions carried out by women (Edwige Khaznadar, Jacqueline Lamothe & Thérèse Moreau, 2006). Can someone who cannot be named exist? Another pertinent question is

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<sup>16</sup> Commission Roudy pour la parité linguistique 1983, or Roudy Committee for parity in French 1983.

<sup>17</sup> François Hollande, the present President of France, was elected in May 2012. He comes from the Socialist Party.

asked by Markus Brauer and Michael Landry in a 2008 article entitled « Un ministre peut-il tomber enceinte? L'impact du masculin générique sur les représentations mentales »<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, the first language fight in francophone countries concerns the name of professions<sup>19</sup>. In this matter, some ground is being covered, but the resistance is fierce: Druon (2008) - who happened to be the spokesperson of the Académiciens at the time - speaks of those who are in favour of a change in language, (consisting of feminising names of professions, because these professions are now open to women), in those terms: « *zélateurs* » de la féminisation, « *ces malfaiteurs* » « *d'une ignorance crasse* », which can be translated into “those wrong doers, zealots or partisans of feminising” names of professions in French demonstrate “a filthy ignorance” (p. 35).

### iii. Outside of France

Nowadays, the fight for a less sexist French language is fought mostly outside of France. On the one hand, in countries such as Switzerland and Canada, progress is noticeable around names of professions: new names are well accepted and commonly used. Canada and Switzerland are now moving towards a fair representation of the genders in French. The governmental organisation called Status of Women Canada (2011) has published a guide called *Gender Inclusive Writing* in order to pursue this idea of gender equality in the French language (Martin, 2011). On the other hand, countries like Belgium, Cyprus and France are struggling. Names of professions in the feminine form are still mocked because « cela sonne mal, ce n'est pas beau » i.e. it “does not sound right and it is not pretty” (Guittiène, Proust 2009, p 113.) It seems that the road to « rédaction épiciène »<sup>20</sup> will be long and chaotic.

## Summary

The main feminist movement in France was the MLF, which was born out of social unrest in 1968. In the 1980s and 90s, French feminism evolved in many directions; new groups were created, each one with particular demands. One group of feminist linguists,

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<sup>18</sup> “Can a minister (male) become pregnant? The impact on mental representations of a generic masculine gender”

<sup>19</sup> Many occupations in French did not have a feminine form until very recently. For instance, nouns like “minister”, “doctor”, “surgeon”, “professor”, “researcher” etc... did not, until the 1990s, have feminine forms.

<sup>20</sup> “gender inclusive writing”

concerned with language inequalities, started demanding changes in the way constitutional texts are written. They also demanded the feminisation of names of professions. These demands were not well accepted in France but other feminists in other French speaking countries were more successful.

## **e. Neurosciences and languages**

A direct consequence of my study would be to raise consciousness around this issue of gender inequality in language<sup>21</sup> because the more it is in the open, the more people talk about it, and the more it is researched, the greater the chances of an evolution towards more equality in the gendering of language. All struggles have to be addressed through the use of language: arguably if it is possible to de-gender parts of the language, we will have better linguistic tools to address problems of gender inequalities. Scholars such as Lera Boroditsky (2011), Guy Deutscher (2010), and Marie Nathalie Beaudoin (2011) support this idea. Lera Boroditsky<sup>22</sup> in her lab has noted that “a causal relation between language and cognitive abilities has emerged suggesting that an individual's native language moulds the way they think about the world, including the concept of space and time” (2011, p. 64). A language, such as French, in which the linguistic field is mainly masculine, suggests that the way its speakers are likely to construct a reality will be heavily tinted by masculinity, in which the feminine gender has little space.

Guy Deutscher (2010)<sup>23</sup> develops this idea further, regarding the way our language shapes our thoughts; he adds that it also shapes our beliefs, values and ideologies:

For many years, our mother tongue was claimed to be a “prison house” that constrained our capacity to reason. Once it turned out that there was no evidence for such claims, this was taken as proof that people of all cultures think in fundamentally the same way. (...) The habits of mind that our culture has instilled in us from infancy – through our mother tongue – shape our orientation to the world and our emotional responses to the objects we encounter, and their consequences probably go far beyond

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<sup>21</sup> The findings of this research may offer transferable insight to other highly gendered languages such as Spanish and Portuguese.

<sup>22</sup> Lera Boroditsky is an assistant professor of cognitive psychology at Stanford University and editor in chief of *Frontiers in Cultural Psychology*. Her lab conducts research around the world, focusing on mental representation and the effects of language on cognition.

<sup>23</sup> Guy Deutscher is an honorary research fellow at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures at the University of Manchester.

what has been experimentally demonstrated so far; they may also have a marked impact on our beliefs, values and ideologies. We may not know as yet how to measure these consequences directly or how to assess their contribution to cultural or political misunderstandings. But as a first step toward understanding one another, we can do better than pretending we all think the same. (p. 7)

It is now accepted amongst most scholars that our belief systems, our values and ideologies are strongly influenced by our native tongue. Some researchers, such as Deutscher, Boroditsky and Beaudoin, are trying to scientifically measure this idea. Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin (2011, p. 1), explains how:

The advent of the functional MRI (fMRI) in the last two decades has allowed neuro- scientists to develop a better understanding of brain functioning during the course of certain experiences (Brefczynski-Lewis, Lutz, Schaefer, Levinson, & Davidson, 2007). A large number of scientific investigations have now demonstrated that the brain's neuroplasticity, the ability to change itself structurally, far extends what it was previously believed to be (Lazar et al., 2005). These new discoveries have been considered revolutionary in the medical field as they allow an understanding of how the brain processes information during certain mental tasks and conversations (Begley, 2007). Such understandings have important implications for therapists who operate primarily through linguistic endeavours.

The scholars cited above lend credibility to the idea that de-gendered French would bring a real change. Applied de-gendered French will touch on beliefs, values and ideologies and through its daily practice in the spoken and written spheres it might participate modestly in the re-shaping of the brains of its speakers, resulting in the construction of a more balanced reality in which both genders would be represented equally.



Figure 10: An MLF demonstration in the 1970s



Figure 11: A sign reading: « il y a plus inconnu que le Soldat Inconnu: sa femme »  
“More unknown than the Unknown Soldier: his wife”

## **f. Situating my project within the translations studies field**

### **i. Theory**

The act of translating has been going on for millennia – that is, as long as individuals speaking different languages have come into contact. When those meetings took place, translating or interpreting had to be part of the encounter otherwise people would not have been able to communicate. Inevitably, as the experience of translating evolved, many arguments arose around how best to approach the act of translation. Anthony Pym (2009) explains that these arguments come from the fact that translators have worked from different paradigms. This project engages three of the paradigms identified by Pym; these three paradigms fit particularly well with the intent of this study. What follows is a chronological approach to explore these paradigms. The first is the literal paradigm; the second, the equivalent paradigm, has what is referred to as a negotiated translation (with the translator standing between author and reader); and the third is the cultural paradigm.

It is not my intent to retrace the earliest history of literal translation: that would be the work of a historian. For the purposes of this study it is reasonable to assume, as does Pym (2009), that literal translation preceded the more complex paradigms.

### **ii. Literal paradigm**

The literal paradigm relies on a simple idea: replacing one word in one language with the “same” word in another language. It is well understood that a source text (ST)<sup>24</sup> translated in this way will often make no sense to the reader of the target language it is translated into; hence the idea in the literal paradigm that a translation is foreignised.

In this current project, step one will be to translate literally the therapeutic narrative conversations I have chosen. I intend to use the literal paradigm as an entry point into the texts I am translating. Here is an example of how this intent comes into action: the source text « Le chat gris tigré » is translated literally as “The cat grey tiggered”. This translation does not make sense to an English speaking reader: it is foreignised. This foreignised text pushes me, the translator, to give full attention to all words forming the source text, which is why it is important to this study. From this foreignised phrase, I can then produce the

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<sup>24</sup> The Source Text (ST) is the original text, the one which is translated; the translation of the ST is referred to as the Target Text (TT).

phrase: “the grey tabby cat”. This latter translation comes under the natural equivalence paradigm.

### iii. Natural Equivalence Paradigm

The literal translation is one step towards an equivalent one. It brings me one step closer to what I intend to do in this project: partially de-gender the French language.

The natural equivalence paradigm was most popular in the second part of the twentieth century. The literature tells us that it is still the most common paradigm used by professional translators. Tatilon (2003, p. 117) explains this paradigm quite well: he calls the translator a « transporteur », or a “transporter,” who moves information from one language to another. What matters is the information which is transported along the way: this piece of information will undergo transformations. It moves across time and across cultures, and it goes through what Tatilon calls “linguistic customs” (p. 117). The personality of the transporter as well as the idea he or she has of his or her job matter in this process. Tatilon reminds us that most translations today are 'utilitarian', i.e. administrative, legal, technical, scientific and so on. What matters is to domesticate the ST. “The grey tabby cat” is the domesticated version of « le chat gris tigré ».

So, on the one hand, and according to the literal paradigm, scholars argue that what is most important in a translation is to respect the ST and through it, implicitly, its author. They do not see a foreignised target text (TT) as a problem. Opposed to these ideas are authors who suggest that foreignising is a problem because the TT will most certainly not be understood by the readers at which it is aimed. To those authors, domesticating the TT is what matters.

Recently joining this debate is a group of authors and translators, such as Gayatri Spivak (2011), Rita Wilson (2005), and Umberto Eco (2003), who want to move away from the binary approach the translation field seems to have taken; they speak of “negotiation” in the act of translating. This idea of “translation as negotiation” is important for this study; it is another step towards the cultural paradigm where de-gendering will take place.

“Should the ST or the intended reader be the focus of a translator's attention?” (p. 119). This is the question that Wilson (2005) explores in her article *The Eco Effect*. She cites Umberto Eco who complicates this binary choice:

The aim of a translation, more than producing any literal equivalence, is to create the same effect in the mind of the reader (obviously according to the translator's interpretation) that the original text wanted to create...

Instead of speaking of equivalence of meaning, we can speak of functional equivalence: a good translation must generate the same effect aimed at by the original (p. 56).

Eco, a best-selling writer, translator and scholar, moves away from the foreignising versus domesticating debate. He sees the TT as a negotiation between the author, the translator and the reader (Eco, 2003).

#### **iv. Negotiated translation**

In this project, I have access to one key author<sup>25</sup> of the conversations I have translated, as well as access to potential French readers. Drawing on these resources, step two of my project is to negotiate the best possible translations of the conversations I have chosen; therefore, the second translation in this research is named a negotiated translation, following Eco's thinking.

#### **v. Cultural translations**

I now turn to discuss step three: the cultural translations. Under this paradigm, we find scholars such as Marcela Polanco (2011), Homi Bahbah (2009), Gayatri Spivak (2011) and the Campos Brothers (Milton, 2010), who all use the act of translating as a tool for reclaiming social justice, which is also a cornerstone of narrative practices. According to Pym (2009), translations must fulfil two criteria in order to be identified as cultural translations: the first criterion places the translator at the centre of the work he or she is doing (rather than placing the text she or he is producing at the centre); therefore a cultural translation is a process rather than a product. Pym writes:

One of the things that “cultural translation” theory does best is move beyond a focus on translations as (written or spoken) texts. The concern is with general cultural processes rather than with finite linguistic products. Salman Rushdie's: “Having been borne across the world, we are translated men” (1992, p. 17). After all, if nothing moved, there would be no need for translations. (p. 152)

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<sup>25</sup> Narrative Therapist, David Epston.

The second criterion Pym identifies for cultural translations is about asymmetry. In his *Cultural translations lecture* given on 30 November 2009, Pym defends the idea which comes from post-colonial studies claiming that there are no fixed cultures and that there are asymmetries between them. He says there is a space for the colonising culture, a space for the colonised culture, and there is also a third space, an interface, where cultural translations belong. This interface is the perfect place in which to reclaim social justice, for example, to decolonise and de-gender.

When Marcela Polanco (2011), a narrative therapist from Columbia working in the United States, started translating *Maps of Narrative Practice* from Australian English into Columbian Spanish in a literal or equivalent manner, she realised that she was colonising her practice of narrative therapy in Columbian Spanish. This is not what she wanted. She writes: “Engaging faithfully with practices that originate in foreign cultures carries the risk of colonising local contexts if the impossibility of a perfect match between cultures is not addressed” (2011, p 42).

Narrative therapy originated in Australia and New Zealand and came to life in Australian – New Zealand English. In order to practice Narrative Therapy in a language other than English, Polanco argues that the practice needs to be decolonised. She attempts to decolonise her practice of Narrative Therapy in her native Columbian-Spanish via cultural translations of narrative ideas. Her thinking process is supported by the philosophy behind Narrative Therapy. “Narrative practices defend the idea of plurality in any text and constantly inveigh against any single interpretation” (White & Epston, 1990, as cited in Polanco, 2011, p. 46). Polanco (2011) needed to translate *Maps of Narrative Practice* in a way that was going to decolonise her practice of Narrative Therapy in Columbian Spanish. The cultural paradigm allowed her to do that. Polanco (2011, p. 51) writes: “With various possible candidate words at hand, impregnated by my Colombian and Latin American culture, I found myself in a decolonized territory where I could begin giving shape to new vocabularies to renew the ones of *Maps*”. She goes on to note: “While visiting a Colombian house of words, after looking, leaking from their jars, feeling and smelling words, the most appealing vocabulary to name re-authoring’s soul in my Colombian Spanish was *historiografía* or *historiography*.”

This is how a piece of ST, written by Michael White, is rendered in the cultural translation Polanco creates, once the process of decolonizing is completed (Polanco, 2011, p. 53):

### Source text:

This re-authoring conversations map provides therapists with a guide for shaping therapeutic conversations that redevelop the subordinate story-lines of people's lives (White, 2007, p. 128).

### Cultural translation (translated from Colombian Spanish to English by Polanco):

This re-historiographing conversational novelistic craft accompanies the healing effects of "aromatic fumes of gold cyanide" and provide therapists with a poetic labour that assists the re-invention of peoples' lives, as their work of art, by taking another look at their lives. This time, virtually and "seasoned in the broth of longing" to sink into the real marvellous of the labyrinths of their poetic memory.

In this way, the cultural paradigm allows the translator and his or her contextualised history to be fully present in his or her translation and to announce this presence, which is revolutionary in the field. Polanco asks:

What sort of memories from my Colombian life were evoked while re-reading and therefore interpreting Michael White's term ['re-authoring'] that I believe could be sustaining of my reinvention and decolonisation of it into my Colombian Spanish? (2011, p. 49).

Polanco is concerned with the decolonisation of her practice; this study is concerned with the de-gendering of a language. Cultural translations create a space in which translators can experiment with these ideas (decolonising or de-gendering).

De-gendering fulfils both criteria identified by Pym as defining cultural translations: it re-introduces the translator at the centre of his or her work and it creates an interface in which reclaiming social justice is possible. Having moved from invisibility - recommended in the previous paradigms - to visibility, the translator can start making claims. In the cultural translations, de-gendering honours the female characters of the ST by re-introducing them in a text in which they were previously absent. Cultural translations create a space or an interface between the two genders. In this interface, both genders are represented equally. In this project, step three is the de-gendering of the French language through the practice of cultural translation. As Pym (2009) puts it - and I agree with him - I see de-gendering as a necessary "cultural process rather than a textual product" (p. 150).

## Summary

The translation studies field provided this project with a clear framework: the literal paradigm gave me, the translator, a point of entry into the 'Heart of Narrative Therapy'<sup>26</sup>, the negotiated translation allowed for invaluable input from the author of the conversations and the cultural translation enabled a view which led to a de-gendered translation. This research is attempting to translate a highly gendered world into a more gender-equal one.

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<sup>26</sup> The 'Heart of Narrative Therapy' is a term used by David Epston. It also refers to the title of my reflective journal "Heart to heart".

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### Introduction

This study is a theoretical study that creates and employs a series of translations and draws on a reflective journal to generate data. The data come to fruition in the cultural translation, situating this project within a post-modern paradigm, discussed below. Cultural translation is successful in partly de-gendering the French language, as we shall see in Chapter 4; however, this project also draws on elements of a transformative paradigm. According to Mackenzie & Knipe (2006), “transformative researchers may utilise qualitative data collection and analysis methods for the development of more complete and full portraits of our social world... allowing for an understanding of greater diversity of values, stances and positions” (p. 194). The chosen method to analyse this data is critical discourse analysis, while potential validity issues are addressed through a system of two different peer checks: the first one concerns the validity of the translation work, particularly the negotiated translation, and the second one invites narrative practitioners as well as linguists to provide feedback on the findings.

#### a. Research methodology

##### i. Post-modern paradigm

Some scholars argue that post-modernism came into being during the French-Algerian war of 1962, when Algeria, a French colony, fought to gain its independence from its coloniser. The left wing of French politics was not going to accept a colonial war because their ideology favoured decolonisation. Amongst the French leftists of the time were intellectuals like Derrida, who was born and raised in Algeria, as well as Deleuze and Foucault.

Post-modernism deconstructs relations of power operating within a society and unpacks them in order to make them visible. Post-modernism studies discourses: Foucault writes “Discourses are practices which form the objects of which they speak” (as cited in Burr 1995, p. 12). Therefore, a discourse claiming that “the masculine gender being more

noble, it must predominate every time the masculine and feminine genders are put together”, forms “male objects” who think of themselves as being more noble than “female objects”, and legitimising the disappearance of “female objects” from the language when both genders are put together. This study looks at such discourses within the French language. Burr suggests:

Our identity arises out of interactions with other people and is based on language. We can now say that our identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communication with other people (Burr 1995, p 6).

A discourse promoting the disappearance from the language of one gender when both genders are put together doubles its efficiency: the masculine gender is pervasive while the feminine one is invisible. Fighting against this discourse is particularly difficult because it is put in place within the grammatical structure of the French language. Burr explains:

For each of us, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings (1995, p. 8).

As long as one lives, constructing his or her identity through the use of language, the discourses conveyed by this language potentially remain invisible to him or her. This is even more so when the grammar rules constituting the language are taught in childhood.

Burr goes on explaining the unavoidable link between the political and the social dimensions:

To say that identities are socially constructed through discourse does not mean to say that those identities are accidental. It is at this point that post-modern social constructionism brings to bear a political analysis of the construction of our world, including personal identity (1995, p. 9).

This post-modern view is particularly well suited to this study which aims to represent the French language as a tool used to control and oppress its speakers, some more than

others. Language as a tool is shaped by outside forces, powerful sources like the “Education Nationale” or “l’Académie Française”, but once shaped the tool is used by all those who speak the language: it then becomes a self-policing tool. Foucault’s claim that policing one’s own thoughts, feelings and actions to ensure conformity to commonly accepted ideas and practices are an ingrained mechanism of social control in modern western societies. This effectively means individuals are living their lives in constant observation. Foucault’s theories can be applied to the gendering of languages, including his own. Making visible, exploring and deconstructing the control and self-policing which happens within the French language where women regularly have to talk, read or write about themselves in the masculine form, is aligned with post-modern thinking and has the potential to become transformative when performed in everyday life (see Chapter 5). Meticulously and methodically reintroducing the feminine form in spoken and written French, as a constant reminder that the masculine gender is not “more noble” than the feminine one, is an act of resistance, and this act in itself can be transformative.

## ii. Transformative paradigm

The transformative paradigm entails ideals of social justice: power struggles are denounced, deconstructed and acted upon. In this research, I strongly advocate in favour of the claim that language creates reality. As seen in the literature review, the view that the masculine gender overrules the feminine one each time both are present, is an historical, political view which has cultural and economic consequences. Guy Deutscher (2010) explains:

Some 50 years ago, the renowned linguist Roman Jakobson pointed out a crucial fact about differences between languages in a pithy maxim: “Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey.” This maxim offers us the key to unlocking the real force of the mother tongue: if different languages influence our minds in different ways, this is not because of what our language *allows* us to think but rather because of what it habitually *obliges* us to think *about*.

For approximately four hundred years, the French language has obliged those who speak it to think a certain way. The thought patterns created have slowly but surely influenced their world view. This gymnastics of the mind which involve moving constantly from one gender to the other as soon as one speaks French is mostly taken for granted by

speakers of the language. In this project, building on Foucaultian ideas, I want to move away from 'taken-for-granted' knowledge. My thesis challenges grammatical constructions which it claims have consequences on social constructions. A feminist view point added to a post-structuralist methodology allows for such a challenge to take place. De-gendering a heavily gendered language is a practice which aligns resistance and deconstruction before moving towards new ground. The newly discovered ground has the potential to become transformative; de-gendered French has changed my way of communicating, which is more in line with the way I want to be in the world and the way I want to see the world around me. It has been transformative for me. This was not anticipated when this project started. The cultural translation triggered an almost instant transformation, both in the language and in me. Eager to share my experience, I sent some excerpts of my work to French speaking narrative practitioner colleagues -- who claimed that it was transformative for them as well, as we shall see in Chapter 5 <sup>27</sup>.

## **b. Methods**

### **i. Sampling and translations**

Three transcripts of conversations have been chosen by me and three suggested to me by David Epston. They cover a range of issues which are of interest to me as a counsellor. As a translator, I am aware that the translations will be of a higher standard if I work on topics about which I feel passionate; hence the decision to select the particular STs translated as part of this study. All transcripts have been published in English.

Translations are the starting point of this research: they range from a literal paradigm to a post-modern, feminist cultural one. That is to say, the key data for this study consists of three translations in French of the same conversations in English, following a precise method already stated in the literature review. This study implies navigation between the STs and the TTs in order to compare them. It quickly became obvious that the comparison of the last two translations (negotiated and cultural), was the most interesting, because the changes this project is interested in appear more clearly in this particular comparison. In order to create some clarity when comparing the different texts (STs and TTs) I decided to use colours and font codes. The original text or source text is colour coded orange. The

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<sup>27</sup> After reading the first draft of this thesis, Pierre Blanc Sahnoun, narrative practitioner in Bordeaux France, included de-gendered French in his Wiki "Pratiques Narratives", where he writes: "we practice a grammar respectful of the feminine gender".

literal translation is in black italics, which to me symbolises the 'in between-reflective' state of this particular step of the project. The negotiated translation is in blue, and the cultural translation is the same, i.e. blue except that all de-gendered parts in it are orange. This will be evident when looking at Appendix 1. The decision to use the colour orange a second time came from the feeling I had when translating, that the cultural translation was in fact the closest to the source text. Choosing orange was a way to symbolise this closeness between the English and the de-gendered one. In the cultural translation, this last code made it very easy to identify where de-gendered French was the most prevalent.

The techniques used to de-gender my native tongue were gathered while the cultural translation work was happening, therefore they are critically analysed in Chapter 4, in the comparison of the negotiated and cultural translations. Some of these techniques come from personal observations; others have been tried in Francophone countries such as Canada and Switzerland or were imagined by feminist linguists. Five different de-gendering techniques were identified; all were tried in the Cultural translations but only 4 were adopted. After they were critically analysed in Chapter 4, they were catalogued in Chapter 5 of this thesis entitled: discussion of findings, in which I will discuss which ones of these techniques were found to be most effective for this project and why.

## **ii. Peer review and Members' check**

Potential validity issues concerning the translation work were addressed through review by bilingual peers. As translators, it is important that our work is proofread in order to avoid misinterpretations. Two bilingual peers have reviewed both source texts and negotiated translations looking for mistranslations, the focus being on respecting the intention of the ST as explained in the negotiated paradigm of the translation studies field in the literature review. The peers are: Corinne Le Pavec, a former French social worker, French teacher, writing consultant and short story writer; and Christian Graffeuille, an engineer, and writer of technical software literature. Simply put, their task was to check the quality of the translated work under the negotiated paradigm.<sup>28</sup> I selected those two particular peers for their knowledge of English and French as well as their experience in working as translators. In this thesis, they are referred to when I cite 'Peer review'. Peers

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<sup>28</sup> It might be worth signalling here that 3 of the ST and their negotiated translations have been used by David Epston during a workshop given in France in April 2012. The feedback on the translations by the French participants of the workshop has been positive.

did not check the cultural translation which could have appeared too foreign to them. The cultural translations were checked by and open to discussion to sympathisers of the narrative approach; in this thesis, they are referred to when I cite “Members’ check”<sup>29</sup>, they are: professeure honoraire, docteure en linguistique et docteure ès-Lettres Edwige Khaznadar; Elisabeth Burr, Professor of French, Francophone and Italian Linguistics at the University of Leipzig, Germany; Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun, narrative practitioner, founder of La Fabrique Narrative, Bordeaux France<sup>30</sup>; Catherine Mengelle, French narrative practitioner; and Nicole Pradalier, journalist. These Members have an insiders’ knowledge of the French language and are willing to challenge it in their work as therapists, linguists or journalists. They kindly and generously contributed to this study by commenting on its progress as well as its results.

### **iii. Reflective journal**

Alongside the original therapeutic conversations and their three translations, this project includes parts of my reflective journal, which is a tool used in qualitative research. The reflective journal is kept during the translation process. Jane Fook (1996) explains that a reflective journal must include reflexivity, that is, the way the researcher is in the world, and reflectivity, how, holding reflexivity in mind, the researcher reflects on his or her work. These ideas are paramount in this research as they are central to the positioning of translators engaged in cultural translations. The reflective journal I write as I translate is also part of the data.

In this journal, a first step is to position myself in my environment followed by a second step which can only exist because of the first one, in which I position my translation work.

In the introduction of this thesis, I gave a brief description about myself which I expanded on in my reflective journal. In the context of the first step, here is a summary: I am a French woman, born, raised and schooled in France. I migrated to New Zealand fifteen years ago with my family. I am a mother of two teenage sons, raised and schooled in Auckland. I am a wife of 25 years to a French husband; my house is a masculine house with three males and one female. Both languages, French and English are spoken at

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<sup>29</sup> As a sign of respect towards the people who devoted time and energy to comment on or correct my work, I have chosen to capitalise “Members” and “Peers.” I use ‘Peer’ and ‘Member’ to refer to individuals, and ‘Peer review’ and ‘Members’ check’ to refer to a process.

<sup>30</sup> La Fabrique Narrative is a training Centre for Narrative Practices in France but its influence goes beyond French borders.

home. I teach French as a Foreign Language, and I translate from English to French<sup>31</sup>. Most importantly, I am a narrative therapist. These different parts of my identity and personal story inevitably colour the way I am conducting this project.

Continuing with the second step evoked by Jane Fook (1996) and keeping the above facts in mind, I used my journal to reflect on my work. The journal allowed me to explore the difficulties I came across as I translated and I tried to deconstruct these difficulties in an attempt to overcome them. In order to illustrate this second step and also the use of a reflective journal, I outline some of the difficulties I have encountered and the attempts I made, through journaling, to find solutions to these issues.

One dilemma translators come across concerns the proximity of the Target Text to the Source Text. This difficulty is expressed in my reflective journal, on the 20/06/2012:

The French 1<sup>st</sup> draft is close to what David has written, but does not sound French enough to me. I can tell straight away that it is a translation and I don't want this effect to happen. I let it sit. I come back to it... re-write some of it...now it flows in French. Have I moved further away from the original? Yes I have.

Moving away from the source text seems inevitable, but what is an acceptable distance? There is no correct answer to this question; ultimately the translator makes a call:

"Blink" works in English but not so much in French. I choose to use « sourciller »<sup>32</sup>, shorter, closer to "blink" even though it means a different thing. I like the sound of « sourciller » Blink would have to be translated by « cligner des yeux », too long, too heavy. Here it starts: the negotiation Umberto Ecco writes about... The translator has to make choices all the time. Choosing between words is not easy. (Reflective journal, 21/06/2012)

Knowing when to stop is another common difficulty:

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<sup>31</sup> I am not a professional translator but I occasionally proof read work written in French as well as pedagogical material (always from English to French).

<sup>32</sup> "Sourciller" means to raise one's eyebrows.

Proof reading the conversation between Rick and Margaret *again*. I cannot decide how to translate the title of the book. It has been on my mind for a while now (a few weeks) and I would like to decide what to do. That's how I work, before moving on to another piece, I would like to finish this one. The question now is: "Is a translation ever finished?" The obvious answer is "No"! I have to learn to live with that... (Reflective journal, 20/08/2012)

Another difficulty encountered falls under the organisation of the whole process because, in order to translate to the very best of my abilities, I feel that first I need to copy out the source text again. This process is time consuming and I will not be able to copy all the texts which have been selected:

Copying the text myself gives me the time that I need to think about what I am writing; it allows me to see the scene a lot better than by "just" reading it. The writing process being slower, involving my hands, as well as my mind, it seems that it is the beginning of my entering "the very heart" of narrative therapy [meaning, these narrative therapy conversations]. To me, it is an important part of the process. (Reflective journal, 20/08/2012)

Of course, many difficulties concern the target language itself and the choice of the words. Many words have to be chosen, and the temptation to substitute one word for another supposedly equivalent word is tempting but not always possible<sup>33</sup>. There is also the issue of the cultural layers imposed on vocabulary. One example illustrates this constant struggle quite well, I believe:

I am also confronted with the formality of the French language: should I translate "you" by "vous" or "tu"? French Doctors or therapists would surely use "vous" but I don't think that's what David would use if he was working in French. Being the closest possible to the patient/client implies probably using "tu" and of course accepting "tu" in return from the client. Being on the same level, relating from a stance of equality, solidarity is what matters most. David and the girls are gathering their forces against anorexia, it is them against "it". I cannot think of many relationships that are closer than

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<sup>33</sup> This project defends the idea, contrary to what the literal paradigm suggests, that there are no possible equivalences between two languages.

the one between a client and his/her (narrative) therapist! (Reflective journal, 24/07/2012)

In this particular example, because I was lucky enough to have access to David Epston, when the dilemma became too annoying, I simply asked David what he would do and he kindly told me that he would use “tu” (Epston, personal communication, March, 2012).

These are just a few examples to illustrate the difficulties encountered. A reflective journal is an ideal place in which to expose them, deconstruct them and finally decide what to write.

As this untidy, messy process was unfolding and as I started the third cultural translations, exploring de-gendering techniques, dominant discourses perpetuated by the French language emerged. These dominant discourses also constitute data to be analysed in this study.

The process of journaling enounced above slowly pushed me towards a third step which includes narrative ideas: the process is taking place through me, I am the translator and the researcher, but the matter, the substance of the research is the language. Intrigued by Derrida’s metaphor (1996) I recognise that I am “cultivating” the French language, and maybe trying de-gendering as a fertiliser. But I am also being “cultivated” by the French language. What are the implications of this? Still following Derrida’s metaphor I ask: what does the crop look like? What about the soil it grows into? Using narrative discursive practices as a method to deconstruct this metaphor, I attempted to externalise my native tongue and observed what happened. These observations, noted in my reflective journal, are part of the data to be commented on by narrative partisans and as such, are part of the discussion in Chapter 5.

#### **iv. Samples (Appendix 1)**

In this qualitative research, purposive theoretical sampling is used. Six transcripts of conversations in English were chosen as source texts for study, three chosen by me and three by David Epston. The translations, or target texts are also part of the data. The method used to translate the source texts is chronological: moving along the translation studies paradigms, that is, a literal translation is followed by a negotiated translation, and the process finishes with the post-modern, cultural, feminist translation. Three target texts for each of the six source texts result in eighteen translations: 18 TTs plus 6 STs equals 24 texts. This data represents approximately 500 pages which are too large to analyse.

Therefore, using purposive sampling, I picked the most relevant passages needed for my analysis, that is to say, those in which de-gendered French is most prevalent and has the greatest effect. As explained in the paragraph on translations above, these samples were collected using a colour code arrangement evident in Appendix 1. When moving from the negotiated translation towards the cultural one, and in order to observe a possible shift, I wrote the cultural translation based on the negotiated one. However, there was a major difference: I systematically re-introduced the feminine form where it had previously been purposely eliminated, and thus challenging the grammar rule which states that ‘the masculine gender overrules the feminine one’. Thirteen samples were identified as being pertinent to this study, each sample consisting of one ST and its two translations (negotiated and cultural); these were sampled and analysed, but the literal translation was not analysed.

## **v. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Once the three translations and the reflective journal were completed, critical discourse analysis methods were used with the aim of deconstructing discourses and comparing them, following the theory of Dijk (2007, p. 10): “Critical discourse analysis focuses on social problems and not on scholarly paradigms, and tries to understand and solve such problems with any kind of method, theory or description that may be relevant”. The methods used in this project, as stated earlier, include translations, a reflective journal, peer reviews and members' checks.

In this research it is clear that the privileged class, materialised by institutions such as L'Académie Française and the Education Nationale have, somehow, won the consent of the majority.

Hegemony is a term used by Gramsci (Forgacs, 1988) and others for talking about power and struggles over power. It emphasizes forms of power which depend upon consent rather than coercion. The hegemony of the dominant social class depends upon winning the majority to existing social arrangements (Fairclough, 2001 as cited in Wetherell, 2001, p 232).

It is easy to imagine why French speaking men would consent to this grammatical arrangement which favours their gender, but why would French speaking women consent as well? Or did they? Could this rule have silently insinuated itself into women's lives? The concept of a masculine gender, which is seen as more noble by Vaugelas and Richelieu,

has not been successfully challenged. Even today, only a few linguists and feminists continue to challenge it. “When you do not belong to the dominant clan, you have the responsibility to claim” (Epston, personal communication, March 2012). This is the advice this project is following. The aim is to further challenge the concept in order to re-integrate the feminine gender into the French language.

The research methods in this study are organised in such a way as to see whether there is a shift between the 2<sup>nd</sup> negotiated equivalent translation and the 3<sup>rd</sup> post-modern cultural translation; it plans to do this by exploring the idea that language, power and gender are tightly linked and have the potential to create social injustices.

The attempted solving of issues which happens in the cultural translation matches the last phase of Critical Discourse Analysis: “solve such problems with any kind of method, theory or description that may be relevant” (Dijk, 2007, p. 10). CDA functions particularly well in this project. Fairclough goes further and asks: “How can critical analysis of texts and interactions contribute to emancipatory changes?” (2001, p. 239 as cited in Wetherell, 2001). This is an interesting point, even though this study does not look into emancipatory changes, we have seen that it has been transformative for me.

#### **vi. Validity: Members' check feedback**

As seen in the work of Polanco (2011), working with translations allows for the exploration of a new area of study. This project, rendered possible because of my interest in the translation studies field, also embraces areas of narrative practice. The value of this study lies partly in the application of narrative ideas, such as externalisation, to a language (in this case French) thereby contributing to the development of narrative practices in new areas of study, such as cultural translations, a field uncovered by Polanco. The work of a translator is often solitary, as is often the work of a researcher. In order to check the validity of this study, its findings underwent a “members' check” process. When working on the cultural translations, I started exchanging emails with Professor of Linguistics, Edwige Khaznadar. She kindly proofread my work and gave me advice from a linguistic point of view, on how to de-gender French. Her critical but constructive feedback, in the light of her immense knowledge of the field of linguistics, gave me the confidence to push the boundaries of our native tongue as far as possible. Having an Emeritus Professor of Linguistics such as Edwige Khaznadar validating this research plays in favour of its robustness. In addition, the “members' check” process included members from the narrative community. This research deeply resonated with the experiences some of them

have when practicing Narrative Therapy in French. The impact was immediate: after reading the first draft of this thesis, Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun invited me to write an article about it, which I did. The article is called “Comment le Language Nous Colonise” (Appendix 2) or “How language colonises us”. It was published on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 <sup>434</sup>, just a few days before the first conference on Narrative Therapy and the French Language took place in Geneva, Switzerland on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2014. The article is a condensed version of this study, but it stresses the findings. It is written in a form which is designed to be accessible to all. Many comments followed its publication. Other readers of the article did not comment about it but started using de-gendered French in their own publications, which illustrates the strong impact this study had on them. As we shall see in more detail in the fifth chapter of this thesis, the reaction and feedback from colleagues, through the “members' check” process confirms the robustness of the findings.

## **vii. Conclusion**

I see this project as “consciousness research”, in terms of my own consciousness and possibly a larger one including translators, therapists, linguists and feminists, amongst others. I keep in mind the idea of social justice and what role languages potentially play in moving towards more equality; hence the idea of de-gendering and anti-languages. This study is transformative for those who participated in it, myself as the researcher, my peer reviewers and the members who participated in the members' check process.

## **Summary**

This research is deeply rooted in the precepts of post-structuralism. Following Foucaultian ideas, it first looks at how some discourses operate, and then it attempts to deconstruct these discourses. The intention is clearly to uncover social injustices. This study has the potential to be transformative because, once uncovered, the socially constructed injustices are likely to be denounced and resisted. Different methods of research are employed in order to work toward the intention enounced above. The three translations (literal, negotiated and cultural) allow for an exploration of how some discourses operate through language. A reflective journal is used to deconstruct the translation work as it happens. Purposive sampling has been chosen for the study to

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<sup>34</sup> “How language colonises us” is cited in the conclusion of this thesis.

reduce the amount of material to be analysed (500 pages of translated material). Critical Discourse Analysis is an ideal method for this type of research because it focuses on social issues and attempts to solve them. Peers are necessary to check the translated material in order to enhance its validity. Members checking and commenting on the findings of this project are also essential to its validity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

#### a. Presentation

This research is concerned with how language creates reality, but more precisely how a gendered language, such as French, can create an imbalance between genders due to its grammatical structure which states that the masculine form systematically overrides the feminine one when both are present. As we have seen, this grammatical approach was decided by a few individuals of the same demography: conservative males, in their old age, belonging to the same institute called l'Académie Française. Wishing to deepen my understanding of how gendered languages can potentially achieve such an imbalance, and to experiment with ways of redressing this situation, I chose to translate therapeutic conversations and slowly worked my way from the English language to various versions of the French one, moving each time closer to a partially de-gendered form of my native tongue.

Three translations of the Source Text were created, each one corresponding to a paradigm established in the translation studies field. The first, literal translations were not included as part of the data analysed because they are not important to this study; they only helped me, the translator, to deepen my understanding of the source texts. The second, negotiated translations and the third, cultural translations are of interest to this project. In the target texts, I selected samples in which I found de-gendered French to be most prevalent (see how this was established, through colour coding, in chapter 3: methods.)

I identified 13 samples. Each sample was constituted by the ST and 2 TTs, one being the negotiated translation and the other being the cultural translation. To each of the TT samples, I applied a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, firstly to the negotiated translations and secondly to the cultural translations.

The critical discourse analysis of the samples belonging to the negotiated translations proved to be most motivating and allowed me to identify three main themes of relevance to this research, which will be assessed in detail below. Keen to share my awareness and strengthened by the first findings which were filtering through the CDA of the negotiated translation samples, and as previously stated, I gladly accepted an invitation by Pierre Blanc-Sanhoun to write a blog article about my research. This article

was published in “Errances Narratives”, an internet publication created by a group of narrative practitioners in Southern France. The publication of this article was very timely as it preceded the first ever conference on translating narrative therapy, where the challenges of transposing Narrative ideas into the French language were to be discussed. The conference took place in Geneva, Switzerland, the week following the publication. Some reactions to and comments about my article, as well as excerpts from my reflective journal, are included in the following Critical Discourse Analysis.

## **b. Analysis**

### **i. Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA**

CDA studies specific areas of injustice and can raise awareness of the use of language to achieve social goals: (Fairclough, 2001 as cited in Wetherell, 2001).

Its objective is to show how language figures in social processes. It is critical in the sense that it aims to show non obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology. It is a resource which can be used in combination with others for researching change in contemporary social life (p. 229).

CDA as a method of analysis is well suited to this project; which looks at domination and ideology conveyed through the French language. In order to do so, it is used in combination with other methods: data collection (translations and reflective journal) and validity (peer review and members’ check). CDA starts with the identification of a problem or an injustice: “The starting point for CDA is social issues and problems. It analyses texts and interactions” (Fairclough, 2001 as cited in Wetherell, 2001, p. 229). In this project the interactions are transcripts of conversations. “But CDA is not just concerned with analysis. It is critical, first, in the sense that it seeks to discern connections between language and other elements of social life which are often opaque” (Fairclough, 2001 as cited in Wetherell, 2001, p. 230). Clearly, in this project, I was drawn to the belief that a gendered language in which the masculine gender systematically overrides the female gender was going to reinforce a social hierarchy where males are dominant, and therefore exercise a form of hegemony. The area of injustice this project is attempting to explore is the deletion of the feminine form within the French language. By comparing the second and the third translations and critically analysing the findings, an answer to the second research

question emerges: does the comparative study of negotiated translations and cultural translations of English texts into French uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language?

In order to critically analyse the selected samples, I decided to observe three different levels of analysis: this is a technique often used in CDA. The first level is the micro level: it looks at the text, the syntax, the grammar, and the vocabulary used to give this text meaning. The micro level keeps the analysis very close to the written text. The second level of analysis is the macro level. Here I am looking at the social context surrounding the text: how is the text positioning the protagonists (clients and therapists) of the selected samples? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? In this level of analysis, a distance from the written text starts to appear; we move away from it. The third level of analysis is the meso level; at this level, I am trying to see what discourses might be uncovered. Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning? The meso level pushes the analysis even further away from the written text; it looks at the big picture, and as such, may lead to wider claims. The first part of this analysis consisted in applying CDA to all the selected samples, starting from the negotiated translations and continuing towards the cultural translation. It became rapidly obvious in the CDA of the negotiated translations that the findings could be grouped according to three main themes, which are:

1. Living in a masculine semantic field.
2. Semantically ignoring and or dismissing the feminine.
3. The masculine semantic field as the oppressor of both genders.

First, each one of the above themes was illustrated with samples taken from the negotiated translations. Then, micro, macro and meso analysis were performed on each one of the samples. Secondly, each one of the above theme was illustrated with samples taken from the cultural translations. Then, micro, macro and meso analysis were performed on each one of the samples taken from the cultural translations. I observed the text, the syntax, the grammar, and the vocabulary used to give this text meaning. I asked the questions: how is the text positioning the protagonists of the selected samples? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning? I started comparing the answers to the questions asked. A sort of thinking dance went back and forth between the samples of the negotiated and cultural translations. Adding to the movement were extracts from my reflective journal as well as feedback coming from the members' check process.

The movement of the dance itself gave birth to a comparison and in the comparison, almost immediately, a shift was noticeable.

## c. Discussion of data

### i. Living in a masculine semantic field: samples from the negotiated translation

Out of 13 samples, I found that 7 explicitly illustrate the idea that the semantic field used in these samples is entirely masculine. They are Samples 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12, and can be found in Appendix 1. This must not come as a surprise, as we will see in the micro analysis of those samples: it is grammatically meant to be the case. I will illustrate this first theme with three samples: numbered 2, 3 and 11. In the macro analysis of the three samples below, I will explore what might be the social consequences of such a grammatical choice and in the meso analysis, we shall see whose interests are served or negated by this choice as well as what discourses are in action.

The first level of analysis is the micro level: Samples 2 and 3 are extracts from an unpublished article written by David Epston entitled: “I am sick of the problem's dirty tricks”. The French translation is: « J’en ai marre des sales tours que me joue ce Problème ». In this article, David Epston speaks to Jenny and Serena. Jenny is Serena's mother. In Sample 2, David addresses Serena.

#### Sample 2

##### Source Text:

David: Your talents, abilities and what your **friends** think is cool about you. Jenny, I wouldn't be surprised if you wanted to know why.

##### Negotiated translation:

David: Tes talents, tes dons, ce que tu sais faire, ce qui te rend « cool » aux yeux de tes **copains**. Jenny, ça ne me surprendrait pas que vous vouliez savoir pourquoi je veux savoir tout ça.

In the second sample, the noun « **copains** » is the masculine-plural form of “**friends**”.

### Sample 3

In this sample, David recalls what Jenny told him about her daughter Serena.

#### Source Text:

She told me that Serena could be 'lovely, friendly and kind to *little children*' and I was provided with examples and stories of her practices of loveliness, kindness and friendliness towards the next door *neighbour's children* and her *cousins*.

#### Negotiated translation:

Elle me raconta que Serena pouvait être « mignonne, agréable et gentille avec *les petits enfants* » et me donna des exemples, me raconta des histoires où Serena était particulièrement gentille et agréable envers ses *petits voisins* et ses *petits cousins*.

In the third sample, The French words chosen to translate “**little children, neighbours' children and cousins**” are all in the masculine-plural form: « **les petits enfants, ses petits voisins et ses petits cousins** ».

### Sample 11

This sample is an extract from the transcript of a conversation between Jermaine, a young American boy who suffers from repeated acute asthma crisis and David Epston. This is the beginning of a conversation which took place in February 1994. Jermaine is speaking about the medical staff he encountered when in hospital during one of his asthma attacks. He says:

#### Source Text:

**They** did not know what to give me and I'd say...

#### Negotiated translation:

**Ils** savaient pas quoi faire, je leur disais...

In sample 11, the English pronoun “**they**” is translated by the French pronoun « **ils** », masculine-plural only.

These examples taken from Samples 2, 3 and 11 were also found in Samples 4, 9, 10 and 12. They illustrate the consequence of the grammatical rule: “the masculine

overrules the feminine form". If we do not know the gender of the "little children, neighbours' children and cousins", "friends" "they" etc... They are to be talked about or written in the masculine form. If the group of "little children, neighbours' children and cousins" or "friends" is composed of mainly girls and perhaps one boy, the whole group is still referred to as being masculine. If it had been stated earlier and explicitly that all of the individuals comprising this group were females and females only, then it would be referred to in the feminine form. We now distance ourselves from the micro analysis and start the macro analysis of these samples.

The second level of analysis is the macro level. In order to deepen our understanding of what takes place through grammar usage, a few questions are asked: how is the text positioning the protagonists, clients and therapists in Samples 2, 3 and 11? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? What might be the social consequences of such a grammatical choice?

In the samples cited above, it became rapidly obvious that the linguistic world in which the protagonists were described was semantically masculine: "**friends, neighbours, cousins, they** etc..." are, in the negotiated translations, in the masculine-plural form only: «**amis, voisins, cousins, ils** etc...». Consequently, male protagonists must be feeling that they are evolving in a known world: their world. They are visible; they are named, even when perhaps they should not be: Serena's friends might be girls only. The English source text does not stipulate the gender of her "friends"; it does not matter, because English does not discriminate against either gender in this particular example. In contrast, the French language decides, through its grammar, that all friends are to be named in the masculine form. The French negotiated translation does not take into account the reality of the situation; consequently it gives a place to the male friends even if there are none, and no space at all to the female friends even if they are all female. The male protagonists are named and potential female protagonists are named in the masculine form, creating a lexical imbalance in which the reality of the situation of both genders is denied resulting in an over representation of males and an under representation of females. The positioning of male protagonists becomes dominant while the positioning of female protagonists is immaterial. This can be observed in Sample 10 too, in the conversation David Epston has with Jermaine on his handling of asthma:

Source Text:

Do you want to just say 'hello'. Do you mind if I introduce you? Tonight I'm talking to Jermaine Henry and Jermaine, we are talking in Ann Arbor Michigan, a state in the United

States, and Jermaine, can you tell **the young people** in Australia and NZ the extent to which Asthma has tried to pull the wool over your eyes and tried to spoil your future?

Negotiated translation:

Tu veux dire un petit bonjour ? Ça ne te dérange pas que je te présente ? Ce soir, je parle à Jermaine Henry et Jemaine, nous sommes à Ann Arbor dans le Michigan, un état des Etas-Unis ; et Jermaine, est-ce que tu peux dire aux jeunes gens d'Australie et de Nouvelle Zélande à quel point l'asthme a essayé de « te tirer la laine devant les yeux » et comment il a voulu pourrir ton futur ?

It is very clear here that while the English source text speaks of “**the young people** in Australia and NZ” who are both males and females, the negotiated French translation speaks of « **les jeunes gens** », masculine-plural, i.e. young males. The young females of Australia and NZ become immaterial; they do not appear in the French lexical field of the negotiated translation. My conclusion, following this observation, is that female protagonists as well as male ones live in a semantically masculine world. The female protagonists are nowhere to be seen (unless they are explicitly present, like Serena and her mother Jenny). They are not named; worse, they are ignored purposely.

Professor Khaznadar, my most eminent participant in the members' check process, agrees with my analysis. She writes<sup>35</sup> :

*« Vous pesez comme moi le poids symbolique du masculin premier institutionnalisé par tous les textes officiels, effaçant tout féminin, toute représentation de la femme française ».*

”Like myself, you are aware of the symbolic weight the 'masculine comes first' has, it has been institutionalised by all official texts, it is erasing all traces of the feminine, all representation of the French woman” (Khaznadar, personal communication Nov, 2012).

Following this analysis which states that females are nowhere to be seen in the negotiated translations, we now ask about the consequences of this fact, starting with the following question:

How is the reader of the texts positioned?

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<sup>35</sup> I have decided to write the comments sent to me through the Members' check process in italics in an attempt to make their contribution more clear.

On the one hand, if the reader of the text is a male, he belongs to the dominant, explicitly named gender, with which he will probably identify; therefore, his position is a position of domination. On the other hand, if the reader of the text is a female, she will (most probably) identify with the unnamed gender, rendering her invisible, reinforcing the fact that she does not have a voice. The fact that readers might identify with the male and female protagonists of the conversations is not of concern in this analysis. What is of interest is the underlying semantic field in which the conversations take place: the semantic background. One might call this overwhelmingly masculine semantic background a favourable milieu in which gender-based social injustices might grow. This is what we shall now analyse in the meso level of this CDA.

The third level of analysis is the meso level: at this level, I am trying to see what discourses might be uncovered. Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning?

The interests of the French speaking male gender are being served: the grammatical rule gives it a presence. This is not accessible to the French speaking feminine gender: the French speaking feminine gender's interests are being negated, in terms of their representation in language. When this analysis hits home, it is quite painful as Catherine Mengelle, a French narrative practitioner, participant in the members 'check process, discovered in the article I wrote prior to the conference on Narrative Therapy and the French language which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2014.

Catherine asks:

*Quel effet cela fait-il, quand on est un petit garçon, et qu'on entend que le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin ? Quel effet cela fait-il, quand on est une petite fille, et qu'on entend que le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin ?*

What does it mean for a little boy to hear day after day 'the masculine overrules the feminine'? What does it mean for a little girl to hear day after day 'the masculine overrules the feminine'? (personal communication, April 17, 2014).

What are the consequences of this positioning? The masculine gender is named, therefore living 'in the light' while the feminine gender, unnamed, remains 'in the shadow'. Women live in the shadow of their male counterparts; in other words, women live in a man's world where their place is very limited and limiting. There is no sharing of the light,

you are either in or out, and because of the linguistic rules in place, women are out. This is a binary vision of the world, based on gender division.

Edwige Khaznadar, a scholar of linguistics, agrees with this discourse analysis. In the correspondence we had following her comments on my translations, she writes:

*Vous parlez des hommes (de leurs privilèges...), mais ils vivent dans un monde où à la base, dans leur langage de tous les jours, ne règne que le masculin, reléguant les femmes au second rang sous des noms souvent sentis comme péjoratifs, ou à la négation de leur humanité (ce n'est pas moi qui invente la négation, c'est le grammairien Jean Dubois – 2<sup>e</sup> moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> et toujours influent – qui classe le féminin, nom de la femme, comme négatif, le positif des noms d'humains étant le masculin).*

You are speaking of men (of their privileges...) understand that they come from a world in which, from the beginning, in their everyday language, only the masculine reigns, marginalizing women, pushing them into the second class, giving them often derogatory names or even negating their humanity (I did not invent negation, the grammarian Jean Dubois did, in the second half of the twentieth century, he is still influential today. He classifies the feminine, name of women, as a negative, the positive of human names being the masculine.) (Khaznadar, personal communication, November 2012)

My critical discourse analysis, strengthened by the evidence exposed in the literature review of this thesis and re-enforced by the members' check process, gives rise to the idea that through the French language (amongst other things), men are kept in a position of power and privilege. They are the 'positif' and women are the 'négatif', in other words, they are visible and women are not. The académicien Maurice Druon (2008) who is strongly in favour of the language remaining that way, became a symbol of the resistance to a more balanced use of the feminine and the masculine form in the French language when he openly verbally abused feminists from Quebec, calling them "ignorant Huronnes". The académiciens are the ones who still control the French linguistic field today.

What discourses might be uncovered?

The main discourse this linguistic situation seems to put forward is that women do not matter; if they did, they would have a place similar to the one given to their male

counterparts. My analysis uncovers a discourse holding that they are not worthy of being named or acknowledged, including when they are physically present in stories. This finding can be observed in Sample 12. In this sample, when he speaks about finding a cure for asthma, Jermaine states:

Source Text:

By the time **they** get a cure

Negotiated translation:

D'ici à ce qu'**ils** aient un médicament qui guérisse.

Again, "**they**" in the English source text is translated by «**ils**», masculine-plural only in the French text, insinuating that males only are looking for a cure. What does this translation suggest about female medical researchers? In twenty-first century France, women have permeated all fields of research, and they, as well as their male colleagues, are part of teams looking for cures. The linguistic field of the negotiated translation does not honour their presence and does not give a complete picture of the reality. Antoinette Fouque, a feminist who passed away on the 22nd of February 2014, explains: "In 1968, we started having single sex meetings, women only meetings, because we noticed that if there was an assembly of three thousand women and one man, he was the one talking."<sup>36</sup> Those words from a feminist of the first wave resonate deeply with the grammar rule this project is critiquing which declares that "in a group of 3000 women and one man, the masculine wins". This rule applies not only to the written language; it has clearly invaded other social and political arenas as revealed by Antoinette Fouque's remark.

In my reflections on this discourse, which stipulates that because women do not have a place, they do not matter, the analysis could be pushed even further: if women do not matter, what remains of their desires, requests, thoughts, ideas, arts, careers, etc. Do they matter? When they were gathering in 1968, the thousands of women Antoinette Fouque speaks about were dreaming of a more equal society. They had desires, they wanted to go to medical school, and they yearned to get better jobs with better pay. These desires and dreams were not met; they were dismissed, and the French language potentially played a role in this. This is the topic explored in the next theme.

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<sup>36</sup> "En 1968, nous avons commencé les nouvelles réunions non mixtes, non mixtes parce que nous avons remarqué que s'il y avait une assemblée de trois mille femmes et un homme, c'était lui qui parlait."

## ii. Semantically ignoring and or dismissing the feminine: samples from the negotiated translation

In the first theme of this CDA, it has been demonstrated that the feminine gender was absent from the semantic field of the majority of the studied samples, implying that women are second class citizens who could well be discounted. In this second theme, we are moving a step further; my Critical Discourse Analysis will reveal that the feminine gender when not ignored is dismissed.

We start again with the micro level of the analysis: in 7 samples out of 13, I found examples of the feminine gender being explicitly absent and implicitly dismissed: these are Samples 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12. For reasons of clarity and in order to avoid repetitions, I will concentrate on Samples 5 and 6. The others can be viewed in Appendix 1 of this thesis. Samples 5 and 6 are both extracts of conversation taken from the book *Biting the hand that starves you: Inspiring resistance to anorexia/bulimia [a/b]* (Borden, Epston & Maisel, 2004). Sample 5 comes from Chapter 7 entitled "Manners of speaking". In this chapter, David Epston talks to a young girl called Kris.

### Sample 5

#### Source Text:

David: **Psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, and dieticians** are all likely to ask questions based on the notion that the person has a/b or a disorder. Consequently, the person usually comes to view herself as an "anorexic" or a "bulimic" for the doctor or the other professional, because a/b fosters in many the desire to please others and live up to their expectations, as well as desire to be the best.

#### Negotiated translation:

David: **Les psychiatres, les médecins, les thérapeutes et les diététiciennes** ont de fortes chances de poser des questions basées sur le fait que la personne en question est l'a/b ou encore qu'elle a un trouble mental. Par conséquent, la personne finit par se considérer comme « anorexique » ou « boulimique » pour satisfaire le médecin ou les autres professionnels de la santé, car l'a /b encourage chez beaucoup d'entre elles l'envie de plaire aux autres et d'être à la hauteur de leurs attentes, de même qu'un désir d'être la meilleure.

In this sample, “*Psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, and dieticians*” are translated by « *Les psychiatres, les médecins, les thérapeutes et les diététiciennes* ». ‘Psychiatrists’, ‘physicians’, ‘therapists’ are in the masculine form while ‘dieticians’ is in the feminine form.

This happens again in Sample 6, also taken from the book “Biting the hand that starves you: Inspiring resistance to anorexia/bulimia” (Borden et al., 2004). Sample 6 comes from Chapter 10 entitled “I wanna be good”. In this chapter, Rick, a therapist, has a conversation with a young woman called Margaret.

## Sample 6

### Source text:

Rick: Didn't **the doctors and nurses** tell you it was because of not eating and weren't you told that in order to save your life you had to eat?

### Negotiated translation:

Rick : **Les docteurs et les infirmières** ne t'ont-ils pas dit que c'était parce que tu ne mangeais pas et que pour sauver ta vie, il fallait manger ?

In this sample, “**the doctors and nurses**” is translated by « **les docteurs et les infirmières** », « **docteur** » being in the masculine form and « **infirmières** » being in the feminine form.

We now turn to the macro level of the analysis of those two samples: how is the text positioning the protagonists, clients and therapists, of the above samples? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? What might be the social consequences of such a grammatical choice?

In these particular samples, we are speaking of psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, doctors, dieticians and nurses. The protagonists in the conversations translated into French are mostly males except for the nurses and the dieticians. Their position is clear: any profession regarded by French society<sup>37</sup> as noble, like doctor, psychiatrist or physician

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<sup>37</sup> This claim is not evidenced directly in the selected samples. Nevertheless, in the macro analysis, when looking at positioning, it is easy to check, via the Internet, the difference in salaries of the professions named in the samples. For example, the average salary of a Public hospital nurse is 1,485 Euros, while

is in the masculine form while any profession held as less noble by French society - such as nurse - is in the feminine form.

The social consequences of such a grammatical choice seem obvious: the readers' social constructions of these negotiated translations can only be strengthened by this lexical field which normalises the idea that males are to occupy well paid, noble positions while women can be satisfied with less prestigious, not well paid, occupations. Prestige and power belong to the masculine semantic field, reflecting Vaugelas' opinion when he established that "the masculine gender being nobler, it must predominate every time the masculine and feminine genders are put together", while care and physical appearance belong to the feminine linguistic field. The case of the dietician is interesting: a profession dealing with what woman must eat in order to look a certain way is more easily imagined in the feminine form, hence the translation "diététicienne".

Now, at a meso level, I am trying to see what discourses might be uncovered. Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning?

Again, the interests of the French speaking male gender are being served: the vocabulary gives it a position of prestige and power (doctor, psychiatrist, physician) which is not accessible through the same means, that is, lexicon, to the French speaking feminine gender: this vocabulary does not exist in the feminine form, rendering impossible a representation of women in this semantic field.

Whose interests are negated?

The French speaking feminine gender's interests are being negated. Prof. Khaznadar (Nov 2012) explains:

*Il est indécent de dire « le citoyen ou la citoyenne » chez nous. Si : pièce par pièce, il y a ici où là une première ministre ou une docteure en médecine, mais surtout bien identifiée, seulette : il faut qu'elle prenne bien ses responsabilités. Toutes se cachent en France sous l'Homme et ses Droits.*

It is obscene to say « citizen » (in the masculine – le citoyen – followed by the feminine form – la citoyenne -) in France. If there is, one at a time,

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the average salary of a Public hospital doctor is 5,700 Euros. Quite logically, better wages are given to professions that are considered more prestigious.

here and there, a woman prime minister or a woman doctor, especially identified as such, she is very isolated: she'd better take her responsibilities. All females, in France, hide behind the Man and His rights.

What discourses might be uncovered?

A common discourse in France which places males in positions of power lies at the root of this use of vocabulary. Here, the examples found in Samples 5 and 6, but also seen in Samples 11 and 12, involve occupations such as doctors, psychiatrists, etc. But we have seen in the literature review of this thesis that many other professions exhibit the same lexicon-poverty: the French language simply does not have a feminine form for many professions, especially the so called 'noble' ones which usually involve a higher salary. This situation illustrates the fact that for many years, women have been kept away from those professions on the basis that they were often seen as 'irrational' or 'emotional', in other words, incapable of practicing such careers. This same discourse conditions women to be **'nurses'** or **"*infirmières*"** on the basis that they are seen as more caring, and possibly less intelligent than men. The language clearly serves as a tool<sup>38</sup> to hammer home the idea that women are emotional, caring beings and that their male counterparts are rational beings, able to make life or death decisions based on their Cartesian minds. The emotional imbalance is pinpointed in this discourse, as if both genders could not be rational and emotional. This discourse, as well as maintaining a social imbalance, also serves an economic imbalance. Men are typically in better-paid employment than women, even when engaged in the same career.

Another layer to this discourse is the disdain it shows the feminine gender: it is implicitly saying that women are not intellectually, physically or emotionally able to be in certain positions<sup>39</sup>. It sends the message that these professions are the exclusive domain of men. We know that this discourse has no basis: a majority of students in medical schools in France are now young women.

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<sup>38</sup> How could a French boy want to be in a profession which does not have a masculine name, as "*infirmière*" is only in the feminine form? On the other hand, nursing traditionally attracted girls while "*docteur*" or doctor in the masculine form only attracted mostly boys, that is to say, until very recently.

<sup>39</sup> "La femme doctoresse est une de ces herbes folles qui ont envahi la flore de la société moderne, très innocemment, elle s'est imaginé qu'ouvrir des livres et disséquer des cadavres allait lui créer un cerveau nouveau..." "The woman doctor is a weed which has invaded the modern human field. Very innocently, she imagined that opening books and dissecting dead bodies were going to give her a new brain..." (Fiessinger, 1900, p 81).

Moving away from the medical field, it is interesting to notice that this discourse applies to the world of translation as well. As I am translating the transcripts necessary for this study, and commenting on my work in my reflective journal, I write:

For centuries, traditionally, translations have been a women's job, the only "chance" they had to come close to the arts. Authors, writers were men, they needed to be seen, they had the talent, they shone, they created the Source Text (whether it was any good or not was another matter not to be commented on by the translator; remember, the translator does not exist, it cannot be seen.)

José Santaemilla in his essay entitled "Feminist Translating: on Women, Theory and Practice" (2008) writes:

There has been persistent historical association between women and translation, due to the fact that both – allegedly – share traits like submissiveness, self-effacement or modesty. [...] Women in the past have greatly contributed to what we can label as our literary or cultural tradition, but their contribution has remained muted or neglected. (p. 65)

In my reflecting journal, this quote from Santaemilla as well as my own experience pushes me to write (p. 14): "It tells me that including in the world of Academia, where translations are omnipresent, they (translators, mostly women) are still widely undervalued".

In this meso analysis, we have looked at two particular fields of inquiry: the medical field and briefly the translation field; both are proving to be places where women find it difficult, if not impossible, to have a space in which they can claim visibility. Another members' check, from a journalist called Nicole Pradalier, puts it this way: « Je crois qu'en effet, les femmes se sont construites dans une certaine carapace pour continuer à vivre malgré la négation d'elles-mêmes ». "As a matter of fact, I believe that women have constructed their identity within armour to be able to go on living despite the negation of themselves."

We have observed that the gender imbalance established through the use of language, whether in its grammar or choice of vocabulary, is clear. Women are either absent, as seen in the first theme of this analysis, or dismissed, as we have seen in this second theme. The third theme contributing to this CDA moves towards a different discourse.

### iii. The masculine semantic field as the oppressor of both genders: samples from the negotiated translation

In this last theme, we shall see how both genders end up being hurt by this biased used of the French language.

At a micro level: In 6 samples out of 13, I found examples where the masculine form was so explicitly present as a consequence of the feminine form being so explicitly absent that it seemed to put pressure on the masculine gender only. An overwhelmingly masculine semantic field creates pressure on that one gender while dismissing or ignoring the other. The consequence is that both genders end up suffering the costs of a biased, oppressive language. The samples studied are numbers 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, and 13. I focus here on two samples only, 11 and 13. Sample 11 is an extract of the conversation David Epston is having with Jermaine, the American boy who suffers from severe asthma. In this dialogue, Jermaine talks about an experience he had while in the emergency ward, where doctors were uncertain about which medication to give him.

#### Sample 11

##### Source text:

Jermaine: Yeah – I'd just tell him..... I was sweating..... about to blank out. **They** didn't know what to give me and I'd say: "Please just listen to me. I know what medication..... just give me this. Then **they'd** finally listen to me and **they'd** give it to me and I'd be easing' up, getting clear. **They'd** be giving me benedryl and all that and I'm allergic.

##### Negotiated translation:

Jermaine : Ouais—Je leur ai juste dit. Je transpirais beaucoup... J'allais tourner de l'œil. **ils** savaient pas quoi faire, je leur disais : « écoutez-moi s'il vous plaît. Je connais mes médicaments... Donnez-moi juste celui là ». Alors, **ils** ont fini par m'écouter et **ils** me l'ont donné et j'ai commencé à aller mieux. **ils** m'auraient donné du benedryl et tout ça, et j'y suis allergique.

In this sample, "**they**" in the source text refers to the medical staff but does not speak of their gender. In the negotiated translation, the French pronoun « **ils** » is masculine-plural. The French grammar refers to « **ils** » or "**they**" as the «masculin générique », or the masculine generic, which entails the idea that the masculine form is neutral and embraces both genders. According to this rule, « **ils** » or "**they**" would mean '**he and she**'.

### Sample 13

In sample 13, David Epston is having a conversation with Joe, Cathy and Katie. In this excerpt, Cathy, Joe's wife speaks about her in-laws, Joe's parents.

#### Source text:

Cathy: I don't think he (Joe's father) appreciates the way Joe has matured. I don't think his **parents** appreciate him at all. And sometimes **they** come down on him pretty hard. And I feel like I need to defend him because he is doing a great job and everyone wants to be told they are doing a great job, especially by your **parents**. And sometimes **they** don't do that. And I might come to his defence and say - 'He's really made great progress and he's done so great! He's something to be proud of'.

#### Negotiated translation:

Cathy : Je ne crois pas qu'il apprécie la façon dont Joe a mûri. Je ne crois pas que ses **parents** l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, **ils** lui tombent dessus méchamment. Et j'ai l'impression que je dois le défendre, parce qu'il fait vraiment du bon travail et tout le monde aime qu'on leur dise qu'ils font du bon travail en particulier quand ça vient de vos **parents**. Et **ils** ne font pas ça. Alors, je monte au créneau et dis « il a tellement progressé, il se débrouille tellement bien ! Il y a vraiment de quoi être fier de lui ».

In this sample, "**his parents**" are translated "« **ses parents** », masculine-plural, and are referred to as « ils », masculine-plural all through the conversation because of the "« masculin générique » rule; therefore, there is no mention of Joe's mother at all.

At a macro level, I ask: how is the text positioning the protagonists, clients and therapists, of the above samples? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? What might be the social consequences of such a grammatical choice?

Once more, in the samples cited above, it is clear that the protagonists are part of a semantically masculine world; this situation, as already analysed in the discussion of the first theme in this chapter, puts women in a non-visible zone. Contrary to the position of women, men are overwhelmingly present because of the rules enounced many times before. Firstly 'the masculine overrules the feminine,' and secondly 'the masculine is generic', somehow embracing both genders. The question to ask now is: is this a desirable

position for men to be in? What other social consequences could there be for such a grammatical choice, other than those seen in the 1st and 2nd themes of this chapter?

In Sample 13, Joe's parents always appear in the masculine-plural form, associating discipline and authority with the masculine gender:

Source text:

I don't think his **parents** appreciate him at all. And sometimes **they** come down on him pretty hard »

Negotiated translation:

Je ne crois pas que ses **parents** l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, **ils** lui tombent dessus méchamment.

The French translation which uses the masculine generic concept re-enforces the idea that masculinity and discipline, or toughness, go hand in hand, dismissing Joe's mother as well as avoiding her association with discipline and toughness. That poses a problem: who is to say that she is not the one who is tough in their family? And what are the implications of assuming that men are always tough?

In Sample 11, « **ils** savaient pas quoi faire » or « **They** didn't know what to give me » associates the masculine gender with the medical profession because « **they** » in this dialogue represents the medical staff of the hospital. The French translation sees the medical staff as being exclusively masculine « **ils** », which was positive and flattering as seen in the discourse analysis of the previous theme, but becomes a problem for masculinity when these staff members do not know what they are doing.

In Samples 11 and 13, the dominant use of the masculine form in the French language associates traits such as toughness, discipline or incompetence with masculinity. These presumed traits can be considered less desirable aspects of male privilege. The male readers going through the conversations will see that males are, at times, the authoritarians, disciplinarians or the so called "tough ones" in this overwhelmingly masculine semantic field; at other times, they are seen as incompetent professionals. Women readers might feel that once again "boys will be boys", that is, tough, harsh or slightly senseless while they, as females, remain absent from the linguistic field, and therefore untouched by those negative traits. This seems to be the price to pay for the 'dominant' group when one gender is so pervasive.

In this last theme the critical discourse of the macro analysis demonstrates that what can be an advantage at times can become a disadvantage at other times, and for the same reason: omnipresence. This imbalance is mostly due to the masculine generic concept. This concept poses a problem to a number of scholars with whom I was in contact during the research phase of this project. The journalist, Nicole Praladier, is one of them. She writes:

*De mon côté, je suis dans l'action pour avoir pratiqué la communication journalistique écrite (...) et m'obliger sans état d'âme à revenir sur ce générique masculin, fauteur de trouble et de confusion, de même que ce masculin pluriel qui fausse l'information.*

As far as I am concerned, I came into action because I had to practice written journalistic communication (...) and without a second thought, I dismissed this masculine generic which initiates confusion and causes trouble. The same goes for the plural masculine generic which distorts information (Praladier, personal communication, March, 2013):

The CDA of the examined samples reaches the same conclusion: trouble, confusion and distortion. The social construction created from this biased use of language is unflattering to both genders. The French language emerges as an agent of control, set to keep everyone, both males and females within a binary social construction detrimental to all.

At a meso level: at this level, I am trying to see what discourses might be uncovered. Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning?

In this last theme, at the risk of repeating what has already been said, no one's interests are being served; everybody loses. The discourses uncovered here are old patterns associating the female gender with care, emotions, and kindness or dismissing this gender all together, as seen in theme one of this analysis. On the other hand, it places the male gender on a pedestal when not assuming it to be senseless and harsh. Either way, each gender is categorised, placed in a 'box', or as Catherine Mengelle<sup>40</sup> puts it, in a "jail". In a personal communication, she asks:

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<sup>40</sup> Catherine Mengelle is a Narrative Practitioner from La Fabrique Narrative in southern France; she also participated in the members' check process.

*Pourquoi acceptons-nous ainsi de nous laisser enfermer dans les cellules des prisons panoptiques ? Pourquoi oublions-nous la plupart du temps de questionner les règles qu'on nous impose ? (...) Est-ce si inutile que cela de trouver ce postulat linguistique inique ? On cherche à nous dire qu'il faut bien que l'un des deux l'emporte. C'est idiot!*

Why do we accept being locked up in panoptical jails? Why do we so often forget to question the rules imposed on us? Is it so senseless to find this linguistic postulate iniquitous? We are made to believe that one has to win over the other. That is plain stupidity! (Mengelle, personal communication, April 2014).

This positioning of the genders in the language, through the choice of grammar and vocabulary, seems to re-enforce the position of males and females in real life: males are powerful, have privileges, are Cartesians, have economic power, are 'tough' but can be senseless as well. In contrast, women are caring, emotional, economically weaker, and concerned with their physical image. The developing issue is that nowadays things are changing and this re-enforcement is losing grounds. The experience of men and women in twenty-first century France is drifting away from the old patterns of gender division still expressed and conveyed by the French language. This way of writing and telling stories is not a real reflection of men and women's experiences any more. For example, female doctors are to be found in all French hospitals, and there are men concerned with their physical appearance.

Catherine Mengelle adds:

*«Ne peut-on faire les deux: faire vivre notre langue et toutes ses richesses singulières et en même temps la faire évoluer, au rythme de la pensée sociale ?»*

“Can't we do both? Allow our language to flourish with all its richness, its singularities and at the same time allow it to evolve at the same pace as social thoughts?” (Personal communication, April 2014).

Joining with Catherine Mengelle's views, (hen she expresses her wish for an evolution in the French language to take place) this CDA hopes for an evolution - maybe a shift - to happen too. Remembering parts of my reflective journal, I am confident that my mother tongue will move from being an “agent of control”, keeping both genders in very circumscribing roles, to an “agent of reconciliation” between genders. This is what the

narrative exploration of my native tongue has demonstrated in the reflective journal used to establish this project. Parts of this journal have been cited in the literature review of this thesis, in the paragraph entitled, 'The idea of de-gendering and Narrative Therapy'.

In the last part of this chapter, I compare the negotiated and cultural translations, looking for signs of a shift such as an increased parity.

#### **iv. Comparison of the negotiated and cultural translations**

My reflective journal, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2012, page 11, reads:

In my experience, French and English were always of equal status. I found English to be exotic. I found English to be less stressful than French. And now, like Marcela Polanco, I find English to be liberating. She says: "Living in the worldview of English opened my eyes to some of the constraints of my life in Spanish, freeing me from them [...] The encounter of these two languages helped me discover aspects of my life that were invisible otherwise" (Polanco, 2010, p. 3).

I absolutely want to translate with a purpose. I want to free my use of French and more particularly, free it from the overwhelming power imbalance between the two genders: masculine and feminine. Here, I need to cite Polanco: "Translation is not about confining to one language another language, rather to be liberated by it" (2010, p. 6).

The heart of this project is about this liberating movement and its consequences. This is a shift I hope to make clear by comparing the negotiated translations and the cultural ones. At the end of this chapter, we are pursuing the discourse analysis of the cultural translations, using the samples already discussed in the paragraphs above. As before, we will proceed with a micro, macro and meso analysis of the cultural translations, the intention being to be faithful to the Critical Discourse Analysis. For a better understanding, I am purposefully using samples already observed at the beginning of this chapter.

At a micro level:

#### **Sample 2**

##### Source Text:

Your talents, abilities and what your *friends* think is cool about you.

Negotiated translation:

Tes talents, tes dons, ce que tu sais faire, ce qui te rend « cool » aux yeux de tes **copains**.

As previously seen, the noun “**copains**” is the masculine-plural form of “**friends**”.

Cultural translation:

Tes talents, tes dons, ce que tu sais faire, ce qui te rend ‘cool’ aux yeux de **tes copains et tes copines**.

In the cultural translation, the noun «**copines**» or “girlfriends” has been added. In my reflective journal, on 21 June 2012, I wrote: “Friends” in English implies both boys and girls. Not in French. I choose to write « copains et copines » to include both sexes.

### Sample 3

Source Text:

Serena could be ‘lovely, friendly and kind to **little children**’ and I was provided with examples and stories of her practices of loveliness, kindness and friendliness towards the next door **neighbour's children** and her **cousins**.

Negotiated translation:

Serena pouvait être « mignonne, agréable et gentille avec **les petits enfants**. » et me donna des exemples, me raconta des histoires où Serena était particulièrement gentille et agréable envers ses **petits voisins** et ses **petits cousins**.

Here, “**little children, neighbours' children and cousins**” are all in the masculine-plural form: “**les petits enfants, ses petits voisins et ses petits cousins**”.

Cultural translation:

Serena pouvait être « mignonne, agréable et gentille avec “**les petits garçons et les petites filles**” et me donna des exemples, me raconta des histoires où Serena était particulièrement gentille et agréable avec **ses petits voisins, ses petites voisines et ses petits cousins et cousines**.

The cultural translation adds the feminine form each time it is possible; therefore, “*little children*” is translated by « *les petits garçons et les petites filles* » or “the little boys and the little girls”. “*Neighbours' children and cousins*” becomes « *ses petits voisins, ses petites voisines et ses petits cousins et cousines* », again, adding the feminine form instead of relying on the masculine one only, as was the case in the negotiated translation. The cultural translation also intends to jostle the idea of a masculine generic where a masculine pronoun, somehow, includes the feminine one. This move is illustrated in Sample 12.

## Sample 12

### Source Text:

By the time *they* get a cure.

### Negotiated translation:

D'ici à ce qu'*ils* aient un médicament qui guérisse.

We have seen that « *ils* » is a masculine-plural pronoun.

### Cultural translation:

D'ici à ce qu'*on* ait trouvé un médicament qui guérisse.

« *On* » is a pronoun not used very often in the written language. It is mostly used in spoken French. It encompasses the idea of « we » and « one » but is not attached to one particular gender. « *On* » can be either feminine or masculine, the way « they » is in English.

With Sample 5, we saw that professions considered as noble were in the masculine form only. The cultural translation chooses another approach:

## Sample 5

### Source Text:

*Psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, and dieticians* are all likely to ask questions based on the notion that *the person* has a/b or a disorder. Consequently, the person

usually comes to view herself as an « anorexic » or a « bulimic » for the doctor or the other professional, because a/b fosters in many the desire to please others and live up to their expectations, as well as desire to be the best.

#### Negotiated translation:

**Les psychiatres, les médecins, les thérapeutes et les diététiciennes** ont de fortes chances de poser des questions basées sur le fait que **la personne** en question est l'a/b ou encore qu'**elle** a un trouble mental. Par conséquent, **la personne** finit par se considérer comme « anorexique » ou « boulimique » pour satisfaire le médecin ou les autres professionnels de la santé, car l'**anorexie /boulimie** encourage chez beaucoup d'entre **elles** l'envie de plaire aux autres et d'être à la hauteur de leurs attentes, de même qu'un désir d'être **la** meilleure.

In this sample, "**Psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, and dieticians**" are translated by "**Les psychiatres, les médecins, les thérapeutes et les diététiciennes**". ("Psychiatres" and "thérapeutes" could be either in the masculine or feminine form, because there is an "e" at the end of the word. "Médecins" is masculine only and "diététicienne" is feminine only.) Also, it is interesting to note that in the French negotiated translation « **la personne** » or "**the person**" diagnosed with an eating disorder is in the feminine form; consequently, French grammar makes it compulsory for the referring pronouns which follow to be in the feminine form -- so we have: « **elle** » « **elles** » and « **la** », all in the feminine or feminine-plural forms. Application of CDA indicates that mental illnesses like anorexia or bulimia as well as most mental illnesses have been declared by the members of the Académie Française to be named in the feminine form<sup>41</sup>. The humans who suffer because of anorexia are more likely to be described in the feminine form in the French translations of this paradigm. The cultural translation, coming from a different paradigm, has a different view of this narrative and tries to correct it as we will now see.

#### Cultural translation:

Les psychiatres, **les médecins et les docteurs**, les thérapeutes, **les diététiciens et les diététiciennes** ont de fortes chances de poser des questions basées sur le fait que l'être humain en question est l'a/b ou encore **qu'il ou elle** a un trouble mental. Par conséquent,

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<sup>41</sup> Searching for the list of mental illnesses on Wikipedia France, I calculated that 85% of the words were gendered feminine.

**l'être humain** finit par se considérer comme « anorexique » ou « boulimique » pour satisfaire **les soignants et les soignantes**, car **les troubles du comportement** alimentaire encouragent chez beaucoup d'entre **eux et elles** l'envie de plaire aux autres et d'être à la hauteur de leurs attentes, de même qu'un désir d'être **le ou la** meilleure.

We clearly see here, thanks to the bold italics font which were already in place in the negotiated translations, and the bold italics font underlined, (representing the addition of the feminine form), that the cultural translation modifies quite drastically the negotiated translation. All names of professions are now in the feminine and the masculine forms where possible, because, as seen in the literature review of this thesis, when the letter 'E' is already at the end of the noun of the profession like in “psychiatrE” or “thérapeutE”, it can technically be either male or female. For this reason, the cultural translation does not make any changes to those nouns but in order to not make these names of professions exclusively masculine, as they appear to be in the negotiated translation, a feminine form, either a pronoun or an adjective will have to be added when referring to the noun. Later in the conversation, we see the appearance of « **il ou elle** » “or “he or she” and « **eux et elles** » instead of the generic «ils». On the other hand, « médecin » is masculine only; therefore « **docteure** » has been invented to include women doctors. I am encouraged by the members check process to push the boundaries of my native tongue. Elisabeth Burr, Professor of French, Francophone and Italian Linguistics at the University of Leipzig, Germany, in a personal communication writes:

*À Laure je voudrais dire : tu peux bien changer la langue, la langue c'est nous, la langue est créé par les parlantEs, même les grammaires sont seulement des produits des hommes (parfois aussi des femmes), elles ne sont pas tombées du ciel.*

To Laure, I would like to say: you can change the language, the language is us, the language is the creation of those who speak it and grammar books are only the products of men (and sometimes women as well), they have not fallen from the sky (Burr, March 2013).

But the cultural translation does not stop there. We have previously seen in the negotiated translation of these samples, that when speaking about anorexia and bulimia, the semantic field of the illness is feminine. The cultural translation, once again, re-

introduces a balance, that is, adds the masculine form when the feminine one, linked to a mental illness considered as feminine, is overwhelmingly present. Therefore, « **la personne** » of the negotiated translation becomes « **l'être humain** » or “the human being” in the cultural translation, referred to later in the conversation as « **ils et elles, le et la** » and « **eux et elles** » including both genders. The feminine nouns of « **anorexie** » and « **boulimie** » are replaced by « **les troubles du comportement alimentaire** » i.e. “eating disorders”.

I keep in mind the words of Professor Burr who encourages me to deconstruct my native tongue and give names to women, even if it is not acceptable yet. She writes (personal communication, March 2013):

*Continuons à faire la déconstruction en tenant compte de tout le contexte que nous sommes capables de tenir en compte et donnons un nom à nous-même et aux autres, même si on nous dit que cela va contre le génie de la langue (de quelle langue ? Et quel génie ?).*

Let's keep deconstructing it – the language – keeping in mind the context we are able to keep in mind, and let's give ourselves and others – women – a name, even if we are being told that it goes against the genius of the language (what language? What genius?)

Deconstructing discourses embodied in the lexical, grammatical fields of the French language, is what the cultural translations allow.

At a macro level: how is the text positioning the protagonists, clients and therapists, of the above samples (2, 3, 5 and 12)? How is it positioning the readers of those texts? What might be the social consequences of such grammatical choices?

The characters of these stories – in which David Epston is having a therapeutic conversation with Jenny and Serena in Samples 2 and 3, with Jermaine in Sample 12 and with Kris in Sample 5 – are in the same position as in the negotiated translation. The micro analysis of these samples shows that what changes is not their positioning but the semantic field in which they now sit. In the cultural semantic field, contrary to the negotiated semantic one, both genders are represented, and the background to their conversation with David has changed. My analysis of this observation is that the new background or milieu created by the cultural translation is closer to the reality the protagonists are experiencing in real life where males and females are both present. Consequently, when reading the cultural translations, the reader creates a world in his or

her mind where an equal representation of genders is operating, positioning him or her in a more equal semantic field, a field closer to his or her own reality.

The social consequences for the protagonists in the conversations, or the readers of those conversations, are the same: they grow in a field where equal semantic attention is given to both genders. The discrimination against the feminine form is obsolete; the feminine form is now promoted to equal status with the masculine. Parity between genders is the new norm; this is what the members of the members' check process are working towards as well. In a personal communication about parity and the difficulties encountered in order to promote it, Prof Khaznadar writes:

*Cette lecture me redonne du courage pour continuer quand même (malgré le poids des ans !) à promouvoir mon féminin, mon nom, au rang qui est le sien, et traiter cette déviance sociale qu'est le masculin des discours dominants, merci Laure. Si je vous écris, c'est pour me forcer pour de bon à reprendre encore et encore le travail de déconstruction et reconstruction de notre langage.*

Reading this brings back courage into my life and pushes me to keep going (despite the weight of the years) to promote my feminine, my name, at the place which should be hers, and to deal with this social deviance which the masculine of dominant discourses represents, thank you Laure. If I write to you, it is because I want to push myself to go back to the work of deconstruction and reconstruction of our language, again and again (Kaznadar, March 2013).

The same observation about parity between both genders can be made visible when critically analysing names of professions: the texts belonging to the cultural translations are positioning the protagonists, clients and therapists in the studied conversations on a more equal foundation. Both genders are represented as equally as the French language allows it. Therefore, when reading the conversations, the reader is positioned in a narrative where males and females can work within the same professions: « docteure, médecin », etc. The social construction emanating from his or her reading will be that all is possible for both genders: if the reader is a female, she might identify with the highly regarded, professional female protagonists of the conversation; if the reader is a male, he might do

the same but also will notice that either gender may practice medicine (in the analysed samples) instead of excluding the other gender from the medical field.

The social consequences of such a grammatical choice are an unbiased representation of the story, which is most probably closer to what the veracity of this story is, because there are female and male doctors in French hospitals.

In Sample 13, the negotiated translation only spoke of male protagonists, ignoring potential female ones:

### Sample 13

“**they** come down on him” or «**ils** lui tombent dessus» the masculine-plural pronoun to refer to Joe's father and mother is inappropriate contrary to “they” which does not stipulate the gender of Joe's parents.

On the contrary, the cultural translation, once again re-introduces the feminine form: « Son père et sa mère lui tombent dessus méchamment » translated as “his father and his mother come down on him”.

The positioning of the clients does not change: Jermaine, Cathy, Katie and Joe remain the same but their experience of the narrative might be different. In Sample 13, there is no doubt that Joe's mother would have liked to have a place, her place, in the conversation. Having her named appropriately in the cultural translation might have brought a reflection to her about her parenting style; she might have otherwise been missed in the negotiated translation, in which she never had a full part. For a protagonist to be absent or dismissed from a text cuts short all possibilities to enquire about his or her life.

While it seems that the French used in the negotiated translations favours men and ignored women as seen in the first two themes of this CDA, it appears that in some instances, this systematic use of the masculine form puts pressure on the masculine gender and becomes burdensome. Keeping in mind who is ‘in the light’ and who is ‘in the shadow’, to refer to a metaphor used earlier in this chapter, resonated with Member Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun. He writes:

Ces conversations avec toi, ta démarche, ton travail, ont ouvert une énorme autoroute dans ma réflexion sur l'utilisation du langage dans la

Narrative -l'éclairage et les ombres que le langage fait peser sur le texte à son indu / la façon de poser ma caméra pour éviter ces ombres [...] Je trouve vraiment cela passionnant(e) et tellement important(e) pour le développement de la Narrative en Français(e).

These conversations with you, your process, your work, have opened an enormous speedway in my reflection on the use of (the French) language in Narrative Practices – the light and the shadows that the language puts onto the text unbeknown to it / my way of installing my camera to avoid these shadows [...] In all instances, I find this fascinating and so important for the development of Narrative Practices in French (Blanc-Sahnoun, March 28, 2014).

Here it is interesting as well as heart-warming, to see that Pierre is already using de-gendered French in his correspondence with me: he adopted it instantly<sup>42</sup>. The social construction established through cultural translations and the use of de-gendered French re-introduced a balance which played in favour of the masculine gender, releasing the pressure by allowing the sharing of problems: males are not alone on their sun soaked pedestal anymore and females are not living in the shadow or underground. Could the gender difference be slowly moving towards gender indifference?

At a meso level, I am trying to see what discourses might be uncovered. Whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning?

Whose interests are served?

In the cultural translations, both genders' interests are being served: both are named appropriately, both are 'in the light', to use a previous metaphor. The interests of the previously un-named are served by this positioning. They, that is, « **les copines, les voisines, les cousines** », etc. are named; they have a linguistic place comparable to the one of their male counterparts. In the cultural translation, the recurring discourse is that both genders must be represented and positioned equally in the French language in order to create a more accurate picture of experiences lived in twenty-first century France.

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<sup>42</sup> Pierre puts 'e' in parenthesis in order to include the feminine form. This de-gendering method will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Whose interests are negated?

No one's interests are being negated any more: the female children, neighbours and cousins, the medical staff who happened to be females have moved from the shadow to the sun light. Both genders are being served by the positioning de-gendered French gives them: women are not ignored or/and dismissed, they are seen as fully capable of practising medicine, or producing Source Texts (for instance) and men are present, just like before, in the negotiated translation but they share the linguistic field with their female counterparts, potentially releasing the pressure their gender was carrying because of the exclusive use of the masculine form. The discourses uncovered here are discourses of equality in all circumstances, good or bad.

What are the consequences of this positioning? My CDA of de-gendered French, as it appears in the studied samples, unveils a fuller picture of the situations, whatever these situations might be, a picture closer to what the reality is. The oppression of one gender by the other is invalidated; furthermore the change happens instantly. Prof Khaznadar explains :

*La parité linguistique est pour moi la reconnaissance égalitaire dans le langage de l'un et de l'autre sexe. Le problème en français est lorsqu'on généralise pour parler de femmes et d'hommes réunis ou l'usage dominant impose le masculin seul avec ses conséquences déviantes, biaisant la représentation de l'humanité au profit du sexe masculin. Conséquences qui ne sont peut-être pas sans rapport avec l'anorexie dont souffrent principalement les filles, le langage étant à la base de la formation de la pensée, mais ceci est en dehors de ma compétence.*

According to me, linguistic parity is the equal recognition of both sexes in the language. In French, the problem comes from generalising when speaking of men and women who are both present; the dominant usage imposes the masculine form only, which brings about deviant consequences, equivocating the representation of humanity, favouring the masculine gender. Consequences which may very well be playing a role in the anorexia from which mostly girls suffer, language being the grassroots of thoughts, but this resides outside of my competence (Khaznadar, December 2012).

In a collaborative, unplanned way, Prof Khaznadar, touched the heart of this study: how would the experience of men and women be if addressed in a less sexist way? This question goes further than the scope of this study but is worth noting. In her communications and her work, Prof Khaznadar showed me how de-gendering was possible, even easy to achieve; in return, I want to push the boundaries of her inquiry further and look at direct consequences on living and suffering human beings, on their psyches, even if these human beings are located in texts at the moment.

The meso level of analysis of this critical discourse analysis shows that the consequences of this positioning, as seen in the cultural translations, are relevant. The systematic introduction of the feminine gender in sentences from which it was previously evicted provokes an immediate change. Referring to what the sociologist Stefan Hirschauer (2006) wrote, the cultural translations possibly transcribe a movement toward gender indifference. Hirschauer sees the act of de-gendering as “a salutary but routine effort for democratic societies” (Hirschauer, 2006, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). “Genuine de-gendering” can take place only after gender difference has been fully brought into the open” (Lorber, 2005, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). This is what the cultural translations of this project do and the Critical Discourse Analysis of these translations demonstrates that, through this process, a partially de-gendered idiom arises.

## **Summary**

In the first theme of this Critical Discourse Analysis, it has been demonstrated that the feminine gender was absent from the linguistic field of the majority of the studied samples, resulting in the idea that women are second class citizens. In the second theme, we have seen that the feminine gender could easily be dismissed, especially through the blocking of feminised names of professions, even when women were performing these professions. In the third and last theme, we saw how both genders ended up being impaired by this biased use of the French language, the imbalance creating unfairness to both sides. The comparison of the negotiated translations and the cultural ones, and the CDA of both, bring forward a hopeful note: in all themes, it has been observed that cultural translations fully participate in the de-gendering of the French language, prompting a new social construction, where both genders are consistently apparent. This study suggests that if adopted widely, using de-gendered French could take us a step closer towards gender indifference as imagined by Hirschauer.

It might be useful to bring to the attention of readers of this thesis once more, that even though this work might look linear now, it was not. On the contrary, it was quite messy. While the intention of this project was clearly to explore possible ways of moving towards a less sexist French language in order to obtain more equality between the genders, the means of achieving this goal were not identified until late in the project. Only when I started working on the cultural translations, long after having translated the STs according to the literal, equivalent and negotiated paradigms, did I work on the idea of de-gendering. Before starting the cultural translations, I could not be certain that it would be possible to partly de-gender my native tongue. How to achieve this goal was a question I kept in my mind for many months, at times worrying that if de-gendering the French language was impossible, the entire project might collapse. Hence the 'good surprise' effect when I entered the cultural translations. As we shall see in the next chapter, the practice is easy but the claim remains controversial. How de-gendered French is performed is one of the topics in the next chapter.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The techniques used to de-gender my native tongue were found and tried while the cultural translation work was happening; this is the reason why they have been catalogued in the fifth chapter of this thesis entitled: Discussion of findings.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt to answer the two research questions enounced at the beginning of this thesis is made. The research questions will be addressed in the order they were named. The first one is: "Through what techniques can a text written in French be de-gendered and are these techniques compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy?" Five different techniques have been identified and will be explored in the following discussion. Then we will see if these five identified techniques are compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. The second research question is: "Does the comparative study of negotiated translations and cultural translations of English texts into French uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language? Does de-gendering undo any inequalities thus discovered?" Members involved in the members' check process participate in the discussion accompanying this second research question and speak about the impact that de-gendered French has had on their practice<sup>44</sup>.

### a. Discussion of findings

#### i. Answer to the first research question:

Through what techniques can a text written in French be de-gendered and are these techniques compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy? This first research question will be answered in two parts. Firstly, we'll look at the different techniques used to partially de-gender the French language and secondly, we'll see if these techniques are compatible with narrative practices.

We have briefly seen in the literature review that francophone countries are trying a number of different ways to obtain a less gendered language, i.e. a language which

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<sup>44</sup> It might be worth mentioning here that if French Narrative practitioners discovered de-gendered French after reading my article, linguists and university professors such as Khaznadar and Burr have already been researching it for many years, mainly in dictionaries and grammar books.

includes both genders equally<sup>45</sup>. Five techniques can be used to de-gender French; however, four are of particular interest to this study. I will explain how these five techniques work, starting with one that is briefly mentioned in the literature review but is not used in the cultural translations. This technique which will be detailed first, needs to be mentioned in order to answer the research question: through what techniques can a text written in French be de-gendered?<sup>46</sup> The four remaining techniques are used in the cultural translations and will be analysed thoroughly in this chapter.

The first technique, seen in governmental documents in Canada, Switzerland or Belgium use punctuation marks such as dots (full stops or periods) or hyphens, or even parentheses (brackets). «Employé.e.s», «employé-e-s » or « employé(e)s » are increasingly used to write about male and female employees when before, only employees in the masculine form would be utilised. I did not use this technique in the cultural translations of this thesis, but I have adopted it in my personal writing style; I use it in emails for instance. This personal use resulted in a discussion with one member of the member's check process, Pierre Blanc-Sanhoun. He writes:

*Je ne suis pas totalement satisfait des parenthèses car ce qui est entre parenthèses est traditionnellement moins important que ce qui est hors des parenthèses et je ne voudrais pas recréer un petit ghetto portatif avec la bonne intention de manier la langue de façon plus éthique. J'ai vu que tu utilisais des points, c'est mieux, même s'il faut prendre une convention qui ne complique pas trop la lecture.*

I am not entirely happy with the parenthesis because what comes in between parentheses is traditionally less important than what is outside of the parentheses and I would not like to re-create a small portable ghetto with the intention of dealing with language in a more ethical way. I saw that you were using dots, that's better; we need to keep in mind that we must apply a convention which does not complicate the reading. (Blanc-Sahnoun, personal communication, March 28<sup>th</sup> 2014).

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<sup>45</sup> In francophone countries other than France, gender inclusive writing is often confined to governmental texts. In France, questions around genders in the French language are confined to Universities.

<sup>46</sup> Including the techniques not used in this study.

I replied to Pierre that I agreed with his analysis of the use of the parentheses. The dots seemed appropriate but my preference goes to the use of hyphens because of the aesthetics it gives to the word: it looks like the letters are holding hands which is a symbolic way of putting both genders together on an equal basis and imagining that they are walking towards the future jointly. The problem with that way of de-gendering is that it only happens in the written form<sup>47</sup>. In this research, the STs translated were transcripts of conversations, and therefore, I thought it more appropriate to use the techniques which would be noticeable orally, such as the ones described below. Thus, I did not use dots, hyphens or parenthesis; I chose instead to include the feminine gender as much as possible, i.e. each time it was a possibility. I prefer this second technique which consists of doubling one masculine word into two words, one feminine and one masculine, a technique called « dédoublement » by Khaznadar: «cousins et cousines » for instance. This technique can be seen in Sample 13. In this example, David, the therapist, talks to Cathy, Joe's wife, about the way her in-laws view their son Joe.

### Sample 13

#### Source text:

I don't think he (Joe's father) appreciates the way Joe has matured. I don't think **his parents** appreciate him at all. And sometimes **they** come down on him pretty hard.

#### Negotiated translation:

Je ne crois pas qu'il apprécie la façon dont Joe a muri. Je ne crois pas que **ses parents** l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, **ils** lui tombent dessus méchamment.

#### Cultural translation:

Je ne crois pas qu'il apprécie la façon dont Joe a muri. Je ne crois pas **que ses parents** l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, son **père et sa mère** lui tombent dessus méchamment.

The ST speaks of "his parents" followed by the pronoun "they", translated by « ses parents » (masculine plural only) followed by the pronoun « ils » (masculine plural only) in the negotiated translation. « ils » is doubled into « son père et sa mère » or "his father and his mother" in the cultural translation.

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<sup>47</sup> One cannot pronounce a hyphen or a dot: "cousin-e" but can say "cousin et cousine".

In this sample, Edwige Khaznadar comments (personal communication, December 2012):

« Il (le thérapeute) pourrait veiller à dédoubler et non rassembler en un masculin. Mais ma remarque concerne non la traduction proprement dite, mais le monde humain que le ou la thérapeute est à même de présenter. »

“He (the therapist) could make sure to double instead of gathering everyone under the masculine. This comment does not apply to the translation, rather to the human world the therapist is portraying”.

Here we touch the heart of the matter: what “human world” do we want to portray? “We” can be the therapists, but not only. Ultimately “we” is all of us who speak the French language or languages highly gendered. The cultural translations solve this problem and advocate for both genders to be included: « son père et sa mère », “his father and his mother”.

Khaznadar adds:

*Toujours s'il s'agit de conseils d'élocution, et non de traduction. Dans l'optique de sortir du système anglo-saxon en principe bivalent mais en fait ambigu, asexué peut-être mais en une société de domination toujours masculine, pour le système français où le masculin d'usage dominant peut être désambiguïsé en une représentation paritaire.*

Still advising on manners of speaking, not on translating. Keeping in mind the wish to move away from the Anglo-Saxon bivalence on principle but in reality confusing, definitely asexual but still resulting in a society of masculine domination. In the French system the dominant usage of the masculine can be re-organised into an equal representation of the genders. (Khaznadar, personal communication, Dec 4th, 2012).

It seems that we have gone full circle: I moved away from my native tongue, looking at it from a different viewpoint or language, the English language. English and the translations which followed the source texts have enabled me to liberate my idiom. The cultural translations are the results of this newly acquired freedom; they represent the language I am happy to be speaking (see Appendix 2). Now, through the member's check process, and considering that members are involved in the field of linguistics, I can see

that the de-gendered translations can, in turn, shed some light on the English language. From the point of view of linguists, the English language can be seen as “asexual but confusing<sup>48</sup>”. Contrary to the previous technique, this way of de-gendering, that is to say doubling nouns or pronouns or adjectives, etc. works for both written and oral communication; this is why it is my preference for the cultural translations. I kept in mind that the transcripts were recordings of conversations which had been spoken before being written down.

When it was difficult or impossible to include a feminine form, usually because the word does not exist in French, I tried a third technique: I created a word, for example, « docteure ». « Docteure » can be the feminine form of the word « Docteur » because adding the letter “e” at the end of a noun can feminise it. Khaznadar comments on this particular example: she writes (personal communication, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012):

« 'Les docteurs' est ambigu, l'ambiguïté est reprise par la répétition des 'ils'. On peut nommer les personnes, le docteur Untel, la docteure Unetelle... »

“Doctors' is ambiguous, the ambiguity is stressed by the repetition of the pronoun 'ils' - masculine plural only - you could name the persons: doctor so and so...”

« Docteure » with an 'e' at the end solves the problem; I used this word in the cultural translations. It is a created word; it is not found in dictionaries, but the creativity remains shy. I only added one letter at the end of an existing word. I did not create many words for this project; I relied more on other techniques such as the previous one or the ones described below. I kept in mind that imagining new words could be highly controversial and easily rejected by unsympathetic readers, which is why I did not push my creativity as a translator and favoured other techniques already validated in the French language. The fourth and fifth techniques come under this category.

The fourth technique consists of leaving the word as it was in the masculine form but adding another word (or several), showing that both genders could be involved. An example of this is seen in the cultural translation of Sample 8: « **quelqu'un** », masculine-singular, to translate “**someone**”. (The negotiated translation used the word « ils », masculine plural only). When referring to « quelqu'un » or “someone” it is important to stipulate that they could be either male or female, not just male, like « un »<sup>49</sup> would

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<sup>48</sup> “They” in English can be feminine or masculine, i.e. “asexual”. Not knowing which gender “they” is can be seen as being confusing.

<sup>49</sup> Singular, masculine, indefinite article.

suggest; therefore the cultural translation speaks of « **et si quelqu'un, un homme ou une femme...** » or “**if someone, a man or a woman...**” Often in the remaining part of the sentence, adjectives had to change as well: the inclusion of the feminine gender meant that the adjectives had to agree with the feminine form -- this is a rule in the French language where adjectives have to agree with the gender and the number of the noun they describe. This is very well illustrated in Sample 4. In this sample, David speaks to Jenny, Serena's mother:

#### **Sample 4**

##### Source text:

Jenny, most Problems have a pretty narrow version of a **young person** because they only know the kid in trouble and not out of trouble and probably aren't that interested in knowing about **their daring, bravery and fearlessness**.

In the ST, **young person** could be either a girl or a boy.

##### Negotiated translation:

Jenny, la plupart des Problèmes ont une vue assez raccourcie des **jeunes gens** parce qu'ils ne les connaissent que quand **ils** font des bêtises et pas quand **ils** n'en font pas, d'ailleurs ils ne cherchent pas vraiment à savoir à quel point ces mêmes jeunes peuvent être **audacieux, courageux et téméraires**.

In the negotiated translation « **jeunes gens** » is masculine plural; it could include both girls and boys except that the remaining sentence is entirely in the masculine plural form, following French grammar rules.

##### Cultural translation:

Jenny, la plupart des Problèmes ont une vue assez raccourcie **des jeunes gens** parce qu'ils ne les connaissent que quand **ils et elles** font des bêtises et pas quand **ils et elles** n'en font pas, d'ailleurs ils ne cherchent pas vraiment à savoir à quel point ces mêmes jeunes peuvent être **audacieux, audacieuses, courageux, courageuses et téméraires**.

In the cultural translation, « **jeunes gens** » does not change but the remainder of the sentence does; it now doubles the pronouns and the adjectives.

Khaznadar commented on this occasion as well; she says (personal communication, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012):

« 'Gens' est bien « épïcène », de l'un ou l'autre sexe, mais la succession des « ils » masculinise leur monde. Le « ils ou elles »<sup>50</sup> paraît impossible, mais ce n'est peut-être qu'une question d'usage. On peut essayer. »

“'Person' can be both feminine and masculine, but the succession of « ils » following in the sentence, masculinise their world. « Ils ou elles » seems impossible, but maybe it comes down to getting used to that. One can try. “

This is exactly what the cultural translations of this research have done: try. As the trial became persistent, the use of both pronouns such as « ils et elles » or « ils ou elles » became easy, natural, simple, both in the written and oral forms, contrary to what Khaznadar anticipated. This reflection came about in a conversation I had with one of the members who participated in the member's check process, after my article was published on the French website of La Fabrique Narrative (see Appendix 2).

Catherine Mengelle, narrative practitioner from Southern France, writes (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup> 2014):

« N'utiliser que des expressions ou terminologies épïcènes me paraît à l'opposé, bien compliqué, sauf à abandonner les multiples nuances de la langue ».

“Only using terms or expressions which can be both masculine and feminine seems very complicated, unless we are willing to give up the multiple nuances the language [French] has”.

I replied to Catherine (personal communication, April 15<sup>th</sup> 2014):

*Catherine, la rédaction épïcène et le langage parlé (où la parité compte) sont simplissimes. Nos politiques et leurs troupes de conseiller-e-s en communication l'ont bien compris, leurs discours commencent régulièrement par « Français, Françaises », non ?*

Catherine, gender inclusive writing and parity in the spoken language are extremely simplistic and easy to achieve. Our politicians (referring to French politicians) and their hordes of communication consultants

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<sup>50</sup> «ils ou elles » can be translated by “they masculine or they feminine”.

understood that, years ago. Don't they always start by addressing their French audiences saying, 'Français, Françaises' – masculine and feminine plural?

I ended my communication with her by summarising the different ways of de-gendering French, demonstrating how easy it can be, implying that if it is not done, it is only because of social and political reasons, not linguistic ones. Almost instantly (personal communication, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014) Catherine Mengelle reacted and her reaction was quite strong. It seemed that for the first time, she came to grips with the rule stating that the “masculine form overrides the feminine one” and measured the consequences of such a rule on herself. As stated in the literature review of this thesis, this rule is the result of a political decision made by Richelieu and implemented by Vaugelas hundreds of years ago. Linguists know that there are no grounds for this rule other than ideology. The fact is that this rule is taken for granted by the immense majority of French speakers who do not challenge it. Catherine writes:

*Je crois que c'est la première fois, si je me suis souvent amusée à jouer avec cette règle, que je comprends à quel point elle a martelé, poli, façonné les personnes que nous sommes. « Le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin ». Mais c'est quoi ce délire ? J'ai entendu ce discours répété par les enseignants et les enseignantes tous les jours entre le CP et la 3ème au minimum, 9 ans d'éponge, 4 jours par semaine à l'école, mais aussi le reste de la semaine et pendant les vacances, relayé par mes parents, mes grands-parents et les cahiers de vacances. Pendant toute mon enfance, je n'ai jamais entendu une femme, ni un homme, s'étonner de cela.*

This is the first time, I believe, even if I often played with this rule, that I understand how much it has hammered, polished, shaped the people that we are today. 'The masculine overrules the feminine', what the heck is going on here? I have heard this lecture daily, repeated by teachers, between the age of 6 and 16, 4 days a week at school but also during week-ends and school holidays thanks to my parents, my grand-parents and holiday homework books. Not once, during all my childhood, have I heard anyone, a woman or a man, questioning this. (Personal communication, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

Catherine realises here how the whole French school system, hand in hand with the ruling of the académiciens, has shaped her life.

Finally, a fifth technique was employed to avoid the masculine generic « ils » allegedly naming men and women but in the masculine-plural form only. I chose to use another pronoun: « on ». « On » is often seen as belonging to oral communications only; nevertheless, it can be written. It has the advantage of not specifying the gender of the noun, working in a way that is similar to the English “they”. This technique can be illustrated rapidly by looking at Sample 12 (Appendix 1).

### **Sample 12**

#### Source text:

By the time **they** get a cure

#### Negotiated translation:

D'ici à ce qu'**ils** aient un médicament qui guérisse.

#### Cultural translation:

D'ici à ce qu'**on** ait trouvé un médicament qui guérisse.

On this occasion again, I have the support of Prof. Khaznadar, prominent member of the member's check process. She writes (personal communication, Dec 4th, 2012):

« Le pronom 'on' accepte le masculin comme le féminin. »

“The pronoun 'on' accepts both the feminine and the masculine form”.

As I was going through the different techniques to try to de-gender my native tongue as much as possible, and as I was starting to work on the cultural translations of this project, it became rapidly clear that contrary to my expectations, de-gendering was extremely simple and uncomplicated to put into place. It was so easy to perform, that it rapidly won the enthusiasm of colleagues, who are francophone narrative practitioners. As always, the most enthusiastic of all was Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun, he emailed me the day following his reading of this thesis' first draft. He read it as he was flying from Paris to Abidjan, Ivory Coast:

*Ton mémoire m'a tenu éveillé pendant tout le voyage. Tu me suggérais de lire une enquête policière, mais en voici une, sur la langue que je parle et que je croyais mienne [...] Pas très glorieux pour un Praticien Narratif de ne jamais y avoir réfléchi avant... Je trouve ta démarche absolument fascinante et le résultat brillant.*

Your thesis kept me awake during the whole trip. You were suggesting that I read a thriller, but here is one (this thesis) in the language that I speak and that I thought I knew. Not so great for a narrative practitioner not to have thought about it before... I find your approach absolutely fascinating and its results brilliant (Personal communication, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Then, soon after my article (Appendix 2) was published, and following Pierre Blanc Sahnoun's steps, French speaking practitioners from all areas told me they were keen to use it as well; however, I shall discuss this point further, in the conclusion of the thesis.

The second part of the first research question remains to be answered: Are these techniques compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy?

The five identified techniques will be examined below to check whether they are compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. First, as was stated in the introduction of the thesis, any text could have been used to attempt a translation from English into de-gendered French. Nevertheless, I chose to use transcripts of narrative conversations because I am a narrative therapist who counsels in both languages (English and French). I have a personal interest not only in those two languages but also in narrative therapy conversations. However, the latter is not the only reason driving my choice of texts to translate. Narrative practices fit particularly well with the intention of this project because:

- Both de-gendered French and Narrative therapy can be viewed as anti-languages, as demonstrated in the literature review of this research (Chapter 2 c).
- Narrative practices enable a creative, non-conformist exploration of the French language, for instance in the form of a reflective journal in which the French language was externalised.
- Narrative practices highlight the use of the imagination, a faculty necessary to enter a de-gendered world and as Polanco puts it: "defend the idea of plurality

in any text and constantly inveigh against any single interpretation” (White & Epston, 1990, as cited in Polanco, 2011, p. 46).

Therefore, narrative ideas are deeply interwoven into this study, and using narrative therapeutic conversations to experiment with the idea of de-gendering is appropriate and helpful. Furthermore, narrative ideas help to push the boundaries of a 'genderless' world from a literary field into a therapeutic one where the protagonists are made of flesh and blood. Thus, this study is breaking new ground and its impact on social practitioners in the francophone world is already happening as we will see more clearly in the conclusion.

The first technique, which uses hyphens, dots and parentheses, is not used in his study, but it is important to signal that it is compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. In the letters crafted by narrative therapists, it is not unusual, and is even encouraged, to use different fonts, colours, etc. to highlight points or meanings. Using hyphens in an effort to include one gender, which was previously excluded by the other, belongs to the panoply of effects used by narrative therapists. The metaphor which looks at letters as representations of both genders 'holding hands,' thanks to hyphens, and 'walking towards the future' together is compatible with narrative practices. The power of metaphors is well established in the world of Narrative Therapists. Therefore, this technique is compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy.

The second technique, which consists in adding the feminine form each time it is missing, for example, « voisins et voisines », « son père et sa mère », « dieteticiens et dieteticiennes », « ils et elles », etc.; using the word « et » or “and”, falls under the idea of social justice.

The idea of social justice is a corner stone of narrative practices: Freedman and Combs write: “We do not want to reproduce, in therapy, the oppression many people have experienced at the hands of the dominant culture” (1996, p. 18). I see the re-integration of the feminine form into the French language each time it has been suppressed: as an act of resistance; as an attempt to repair an injustice done to the feminine gender in the language; and as an informed decision to not reproduce the linguistic invisibility women experience in French speaking communities and countries. I want to see such re-integration in therapeutic encounters as well.

Catherine Mengelle, part of the member's check process agrees; she has realised how painful it was to remain invisible in the language she speaks, a language she loves,

but a language which discriminates against her because she was born a girl. She understands that changes need to take place (we will see how she implements some changes in her work as a group facilitator, in examples yet to come in this Chapter). She writes (personal communication, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014):

« Nous essayons ici grâce à Laure de rendre visible un invisible extrêmement blessant. »  
"Here, we are trying, thanks to Laure, to render visible an extremely painful invisible".

This second technique, embodying social justice, is compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy.

The third technique encourages the creation of new words like "docteure". Imagination and creativity can be seen as another cornerstone of Narrative Practices. Narrative conversations are extremely creative: David Epston does not hesitate, in his work, to create new words, for example, "wonderfulnesses", "unsuffering" amongst many others in an attempt to be, through the use of language, as close as possible to the experience of the other. Clients are openly encouraged to give a noun, sometimes imaginary ones, to externalised problems. Christine Delphi emphasizes "the importance of the imagination for the program of conceiving and realizing a genderless world" (Delphi, 1993, as cited in Schabert, 2012, p. 73). In order to move towards a genderless world, she advocates for a genderless literature. This thesis is not concerned with literature per se but promotes the use of imagination, the way literary texts do. The third technique, therefore, is compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy.

The fourth technique involves leaving the masculine in place, but systematically adding information around it which will create new narratives. The intention here is to include men and women in the text, potentially resulting in a more gender-balanced mental representation. This technique is seen as a way to 'thicken' the story through the use of a richer description. Thickening narratives, particularly the ones which have not been told, identified as 'thin', is a necessary step in narrative practices. What could be seen as thinner than a gender which is so thin that it has become invisible? We have seen earlier in this chapter that this technique can be observed in Sample 8, in which Rick, the therapist, offers help to Margaret who suffers from anorexia. Rick says:

Source text:

Rick: If **they** wanted to, would you be open to it? Could we ask them?

### Negotiated translation:

Rick : Et si *ils* voulaient, cela t'intéresserait ? Est-ce qu'on pourrait poser la question ?

The ST « they » is translated by « ils » as seen many times before. The cultural translation changes “they” to “« quelqu'un » or “someone” still in the masculine form, but opens possibilities when adding « un homme ou une femme ».

### Cultural translation:

Rick : Et si *quelqu'un, un homme ou une femme* voulait, cela t'intéresserait ? Est-ce qu'on pourrait poser la question ?

The cultural translation is much longer than the negotiated one; it contains more words; it tells a richer story leading to more possibilities. This fourth technique is absolutely in phase with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy.

The fifth technique is based on the systematic suppression of the masculine generic « ils ». Pretending that « ils » includes « elles » is misleading. « Ils » is masculine-plural only. The idea in this fifth technique is to denounce a coup on the French language, carried out by Vaugelas and Richelieu centuries ago and left in place until today and zealously transmitted from one generation to another through the school system and other institutions. One man's thought in seventeenth century France, stating that men were noble and that women were not, led to a colossal power imbalance between the two genders. Power imbalances must be addressed, according to discursive narrative practices.

## **ii. Answer to the second research question**

By comparing the second and the third translations and critically analysing the findings, an answer to the first part of the second research question emerges: Does the comparative study of negotiated translations and cultural translations of English texts into French uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language? The answer to this question leads to the second part of the same research question: Does de-gendering undo any inequalities thus discovered? An attempt to answer this last part of the second research question will be made at the end of this chapter.

It became rapidly obvious in the negotiated translations and even more so in their comparison with the cultural translations that inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language were everywhere. These inequalities fell into three main themes: living in a masculine semantic field, semantically ignoring and or dismissing the feminine, and the masculine semantic field as the oppressor of both genders.

Living in a masculine semantic field means that women are purposely ignored. Interestingly enough, once my article was published, and the inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language put into the open, it had an immediate impact on some members from the members' check process. Some of them very spontaneously started playing with the idea of de-gendering. As stated earlier, Catherine Mengelle is one of those practitioners who felt the urge to experiment with it. She explains (personal communication, April 17th 2014):

*Je viens de co-animer une séance avec un groupe de femmes de ForceFemmes, et mon co-animateur était un homme. N'ayant pas d'autre solution que de choisir entre masculin ou féminin, nous avons ensemble (donc aussi avec lui) décidé que dans ce groupe, et pour jouer avec humour le jeu de cette association, « le féminin l'emporterait »... Ce choix portait sur le nombre de celles et ceux en présence : il n'y avait aucune raison que le masculin l'emporte.*

I just facilitated a session with a group of women from the NGO "Women and Strength"; my co facilitator was a man. Having to choose between the masculine and the feminine form, we all decided (the man included) that in this group, we would play with the idea of de-gendering and would apply the rule "the feminine always overrules the masculine". This decision was made based on the number of men and women who attended the workshop; there wasn't any reason for the masculine to overrule the feminine.

For the members who participated in the members' check process, as for me, the realization that the language we speak is shaping our reality in such biased ways is, to some extent, heart breaking and the need to correct this problem appears almost immediately. This is what Catherine Mengelle did: she shares the result of her experiment with the NGO group and discloses her feelings:

*J'ai trouvé difficile de jouer au « féminin l'emporte », même si c'était rigolo de le faire et utile au processus au moment où nous l'avons fait (quel bonheur de voir les têtes se relever et des sourires malicieux renaître sur les visages), parce que je crois que j'ai trop de respect pour les autres pour utiliser un langage éliminant l'un d'entre nous, même s'il était d'accord. J'avais sans cesse envie de m'excuser auprès de lui. Evidemment, cette élimination d'une partie du monde, invisible d'habitude, a été rendue visible ici par le renversement de la situation, d'où l'envie de s'excuser. On n'y prête hélas pas attention d'habitude et personne ne s'en excuse jamais, mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'elle n'existe pas.*

I found it difficult to play the game “the feminine overrules the masculine form”, even if it was fun to play and quite useful as we were doing it (what a delight to see heads lifting up and mischievous smiles illuminating faces). In saying so and because I think I have too much respect for others to be willing to use a language which eliminates one gender, even if the man within the group had agreed to it, I was constantly wanting to apologise to him. Of course, this elimination of one part of the world, usually invisible, was made visible here thanks to the reversal of the situation, hence the urge to apologise. Of course, we never pay attention to that, and no one ever apologises for it but it does not mean that it does not exist (personal communication, April 14th, 2014).

This game or experiment played out by Catherine Mengelle's group shows very clearly the power imbalance which the language institutionalises. When the grammatical rule is changed to “the feminine overrules the masculine”, on the one hand, women feel empowered: “they smile mischievously and their heads lift up”, that is, their bodies talk. At the same time, they are uncomfortable; the rule does not sit well with them and the urge to apologise arises. Catherine Mengelle stresses the fact that men do not apologise for being favoured by the French language.

In the second theme, we saw that the systematic masculinisation of many professions, especially the more 'noble' ones, seen as masculine only, was a way to discriminate against women, and worse, to dismiss the feminine gender. Again, this use of the French language, which creates a disdain towards one of the genders, constitutes an inequality.

Professor Khaznadar constantly denounces this state of being; in the following example, she writes about the media (personal communication, March 2013):

*Les « étudiants » qui font grève (oui, c'est ce que j'ai lu sans discontinuer l'an dernier y compris dans les journaux du Québec, où semble-t-il il n'y a plus d'étudiantes), les infirmiers français devenus hégémoniques dans les hôpitaux hexagonaux, et ne parlons pas des citoyens, européens ou autres.*

The “male” students on strike (this is what I kept reading last year, including in the Canadian press, it seems that there are no more female students in Quebec), the French male nurses who, it seems, have become hegemonic in French hospitals, not to mention male citizens either French or not.

It is interesting to notice, here, that while the feminisation of nouns of professions is difficult<sup>51</sup>, the masculinisation of professions is easy, enters dictionaries rapidly<sup>52</sup> and is widely used by the media as Khaznadar demonstrates in the above quote, showing, once more, how biased the French language can be.

In the third theme, the feminine form kept being ignored, dismissed, while the masculine form was being over represented creating an imbalance already seen in the previous themes, but when analysed in more depth, it appeared that the over representation of the masculine form in the negotiated translations was not systematically a positive thing for masculinity. The gender imbalance conveyed by the French language creates inequalities which are systematically negative for the feminine gender because it renders it invisible in all circumstances but oscillates between the positive and the negative for the masculine gender. Therefore, the way it is explored in the negotiated translations shows that it is inadequate to both genders. It does not have to be that way; it can be quite different, as Khaznadar puts it (personal communication, March 2013):

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<sup>51</sup> We have seen that « docteure », the feminine form of « docteur », is still not in dictionaries.

<sup>52</sup> In the media, the word “infirmier” or “male nurse”, the masculine form of “infirmière”, is widely used, following the “masculine overrules the feminine form”. We know that the profession is still massively a feminine one.

*« Alors que ces pays possèdent une langue qui justement permet cette reconnaissance pleine et entière de l'identité féminine, à tous les niveaux de l'activité sociale et économique, avec ses noms de fonctions alternants masculin/féminin. »*

“These countries (French speaking countries) do have an idiom which allows the full recognition of feminine identity, to all levels of social and economic activity; it has nouns which alternate between the feminine and the masculine.”

As we have seen, the cultural translations focused on using the feminine and the masculine every time it was feasible. The idea behind this focus was to create a balance, to repair what appeared clearly in the negotiated translations to be inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language. Because this approach is new, the outcome of the practice was not foreseen. As the practice gained momentum, it appeared distinctly that de-gendered French was acting as an antidote to the problems raised by the negotiated translations: de-gendering was undoing the inequalities discovered.

As soon as the feminine form was re-instated where it belonged, the three themes enounced above collapsed. The semantic field was no longer an overwhelmingly masculine field, but a masculine and feminine semantic field. Equilibrium had been found: both genders had nouns and adjectives to describe their experiences or professions, and both genders were seen as capable of practising similar tasks. Examples from the third theme saw the masculine form not being overloaded with negativity; the balance of both genders in the semantic field saw a sharing of good and bad narratives.

Therefore, inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language were uncovered but an antidote was also discovered. Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun commented:

*Mais tu es en train de créer un antivirus, accroche toi ! C'est bien ce que tu fais, tu as trouvé un terrain essentiel de décontamination de cette langue et ton travail de dé-genderisation va déboucher sur des réflexions connexes abordant d'autres formes de contamination.*

Hang in there; you are creating an anti-virus! What you are doing is great, you have found an essential terrain of decontamination of the language and your work of de-gendering will bring about related reflections dealing with other forms of contamination (personal communication, March 28th 2014).

The cultural translations acted as 'decontaminators' of heavily 'problem saturated' language whatever the de-gendering technique used. Furthermore, the result is both instantaneous and almost unnoticeable. I experienced it at first hand: as I started to adopt de-gendered French in my everyday life, it seemed that no-one noticed it, or if they were, it was so subtle that it was not worth mentioning. The members from the members' check process have had similar experiences. Prof Khaznadar writes (personal communication, March 2013):

*« Je constate comme vous que lorsque j'emploie le langage paritaire, avec dédoublements systématiques, personne n'a l'air de se surprendre. »*

"Just like you, I have noticed that when I use a gender inclusive way of speaking, where I systematically double everything, no one seems surprised."

Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun confirms this point as well:

*Aucune réaction so far à mon écriture épiciène. Les lecteurs-trices doivent penser que c'est une de mes nouvelles lubies et que ça va passer... Ou alors ils ne remarquent pas... peu importe, j'ai de plus en plus de mal à lire et écrire du français phallomorphe que je trouve violent et injuste.*

So far, no reaction to my gender inclusive writing. The readers, males and females must think that it is one of my latest fads and like others it shall pass... Or it could be that they do not notice it at all... It does not matter, I find it more and more difficult to read and write a phallomorphic French which I find violent and unfair (personal communication, March 2014).

The anti-language which de-gendered French constitutes had an immediate impact on Pierre Blanc-Sanhoun, Catherine Mengelle and others. They adopted this new way of communicating with ease, determination and enthusiasm. Not satisfied only with introducing it in France, Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun took it immediately to Africa (more precisely, to the Ivory Coast) (personal Communication, March 2014):

*Voici un texte dé-genderisé destiné à créer une conscience politique chez les décideurs de Cote d'Ivoire. C'est pour l'instant un premier jet qui doit être retravaillé. Il a été écrit à partir de l'interview narrative d'une mère de famille Ivoirienne. (...) je voulais te montrer l'effet que donne sa dé-*

*genderisation. Je trouve que ça l'enrichir énormément sans gêner la lecture.*

Here is a de-gendered narrative therapy text destined to create a political conscience amongst the people who hold power in the Ivory Coast. It is a first draft which needs to be refined. It has been constructed around an interview of an Ivory Coast mother. (...) I wanted to show the effect its de-gendering was having. I think it makes it a lot richer without obstructing its reading.

We, the people named in the previous paragraphs, who are using and experimenting with de-gendered French and the antidote it constitutes are hoping that it might create a “political conscience” as Pierre Blanc Sahnoun puts it -- this political conscience, in turn, creating a sustainable societal change.

As for the second part of our research question: does this practice undo the inequalities brought into the open by the negotiated translations? I have argued that de-gendered French is an anti-language that acts as an antidote to a much gendered idiom; furthermore, this “anti-virus” can apparently work instantly<sup>53</sup>. I have also argued that the re-gendering of the French language results in a more gender inclusive worldview. Therefore, the answer to the research question stated above is “yes”, de-gendering, as a practice, undoes the inequalities that are revealed through the translation work in this study. The injustices uncovered are being denounced in the language by the language (specifically, through its cultural translations). Members form the members’ check process and I see the de-gendering practice as a possibly efficient way to create long lasting change because, as post-modern social practitioners, we believe that language matters, that it can be an active agent of change.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide an answer to the two research questions enounced at the beginning of this research project. Firstly, I have been able to identify and detail five techniques used to de-gender a text written in French. Secondly, we have seen

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<sup>53</sup> It is important to note here that De-gendered French apparently working instantly resides outside the scope of this study.

that these techniques are compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy. The first research question is thus answered (this question being: “Through what techniques can a text written in French be de-gendered, and are these techniques compatible with the discursive practices of Narrative Therapy?”) The second research question came in two parts: “Does the comparative study of negotiated translations and cultural translations of English texts into French uncover inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the French language? Does de-gendering undo any inequalities thus discovered?” We began by noticing that inequalities intrinsically conveyed by the language appeared as soon as the negotiated translation work started; the comparative study of negotiated and cultural translations only confirmed and stressed these inequalities. As the practice of de-gendering gained momentum (in the cultural translations), it appeared that it constituted an antidote to the heavily gendered language. The first part of the second researched question is thus answered. We then looked at the second part of this research question and found that de-gendering does undo the inequalities discovered.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, I would like to return to Derrida's words, the same words I used in the introduction of this work. Those words are so powerful they were also part of the article I wrote in French for *Errances Narratives*, the Internet publication of La Fabrique Narrative, the training centre for Narrative practices in Bordeaux, France (Appendix 2). This article summarises my journey as I was undertaking this thesis. Below is a translation of parts of this article, starting with Derrida's quote. Following this article will be remarks from and reports on the actions of readers and practitioners. From now on, de-gendered French is in the hands of those who are willing to try it in their practice.

Picture this; imagine someone who would cultivate the French language.

What is called the French language.

Someone whom the French would cultivate.

And who, as a French citizen, would be, moreover, a subject of French culture, as we say.

Now suppose, for example, that one day this subject of French culture were to tell you in good French:

"I only have one language; it is not mine". (Derrida, 1996, p. 2)

This is how it all started...

I speak several languages but which one is mine? I was born in France, I am French but I am also a New Zealander. My French is stronger than the other languages I have chosen to learn, but does that make French *my* language? And if this language which I speak is not mine, whose is it? Do I want to speak it? Do I want to teach it? Do I want to counsel in it?

Absolutely not.

I chose the languages I studied but I did not choose my mother tongue. French has been hammered into me, and not kindly. The grammar rule stating that "the masculine systematically overrules the feminine" has

always annoyed me, no matter how many times it was pushed down my throat. I always felt this grammar rule was insulting, unfair, and ridiculous.

I know it now, this language is not mine. French belongs to a dominant group I am not part of because I was born a girl. My friends will always be talked about in the masculine-plural form, no matter how many of my friends are females. My friends who happen to be women are invisible to my native tongue, only my male friends can be named. Why? How does someone we cannot name exist? How does someone who cannot be named feel? Invisible? Oppressed? (...)

“Imagine someone who would cultivate the French language.” Derrida's words echo in my mind... I can cultivate my native tongue. I shall cultivate the French I want to speak and write, the language I want to teach, the language I want to take along to my counselling room. I shall start by getting rid of a few grammar rules, those which are insulting to my gender. Edwige, beautiful soul and highly qualified linguist, has shown me the way; it is not difficult. (...) My new linguistic companion is de-gendered; it is prone to equality, solidarity. It pulls the feminine gender out of invisibility and pushes it into the light where it can be fully seen and enjoyed. My new linguistic partner is respectful of all, men and women. It resists unfairness. It defends social justice. It re-invents itself when necessary. It is creative. It is aware of its place, its surroundings. It is aware of the role it plays among its speakers. It carries great hopes for the future as it honours all human beings. At times it will make mistakes, it is vulnerable but it keeps moving forward in fearlessness. (...) Now, I can say that this language, or should I say anti-language, is mine.

This last sentence marks the end of my article and summarises my journey as I was working on this project. I am not the only one walking on this path any more: shortly after it was published, de-gendered French as an anti-language took a new turn; its impact was becoming more obvious. Camille Bierens de Haan<sup>54</sup>, an Art Therapist from Switzerland,

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<sup>54</sup> My communication was published on April 1st 2014 and Camille Bierens de Hann's on April 6th. The Conference on Narrative Practices and the French language took place in Geneva on April 4th & 5th 2014.

published an article entitled: « Clown.e, narratif.ve et militant.e ». I do not know De Haan but it seems that de-gendered French had enough of an impact on her for her to start using it almost immediately. Elizabeth Feld, a Narrative Practitioner, uses de-gendered French in a comment she wrote following my communication, on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Catherine Mengelle, mentioned many times in this study, pushed the experience further by taking de-gendered French to a workshop she facilitated around 10<sup>th</sup> April. Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun, as stated in Chapters 4 and 5, adopted this anti-language instantly. Thanks to him, it crossed the Mediterranean Sea and reached Africa (the Ivory Coast). Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun also launched the French Wiki Pratiques Narratives website and openly stated that the articles to be published there were going to be gender inclusive, “respectful of the feminine gender”. Today, this website has fifty five members and the numbers are growing. Still under the influence of de-gendered French, Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun, also a writer, has changed the title of his next book from: *Comment rétrécir un dragon sans se bruler les moustaches* to *Comment rétrécir un dragon sans se bruler les sourcils* or “How to shrink a dragon without burning one's eyebrows”, “eyebrows” replacing « moustaches » to be more gender inclusive. The readers of Pierre Blanc-Sahnoun's next book as well as the members of the Wiki Pratiques Narratives most probably will keep de-gendered French going and possibly spreading.

The fact that so many people, complete strangers to me, in addition to the members who participated in the members' check process, were willing to adopt de-gendered French is a sign that the research questions raised by this project echoed with many men and women who are now willing to challenge the way they write and speak French. The impact de-gendered French has already had on social practitioners validates the findings of this study. This in itself is a success only made possible thanks to a collaborative approach between people who do not know each other: scholars coming from the fields of linguistics or literature such as Edwige Khaznadar and Elizabeth Burr, as well as journalists such as Nicole Pradalier and the Francophone Narrative Practitioners.

MAK Halliday spoke of an anti-language used by an anti-society: “a society which is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it [...] It is a mode of resistance” (Halliday, 1976, p. 570). Could it be that a community of francophone social practitioners, narrative therapists and linguists, have united forces in order to construct an anti-society using an anti-language: de-gendered French? What is the future of this anti-society? Will it push the dominant group to evolve? Will it start bringing the changes wished for in this thesis?

The Romanian philosopher Emil Michel Cioran writes: “We do not live in a country, we inhabit a language” or « On n'habite pas un pays, on habite une langue » (1987, p. 21). This is to some extent what this research project has uncovered as well, in relation to my own identity: I, as a French woman, could choose to not speak my mother tongue, but that would not make it disappear -- it will always inhabit me and reciprocally I will always inhabit it, but I can choose to shape it or “cultivate” it the way I want, to match my values and belief system more closely. I shall no longer let my idiom colonise my thoughts and I am not alone in that quest: echoing Cioran’s words, the partisans of de-gendered French, wherever they live -- France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland or the Ivory Coast -- have this in common which makes us very similar despite our different nationalities. Cioran’s idea about humans inhabiting a language in addition to MAK Halliday’s theory on anti-languages lead me to think that de-gendered French potentially has good days ahead of it.

However, although, this thesis found de-gendered French to be an antidote to a highly gendered language, subtle and easy to implement, in order to be implemented on a large scale, policies will have to be put in place, particularly in the Education Nationale. Scholars such as Khaznadar have been fighting for such policy changes for many years. The lack of political support could be a major limitation to the expansion of this anti-language.

This study was mainly concerned with the way French, through some of its grammar rules, has been participating in the gendered organisation and the control of French speaking societies, because as a post-modern informed narrative therapist, I, like many others, believe that language creates reality. The answer to the second research question of this study strengthens that belief: it demonstrated that languages are powerful tools which can shape a biased reality leading to social injustices. It would now be interesting to pose similar research questions in relation to other gendered languages. What would the answers be? What would de-gendered Spanish or Portuguese sound like?

Moving from one language to the other in order to deconstruct it would be impossible without translations. The practice of translating as a means to explore an idiom was a precious ally in this project. According to Spivak, “Translation is the most intimate act of reading; I surrender to the text when I translate.” (1992, p. 178). The movement from negotiated translations to cultural ones or from one paradigm to the other was particularly fruitful in this research. Diving into the heart of narrative therapeutic conversations is a

privilege made possible, for me – because English is not my first language – through the practice of translations. After entering the heart of narrative therapy and having absorbed its nutrients, its essence; entering translations “as a cultural process rather than a textual product” (Pym, 2009, p. 148) is a logical step for a post-modern researcher. From there, possibilities are numerous: de-gendering, decolonising and more. We must note that this post-modern view on translations is recent. The novelty comes from the fact that cultural translations allow translators to be positioned in the centre of their work. From this new position, the post-modern translator can start reclaiming.

Reclaiming visibility is an important move in this research project. The invisibility of translators - usually women - encouraged until recently in the translation studies field, resonated well with the invisibility of the feminine gender in the French language. The cultural paradigm liberated both the translator (myself) and the unseen feminine gender of the conversations translated. The nature of cultural translations favours a powerful transformation. The translator moves from being invisible to becoming a sort of activist, reclaiming social justice in areas close to his or her heart.

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# APPENDIX 1

## LIST OF SAMPLES

### Sample 1

Sébastien et David Epston (transcription)

#### Source text:

If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of him, what would anger look like? How would it look ?

#### Negotiated translation:

Si la colère était une personne et que tu devais la dessiner, à quoi est-ce qu'elle ressemblerait ? Comment elle serait ?

#### Cultural translation:

Si la colère était quelqu'un et que tu devais le ou la dessiner, à quoi est-ce qu'il ou elle ressemblerait ? Comment il ou elle serait ?

## Sample 2

« J'en ai marre des sales tours que me joue ce Problème »

David Epston (Article non publié)

### Source text:

Your talents, abilities and what your friends think is cool about you. Jenny, I wouldn't be surprised if you wanted to know why.

### Negotiated translation:

Tes talents, tes dons, ce que tu sais faire, ce qui te rend « cool » aux yeux de tes copains. Jenny, ça ne me surprendrait pas que vous vouliez savoir pourquoi je veux savoir tout ça.

### Cultural translation:

Tes talents, tes dons, ce que tu sais faire, ce qui te rend 'cool' aux yeux de tes copains et tes copines. Jenny, ça ne me surprendrait pas que vous vouliez savoir pourquoi je veux savoir tout ça.

## Sample 3

### Same transcription

### Source text:

She told me that Serena could be 'lovely, friendly and kind to little children' and I was provided with examples and stories of her practices of loveliness, kindness and friendliness towards the next door neighbour's children and her cousins.

### Negotiated translation:

Elle me raconta que Serena pouvait être « mignonne, agréable et gentille avec les petits enfants. » et me donna des exemples, me raconta des histoires où Serena était particulièrement gentille et agréable envers ses petits voisins et ses petits cousins.

### Cultural translation:

Elle me raconta que Serena pouvait être « mignonne, agréable et gentille avec les petits enfants » et me donna des exemples, me raconta des histoires où Serena était particulièrement gentille et agréable avec ses petits voisins, ses petites voisines et ses petits cousins et cousines.

## Sample 4

Same transcription

### Source text:

Jenny, most Problems have a pretty narrow version of a young person because they only know the kid in trouble and not out of trouble and probably aren't that interested in knowing about their daring, bravery and fearlessness.

### Negotiated translation:

Jenny, la plupart des Problèmes ont une vue assez raccourcie des jeunes gens parce qu'ils ne les connaissent que quand ils font des bêtises et pas quand ils n'en font pas, d'ailleurs ils ne cherchent pas vraiment à savoir à quel point ce mêmes jeunes peuvent être audacieux, courageux et téméraires.

### Cultural translation:

Jenny, la plupart des Problèmes ont une vue assez raccourcie des jeunes gens parce qu'ils ne les connaissent que quand ils et elles font des bêtises et pas quand ils et elles n'en font pas, d'ailleurs ils ne cherchent pas vraiment à savoir à quel point ces mêmes jeunes peuvent être audacieux, audacieuses, courageux , courageuses et téméraires.

## Sample 5

“Biting the hand that starves you: Inspiring resistance to anorexia/bulimia”.

By Richard Maisel, David Epston and Ali Borden, Chapitre 7: “Manners of speaking”

### Source text:

Psychiatrists, physicians, therapists, and dieticians are all likely to ask questions based on the notion that the person has a/b or a disorder. Consequently, the person usually comes to view herself as an « anorexic » or a « bulimic » for the doctor or the other professional, because a/b fosters in many the desire to please others and live up to their expectations, as well as desire to be the best.

### Negotiated translation:

Les psychiatres, les médecins, les thérapeutes et les diététiciens ont de fortes chances de poser des questions basées sur le fait que la personne en question est l'a/b ou encore qu'elle a un trouble mental. Par conséquent, la personne finit par se considérer comme « anorexique » ou « boulimique » pour satisfaire le médecin ou les autres professionnels de la santé, car l'a /b encourage chez beaucoup d'entre elles l'envie de plaire aux autres et d'être à la hauteur de leurs attentes, de même qu'un désir d'être le ou la meilleure.

### Cultural translation:

Les psychiatres, les médecins/les docteurs, les thérapeutes, les diététiciens et les diététiciennes ont de fortes chances de poser des questions basées sur le fait que l'être humain en question est l'a/b ou encore qu'il ou elle a un trouble mental. Par conséquent, la personne/l'être humain finit par se considérer comme « anorexique » ou « boulimique » pour satisfaire les soignants et les soignantes, car l'a /b encourage chez beaucoup d'entre eux et elles l'envie de plaire aux autres et d'être à la hauteur de leurs attentes, de même qu'un désir d'être le ou la meilleure.

## Sample 6

“Biting the hand that starves you: Inspiring resistance to anorexia/bulimia”.

By Richard Maisel, David Epston and Ali Borden, Chapitre 10: “I wanna be good”

A conversation with Margaret (p 117)

### Source text:

Rick: Didn't the doctors and nurses tell you it was because of not eating and weren't you told that in order to save your life you had to eat?

### Negotiated translation:

Rick : Les docteurs et les infirmières ne t'ont-ils pas dit que c'était parce que tu ne mangeais pas et que pour sauver ta vie, il fallait manger ?

### Cultural translation:

Rick : Les soignants et les soignantes ne t'ont pas dit que c'était parce que tu ne mangeais pas et que pour sauver ta vie, il fallait manger ?

## Sample 7

Same conversation

### Source text:

Rick: water. Does it say that really good people can just live on water? Have you ever met a person who can just live on water?

### Negotiated translation:

Rick : D'eau. Est-ce qu'elle te dit que les gens vraiment bons peuvent vivre d'eau ? Est-ce que tu as déjà rencontré une personne qui ne vivait que d'eau ?

### Cultural translation:

Rick : D'eau. Est-ce qu'elle te dit que les êtres/humains/gens vraiment bons peuvent vivre d'eau ? Est-ce que tu as déjà rencontré une personne qui ne vivait que d'eau ?

## Sample 8

Same conversation

### Source text:

Rick: If they wanted to, would you be open to it? Could we ask them?

### Negotiated translation:

Rick : Et si ils voulaient, cela t'intéresserait ? Est-ce qu'on pourrait poser la question ?

### Cultural translation:

Rick : Et si quelqu'un, un homme ou une femme voulait, cela t'intéresserait ? Est-ce qu'on pourrait poser la question ?

## Sample 9

Same conversation

### Source text:

Margaret: It feels like you are asking me if I want to jump of a bridge. I am afraid they will say no.

### Negotiated translation:

Margaret : On dirait que tu me demandes de sauter d'un pont. J'ai peur qu'ils disent non.

### Cultural translation:

Margaret : On dirait que tu me demandes de sauter d'un pont. J'ai peur que tout le monde dise non.

## Sample 10

Conversation between David Epston and Jermaine Henry,  
February 1994.

### Source text:

Do you want to just say 'hello'. Do you mind if I introduce you? Tonight I'm talking to Jermaine Henry and Jermaine, we are talking in Ann Arbor Michigan, a state in the United States, and Jermaine, can you tell the young people in Australia and NZ the extent to which Asthma has tried to pull the wool over your eyes and tried to spoil your future?

### Negotiated translation:

Tu veux dire un petit bonjour ? Ça ne te dérange pas que je te présente ? Ce soir, je parle à Jermaine Henry et Jemaine, nous sommes à Ann Arbor dans le Michigan, un état des Etas-Unis ; et Jermaine, est-ce que tu peux dire aux jeunes gens d'Australie et de Nouvelle Zélande à quel point l'asthme a essayé de « te tirer la laine devant les yeux » et comment il a voulu pourrir ton futur ?

### Cultural translation:

Tu veux dire un petit bonjour ? Ça ne te dérange pas que je te présente ? Ce soir, je parle à Jermaine Henry et Jemaine, nous sommes à Ann Arbor dans le Michigan, un état des Etas-Unis ; et Jermaine, est-ce que tu peux dire aux jeunes **garçons et filles** d'Australie et de Nouvelle Zélande à quel point l'asthme a essayé de « te tirer la laine devant les yeux » et comment il a voulu pourrir ton futur ?

## Sample 11

Same conversation

### Source text:

Yeah -- I'd just tell him..... I was sweating..... about to blank out. They didn't know what to give me and I'd say: "Please just listen to me. I know what medication..... just give me this. Then they'd finally listen to me and they'd give it to me and I'd be easing' up, getting clear. They'd be giving me benedryl and all that and I'm allergic".

### Negotiated translation:

Ouais—Je leur ai juste dit. Je transpirais beaucoup... J'allais tourner de l'œil. Ils savaient pas quoi faire, je leur disais : « écoutez-moi s'il vous plait. Je connais mes médicaments... Donnez-moi juste celui là ». Alors, ils ont fini par m'écouter et ils me l'ont donné et j'ai commencé à aller mieux. Ils m'auraient donné du benedryl et tout ça, et j'y suis allergique.

### Cultural translation:

Ouais—Je leur ai juste dit. Je transpirais beaucoup... J'allais tourner de l'œil. Personne ne savait quoi faire, je leur disais : « écoutez-moi s'il vous plait. Je connais mes médicaments... Donnez-moi juste celui là ». Alors, on a fini par m'écouter et j'ai eu ce que je voulais et j'ai commencé à aller mieux. On m'aurait donné du Benedryl et tout ça, et j'y suis allergique.

## Sample 12

Same conversation

### Source text:

By the time they get a cure

### Negotiated translation:

D'ici à ce qu'ils aient un médicament qui guérisse.

### Cultural translation:

D'ici à ce qu'on ait trouvé un médicament qui guérisse.

## Sample 13

### Joe, Cathy and Katie with David

(transcription)

#### Source text:

I don't think he appreciates the way Joe has matured. I don't think his parents appreciate him at all. And sometimes they come down on him pretty hard. And I feel like I need to defend him because he is doing a great job and everyone wants to be told they are doing a great job, especially by your parents. And sometimes they don't do that. And I might come to his defence and say - 'He's really made great progress and he's done so great! He's something to be proud of'.

#### Negotiated translation:

Je ne crois pas qu'il apprécie la façon dont Joe a muri. Je ne crois pas que ses parents l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, ils lui tombent dessus méchamment. Et j'ai l'impression que je dois le défendre, parce qu'il fait vraiment du bon travail et tout le monde aime qu'on leur dise qu'ils font du bon travail en particulier quand ça vient de vos parents. Et ils ne font pas ça. Alors, je monte au créneau et dit « il a tellement progressé, il se débrouille tellement bien ! Il y a vraiment de quoi être fier de lui ».

#### Cultural translation:

Je ne crois pas qu'il apprécie la façon dont Joe a muri. Je ne crois pas que ses parents l'apprécient du tout. Parfois, **son père et sa mère** lui tombent dessus méchamment. Et j'ai l'impression que je dois le défendre, parce qu'il fait vraiment du bon travail et on aime tous qu'**on** nous dise que nous faisons du bon travail en particulier quand ça vient de nos parents. Et ses parents ne font pas ça. Alors, je monte au créneaux et je leur dit « il a tellement progressé, il se débrouille tellement bien ! Il y a vraiment de quoi être fier de lui ».

## APPENDIX 2

### COMMENT LE LANGAGE NOUS COLONISE

(2014/04/01 - Laure Romanetti)

Laure Romanetti est une praticienne narrative d'origine française vivant en Nouvelle Zélande. Elle est, avec Marcela Polanco (Colombie), l'une des personnes qui déconstruisent le langage dans le but d'y traquer comment il reflète d'antiques décisions de pouvoir et privilège qui à notre insu, ici et maintenant, gauchissent nos questions et notre construction du monde.

Imagine-le, figure-toi quelqu'un qui cultiverait le français.

Ce qui s'appelle le français.

Et que le français cultiverait.

Et qui, citoyen français de surcroît, serait donc un sujet, comme on dit, de culture française.

Or un jour ce sujet de culture française viendrait te dire en bon français :

« Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne. »

« **Oui, je n'ai qu'une langue, or ce n'est pas la mienne.** »

Et voilà comment, pour moi, tout a commencé.

Je parle plusieurs langues, mais, laquelle est la mienne ? Je suis née en France, je suis Française, mais je suis Néo-Zélandaise aussi. Je parle le français mieux que les autres langues que j'ai choisies mais cela fait-il du français ma langue ? Et puis, si cette langue que je parle n'est pas la mienne ? A qui est-elle ? Est-ce que je veux toujours la parler ? Est-ce que je veux l'enseigner à mes garçons ? Est-ce que je veux la transmettre comme elle m'a été transmise ? Est-ce que je veux l'utiliser dans ma pratique thérapeutique, ici, au pays du long nuage blanc ?

Non, certainement pas.

J'ai choisi les langues que j'ai étudiées, mais je n'ai pas choisi le français. Le français m'a été implanté à coup d'humiliations, de « 5 fautes = 0 »; le français m'a cultivée. Mal. Et puis, « le masculin l'emporte toujours sur le féminin » m'a toujours exaspérée, révoltée, peu importe le nombre de matins, après la récré, ou j'ai dû répéter cette règle de grammaire insultante. C'est comme cette histoire d'Eve qui sortirait du corps d'Adam... je n'aime pas cette histoire. Les hommes et les femmes sortent du corps des femmes, aucune femme et aucun homme n'est jamais sorti du corps d'un homme.

J'en suis sûre maintenant, cette langue n'est pas la mienne.

Cette langue appartient à un groupe dominant dont je ne fais pas partie, dont je suis exclue parce que je suis née fille. 'Mes amis' apparaîtront toujours sous cette forme masculin-pluriel, peu importe si la majorité de mes amis sont des femmes... Mes amies femmes sont invisibles pour ma langue maternelle, seuls mes amis hommes ont le droit d'être nommés.

Pourquoi ?

Et puis, quelqu'un qu'on ne nomme pas existe-t-il ?

Ou plutôt, que ressens quelqu'une qui n'est jamais nommée ? Invisibilité ? Oppression ?

Mais, comment en est-on arrivé-e-s là ?

Ce groupe dominant aurait-il kidnappé la langue française ? Syndrome de Stockholm ? Cette langue acquise aux causes de ses ravisseurs aurait-elle ensuite servi leurs intérêts ? Une espionne, en quelque sorte, une graine insérée dans le cerveau de chacun et chacune d'entre nous? Cette graine aurait germé, puis grandi, ses ramifications nous contrôleraient, à notre insu ?

Mais alors, que faire de cette langue encombrante? De cette plante espionne ?

Il serait si facile de l'oublier, je n'ai pas à la parler ou si peu. Je pourrais ne plus l'arroser, la laisser sécher, elle ne tarderait pas à se recroqueviller, puis mourir. Je pourrais ne pas l'enseigner à mes fils. Pourquoi enseignerais-je à mes garçons l'invisibilité linguistique des femmes, alors que je suis leur mère, une femme ? Il faudrait être idiot... et cruelle ; je n'assoifferai jamais une plante vivante.

... « Imagine-le, figure-toi quelqu'un qui cultiverait le français ».

Oui, j'imagine... encore mieux, je vais cultiver le français que je parle, que j'écris et qui parfois m'accompagne dans mes conversations thérapeutiques. Pour commencer, je vais le débarrasser de quelques mauvaises herbes, des règles de grammaires insultantes pour le genre auquel j'appartiens ; Edwige, une femme sublime, des linguistes chevronnées, m'ont généreusement ouvert leurs cahiers de botanique, ce n'est pas difficile. Je vais soigner, arroser, aimer cette langue et puis je vais l'emmener en consultation, débarrassée de ses préjugés sexistes. Une chose est sûre, elle ne reproduira pas l'invisibilité de leur genre imposée par le langage, aux femmes qui viennent me voir, dans le huit-clos de mon cabinet.

La nouvelle compagne de mes explorations narratives est paritaire, équitable, solidaire, épiciène, « dé-gendérisée ». Elle sort de l'ombre le genre féminin et lui fait profiter des rayons du soleil, tout comme elle le fait depuis bien longtemps pour le genre masculin. Elle est respectueuse de ceux et celles à qui elle s'adresse. Elle est éprise de justice sociale, se rebelle, résiste, se réinvente, elle est consciente de sa place, des multiples rôles qu'elle joue, de son environnement.

Elle crée, elle n'hésite pas à parler 'd'une docteure', 'd'une chercheuse', 'd'une ingénieure', et 'd'employé-e-s'. Elle nomme explicitement les garçons et les filles, les cousins et les cousines, les voisins et les voisines, le père et la mère.

Elle a abandonné au siècle dernier le masculin dit générique ; elle aurait pu être tentée par un féminin générique, mais elle n'est pas revancharde, elle préfère honorer les humains. Elle est résolument optimiste et porteuse d'espoir.

Bien sûr, elle se trompe parfois, expose sa vulnérabilité.... En tout cela, elle est la partenaire idéale de ma pratique thérapeutique car elle possède toutes les qualités chères aux praticiens et praticiennes de cette approche profondément humaniste.

Alors, oui, maintenant, cette langue est la mienne.