

ISSN: 1579-9794

Under His Eye! Translating *The Handmaid's Tale* with the Support of AV Materials

¡Con su mirada! Traduciendo *El cuento de la criada* con ayuda de materiales AV

MAZAL OAKNÍN
mazaliya@hotmail.com
University College London

Fecha de recepción: 8/2/2024
Fecha de aceptación: 23/4/2025

Abstract: This paper aims to develop students' linguistic and plurilingual abilities by utilizing *The Handmaid's Tale*, a transmedia text that blends fiction and political reality, and that has been adapted into various media formats, including series. The translation exercises are task-based and practical, adhering to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and its Companion Volume (2018), thereby fostering communicative competence and intercultural awareness. As a result, a passage from the book is to be translated by students. Supplementary materials include the corresponding scene from the Hulu series and TV news segments featuring actual handmaid-style protests, which provide authentic and multimodal input. While female subversion is primarily expressed through language in the novel, cinematography plays a significant role in the series as it highlights female defiance and champions inclusivity. Drawing from Martínez-Sierra's (2006) study, this AV support in the form of costumes, casting, and acting (Hurley-Powell, 2020) allows learners to gain a deeper grasp of the text, reflect on the main translation challenges, attempt more creative practices (Pérez-González, 2014a, and 2014b; O' Sullivan and Cornu, 2018), and embrace diversity in both linguistic and cultural dimensions. Likewise, the news clips foreground the series' social relevance and prompt students to tailor their translations to the readers' expectations and to the sociopolitical context.

Keywords: Transmedia, Translation, AV support, Feminism, Plurilingual skills

Resumen: Este artículo pretende desarrollar las capacidades lingüísticas y plurilingües de los estudiantes aprovechando el valor que representa *El cuento de la criada* como texto transmedia, que combina ficción y realidad política, y que se ha adaptado a una amplia gama de medios de comunicación, en particular series. Para ello se proponen una serie de ejercicios prácticos de traducción siguiendo un enfoque basado en tareas,

que buscan desarrollar las habilidades lingüísticas y plurilingües de los estudiantes, en consonancia con el MCER (Consejo de Europa, 2001) y su volumen complementario (2018), y fomentando así la competencia comunicativa y la conciencia intercultural. Como resultado, los estudiantes deben traducir un pasaje de la novela ayudándose del material complementario de la escena correspondiente de la serie de Hulu, así como de los clips de noticias televisivas que muestran protestas reales con manifestantes disfrazados de criadas, lo que proporciona aportes auténticos y multimodales. Mientras que en la novela la subversión femenina se expresa principalmente a través del lenguaje, en la serie la cinematografía desempeña un papel significativo al resaltar la resistencia femenina y promover la inclusión. Basándose en el estudio de Martínez-Sierra (2006), este apoyo audiovisual en forma de vestuario, elenco y actuación (Hurley-Powell, 2020) permite a los estudiantes obtener una comprensión más profunda del texto, reflexionar sobre los principales retos de traducción, realizar prácticas más creativas (Pérez-González, 2014a y 2014b; O'Sullivan y Cornu, 2018) y abrazar la diversidad tanto en lo lingüístico como en lo cultural. Asimismo, los fragmentos de noticias subrayan la relevancia social de la serie y motivan a los estudiantes a adaptar sus traducciones a las expectativas de los lectores y al contexto sociopolítico.

Palabras clave: Transmedia, Traducción, Apoyo AV, Feminismo, Destrezas plurilingües

INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this article is Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021) recommendation to apply transmedia narratives as an innovative methodological technique in the educational context for the development of the linguistic competences of a foreign language. Besides providing students with the necessary tools to carry out successful translations, a well-rounded translator training should also involve the development of professional and personal abilities in the form of soft skills such as leadership, creativity, critical analysis, autonomy, and cooperation (Sánchez-Vizcaíno & Fonseca-Mora, 2020). The suggestion made by Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021) to use transmedia narratives as a novel methodological approach in the educational setting for the development of foreign language proficiency serves as the foundation for this article's discussion of the pedagogical uses of AV literary adaptations, in particular Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which has been serialised on Hulu. While feminist themes such as the loss of women's reproductive rights, the suppression of female agency and subjectivity in a patriarchal society, and female resistance and solidarity were always present in the story, handmaid

costumes were worn by protesters across several nations as a symbol of their rejection of gender discrimination, and the violation of women's civil and reproductive rights after the overwhelming success of the Hulu series. As this approach takes on an ever-important role in university curricula, Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021) defend that integrating transmedia storytelling provides teachers with the opportunity to encourage our students to carry out more creative activities through cooperation, teamwork, and collaborative intelligence. To this, I shall add to the discussion that by working with well-chosen transmedia materials, educators can also incorporate equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) values into translation lessons. Thus, to discuss the pedagogical applications of AV literary adaptations, I present a pedagogical proposal based on Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and its immense popularity after Hulu serialisation.

My proposal is aimed at my module SPAN0034 Translation into Spanish, a mandatory component of the BA Spanish and Latin American Studies, which I teach at University College London's Department of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies. This is an advanced Spanish language module designed for finalists, consolidating level C1, and exploring level C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). After a description of the module's pedagogical aims and an explanation of how its particular student composition allows for the fostering of intercultural and plurilingual skills through the use of mediation, the choice of *The Handmaid's Tale* as a source text will be justified. Specifically, the novel's treatment of a series of feminist concerns that are still very prevalent in the 21st century allows us to adopt a feminist approach towards translation as a means of challenging different types of discrimination. In this sense, the activity also provides students with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with feminist literary translation history and with some possible strategies to challenge patriarchal biases and traditional translation norms and include and celebrate women's voices and experiences in literary and social spaces. Feminist literary translation redefines translation as a political and ideological act, rather than a neutral transfer of meaning. Rejecting traditional ideals of fidelity and invisibility, feminist translators champion the active intervention in texts to expose and challenge patriarchal language and structures. Influenced by scholars like Luise von Flotow and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, and shaped by the Canadian School of the 1980s, feminist literary translation uses strategies such as footnotes, prefaces, and reinterpretations to foreground gender and amplify silenced voices (von Flotow, 1991; de Lotbinière-Harwood, 1991). In literary studies, the field of gynocritics recovers and studies women's writing, whilst feminist translation goes further by transforming how texts are read and circulated, and scholars like Castro and Ergun (2018) champion transnational and intersectional feminist engagement.

Ultimately, feminist translation recovers space for women and marginalized identities, asserting difference and disrupting dominant literary norms.

Additionally, given our students' mastery of digital media, the different transmedia adaptations of *The Handmaid's Tale* equip them with the necessary autonomy and creativity to produce a translation tailored to their readers' expectations. Drawing on Carreres, Noriega-Sánchez, and Calduch's (2018) guide to pre-translation textual analysis, students are presented with a preparatory exercise to be carried out in groups. Through mediating with their peers, students not only decide the most appropriate translation strategies but also foster complex communicative skills. Lastly, the choice of text also responds to an intention, embedding EDI values into translation lessons in order to provide minority students with visions of possibility and strengthen their sense of belonging.

1. TRANSLATING AN EXCERPT FROM *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* WITH AV MATERIALS

1.1. *A pedagogical proposal: module objectives and student composition*

SPAN0034 Advanced Translation into Spanish is a compulsory English-to-Spanish translation course of the SPAN0034 Spanish Language III module, an undergraduate course offered at UCL's Department of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies (SPLAS), part of the School of European Languages, Cultures, and Societies (SELCS) (UCL, 2025). Typically, the BA Spanish and Latin American Studies includes a Year Abroad, just as this is the case with the rest of the four-year language degree programmes offered by UCL. SPAN0034 students will have spent this third year in a Spanish-speaking country, and this experience should have benefitted their linguistic and cultural understanding. For those students who combine Spanish with another language, the year abroad is divided between two different countries.

SPAN0034 Advanced Translation into Spanish is designed for finalists, and it is taught entirely in Spanish. It is an advanced-level Spanish language module that corresponds to levels C1-C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (UCL, 2025). The module's key pedagogical aims are:

- to develop students' linguistic and translation skills (from English into Spanish);
- to introduce students to a variety of textual types and conventions (literary texts, film reviews, medical texts, and consumer-oriented texts) and to allow them to work with different linguistic registers and varieties;

- to promote collaborative learning and teamwork;
- to train students to use reliable sources and to fine-tune their dictionary and documentation skills; and
- to develop students' interlinguistic and intercultural abilities (chiefly mediation) through the understanding of translation as a valuable communicative skill.

Although in autumn 2023, the whole SPAN0034 cohort is composed of 70 students, language components are taught in smaller seminar groups formed by ten students on average. According to UCL Student Registry Services, in the academic year 2023/2024 the percentage of international students in the university was 53% (University College London [UCL], n.d.). This means that often, for more than half the students in a seminar group, English is not a mother tongue. In fact, students often speak English as a second or third language. In these plurilingual environments, students possess different degrees of fluency, comprehension, cultural awareness, and political knowledge. The use of mediation as a tool to understand students' different perspectives and to bridge potential cultural, epistemological or linguistic gaps cannot be underestimated in the translation class, and indeed mediation has been key when preparing the ground for the translation of an excerpt of *The Handmaid's Tale* in this pedagogical proposal.

1.2. *The Handmaid's Tale: Transmedia storytelling bridging fiction and political reality*

The Handmaid's Tale, published in 1985, is a highly acclaimed novel that has received numerous awards, including the Governor General's Award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, the Booker Prize and the Prometheus Award. In this dystopian novel, the United States of America have fallen under attack from the Sons of Jacob, a rebellious group of troops, who kill the president and Congress members to establish a new country named Gilead. Gilead is a totalitarian, theocratic, brutal dictatorship set against the backdrop of highly toxic, polluted environments and dangerously low reproduction rates. In this world devoid of human rights, women are under brutal oppression and separated into groups –Handmaids, Marthas, Aunts, and Unwomen. Marthas are servants whose mission in life is to provide domestic service for Commanders and their families. Unwomen are barren, sinful women who have been banished to the highly polluted Colonies, where they are made to clean lethal, toxic waste. Handmaids are fertile women who, given hopelessly low reproduction rates, are kidnapped and made to bear children for Commanders and their wives. They hence lack basic reproductive rights.

Aunts are responsible for training Handmaids, as well as for harshly punishing them whenever they disobey.

The story is narrated by Offred, whose every move is watched by the Eyes, Gilead's secret police. As is the case with all women, Offred's freedom is completely restricted. She lives as a Handmaid in the house of Commander Fred Waterford and his wife, Serena Joy. Before Gilead, Offred was married to Luke and they had a daughter, Hannah. Following a failed attempt to flee across the border into Canada, the family was caught, and Hannah was kidnapped and given to a Commander. Offred has not seen Luke or Hannah since. In her narration, Offred alternates between recounting her daily life and offering flashbacks of her happy previous life, including memories of strong women such as her feminist activist mother Holly, and her assertive and independent best friend, Moira.

Not only has this plot been narrated in the original novel, but *The Handmaid's Tale* has been turned into different media such as an opera – which premiered in 2000 in Copenhagen and whose popularity was such that it was attended by the Queen of Denmark monthly –; a film that was launched in 1990 and, most recently, a Hulu series that was launched in 2017. This series enjoys immense international success, as well as critical praise, and it is now in its fifth season. Indeed, *The Handmaid's Tale* fits in perfectly with Scolari's (2013) definition of transmedia storytelling as “a particular narrative form that expands across different systems of meaning (verbal, iconic, audio-visual, interactive, etc.) and media (cinema, comics, television, video games, theatre, etc.)” (p. 20).

Buyse and Fonseca-Mora (2017) highlight that the use of digital media can have a positive impact on our students' independent learning, both inside and outside the modern language classroom and given the particular plurilingual make-up of the SPAN0034 Advanced Translation into Spanish groups and the need to mediate in groups in order to carry out a well-rounded pre-translation analysis, my proposal uses materials from different media to help students translate an excerpt from the novel. In particular, they are shown a clip from the series with the corresponding scene and TV news clips focusing on real-life, handmaid-style protests. By capitalising on their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, students work collaboratively in a learning space that comprehends different media as well as different types of language (Andrade-Velásquez & Fonseca-Mora, 2017, p. 162).

2. DECIDING TRANSLATION STRATEGIES THROUGH MEDIATION

Students are divided into small groups and asked to translate an excerpt from the novel. Students are first prompted to comment on the Source Text (ST), which depicts a conversation between Offred and Moira, her best

friend, who was also kidnapped and enslaved as a Handmaid. The lecturer, helped by those students who are familiar with the plot, explains to the class that Moria functions as a copying mechanism in Offred's life. Not only does their friendship represent a kind of female solidarity that is forbidden in Gilead, but Offred looks up to her. Indeed, Moira is brave, sassy, and rebellious, and even succeeded in escaping the Red Centre by dressing up as an Aunt. Unfortunately, she was later recaptured, and the scene in the ST happens when Offred finds her in Jezebel's. In Gilead, Jezebel's is a state-sponsored brothel where Offred's Commander takes her in an attempt to seduce her away from his wife. Offred learns that after being recaptured, Moira chooses to be sent to Jezebel's, her spirit having been broken by the regime, and figuring out it is better than ending up in the highly toxic, polluted Colonies, the other alternative. The excerpt used is as follows:

So after that, they said I was too dangerous to be allowed the privilege of returning to the Red Center. They said I would be a corrupting influence. I had my choice, they said, this or the Colonies. Well, shit, nobody but a nun would pick the Colonies. I mean, I'm not a martyr. If I'd had my tubes tied years ago, I wouldn't even have needed the operation. Nobody in here with viable ovaries either, you can see what kind of problems it would cause.

"So here I am. They even give you face cream. You should figure out some way of getting in here. You'd have three or four good years before your snatch wears out and they send you to the boneyard. The food's not bad and there's drink and drugs, if you want it, and we only work nights."

"Moira," I say. "You don't mean that." She is frightening me now, because what I hear in her voice is indifference, a lack of volition. Have they really done it to her then, taken away something — what? — that used to be so central to her? And how can I expect her to go on, with my idea of her courage, live it through, act it out, when I myself do not?

I don't want her to be like me. Give in, go along, save her skin. That is what it comes down to. I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, single-handed combat. Something I lack.

"Don't worry about me," she says. She must know some of what I'm thinking. "I'm still here, you can see it's me. Anyway, look at it this way: it's not so bad, there's lots of women around. Butch paradise, you might call it."

Now she's teasing, showing some energy, and I feel better. "Do they let you?" I say.

“Let, hell, they encourage it. Know what they call this place among themselves? Jezebel's. The Aunts figure we're all damned anyway, they've given up on us, so it doesn't matter what sort of vice we get up to, and the Commanders don't give a piss what we do in our off time. Anyway, women on women sort of turns them on.”

“What about the others?” I say.

“Put it this way,” she says, “they're not too fond of men.” She shrugs again. It might be resignation. (Atwood, 1985, p. 261)

Scolari (2013, p. 20) highlights the potential that transmedia storytelling has to expand across different systems of meaning and media. This is, as we have seen, certainly the case of *The Handmaid's Tale* and in this sense, in the translation classroom, the story is told via different codes and in different spaces: the ST (novel), a clip from the series, and TV news featuring different handmaid-style protests in different countries. These particular codes are put at our students' disposal because they pave the way for a series of aims:

- To fine-tune students' translation skills, since the ST's use of idioms, colloquialisms, and combination of inner thoughts and dialogue makes it particularly useful for advanced students.
- To expand students' experiences and knowledge beyond literature in Spanish, as they are working on a source text written by a world-renowned Canadian author, as well as exploring the topic of transmedia storytelling.
- To bridge knowledge gaps, since those students more familiar with the novel or series are able to fill in their peers, especially when encountering references to *The Handmaid's Tale* institutions.
- To foster plurilingual and pluricultural competences through the use of mediation, given that this mode of communication levels the field between students with different fluency in Spanish and with different mother tongues.
- To promote EDI values and raise their awareness of difference and diversity, as students discuss the blatant examples of gender-based discrimination and violence in the novel, and they are introduced to the character of Moira.

2.1. *Different codes, same feminist message: merchandising, protests, and series*

In the translation classroom, the story is told via different codes and in different spaces. Even before providing students with the corresponding scene from the series and with TV news clips focusing on real-life, handmaid-style protests, most of them are already be familiar with an additional space: the profusion of *The Handmaid's Tale* merchandise. According to Santo (2019), "retail is a site of struggle among retailers and brand owners over how brand stories are told" (p. 115). In a myriad of items such as T-shirts, mugs or cushions, the image of the handmaid in her white bonnet and red cloak is used to promote feminist messages, champion female solidarity, and encourage resistance. Indeed, a search of "The Handmaid's Tale merchandise" on Amazon revealed 297 products featuring well-known feminist slogans from the novel and the series, including "Praise be bitch" mugs, "Blessed be the fruit" T-shirts, "Nolite te bastardes carborundorum" art prints and "They never should have given us uniforms if they didn't want us to be an army" hoodies). On Etsy, the words "Handmaid Tale" produced more than 1000 results, including badges, cushions, mugs, bookmarks, and dolls. The success of these products also highlights another key facet of transmedia narrative – besides their narrative expansion, transmedia narratives are built on a culture of participation (Scolari, 2013, p. 5). Hence, by engaging with these messages and, in many cases, purchasing these products, our students are also playing an active role in the expansion of the narrative.

Furthermore, whilst feminist themes such as the suppression of female agency and subjectivity in a patriarchal society, loss of women's reproductive rights, female resistance and solidarity were always prevalent in the story, following the great success of the Hulu series, handmaid's costumes were donned by protesters in various countries as a symbol of their rejection of gender discrimination and the infringement of reproductive and civil rights. It must be pointed out that the tactic of donning costumes had already been used by protesters –for example, in 2013, demonstrators in favour of women's suffrage dressed up as Columbia, the female national personification of the United States of America. Likewise, it must be noted that it has also been co-opted by conservative movements, as was seen in the costumes from Revolutionary War-era personalities worn by members of the Tea Party in 2009 and 2010. However, in the case of the handmaid-style protests, Liptak (2017) avows that the given their symbolic weight, red cloaks have proven to contribute to empowering women to protest. To this, I would add that the handmaid costume appears to offer practical benefits of its own. Whilst the white bonnet's wings can help to keep protesters' identities hidden, the

homogeneity of the red costumes, which is also worn by male allies, allows the group of demonstrators to portray an image of unity.

In the translation class, following the first reading of the ST, students are shown four images of handmaid's style protests in four different countries that took place between 2020 and 2023: Israel, Argentina, France, and the USA. The lecturer explains that, inspired by a promotional event made by Hulu just before launching the TV show in 2016, multiple feminist demonstrations have introduced the portrayal of Handmaids. They are also asked to watch a short, illustrative clip (CBC News, 2022).

Students are prompted to comment on how in this 2020 news, references to the series' plot are intertwined with the news of abortion rights being curtailed in several USA states, so even the news presenter is capitalising on *The Handmaid's Tale's* icons to establish a link between fiction and political reality. In this sense, Carrola (2021), speaking of the USA, also remarked upon the signature of the red cloaks and white bonnets, which have served as a silent symbol for the resistance of many women, who see parallels between the conditions in the fictional Republic of Gilead and the United States. The subsequent preliminary discussion highlights that although *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian work of fiction, in today's world, women's rights movements continue to work towards the eradication of some of the predominant problems in the novel. These disproportionately affect women and girls and include violations against fundamental rights such as domestic and sexual violence, lack of access to education, and reproductive freedom. Indeed, recent digital movements such as the #MeToo campaign continue to bring to the forefront and denounce the prevalence of gender-based domestic and sexual violence. According to global figures, 27% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their partner. These figures also estimate that these violent patterns start early, with 24% of girls and young women aged 15-19 and 26% of women aged 19-24 having suffered violence at least once since the age of 15 (Sardinha *et al.*, 2022). As universities discuss ways to take their commitment to EDI further, the European Expert Group on Sexuality Education (2016) has recommended that gender-based violence be prevented through a sexuality education. This also comprehends teaching about the emotional, social, and cultural factors of healthy human relationships (UNESCO, 2018).

The ST above, images and TV news, as well as the subsequent preliminary discussion, allow us to take the necessary steps to equip our students with the tools to strengthen the prevention of gender-based violence. From the point of view of the content, not only does the excerpt provide students with the chance to identify unhealthy relationships and examples of abuse, but it also promotes empathy and challenges stereotypes since the

different personalities of Offred and Moira –both victims of gender-based violence– can be appreciated in the text. However, in order to produce an optimal translation of the ST students have to tackle different translation challenges, and the use of the corresponding scene from the series as well as the use of mediation are key.

At this stage, the corresponding scene from the Hulu series (*The Handmaid's Tale Brasil*, 2017) is shown to students, as it proves a useful tool to supplement their understanding of the ST and produce a Target Text (TT) that is tailored to their readers' expectations. My own transcription of the scene is shown below:

Moira: Oh. G-d awful. You look like the whore of Babylon.

June: Well, isn't that the point?

Moira: Take a hike.

June: Did you pick this out?

Moira: Government issue. Why? Isn't it me?

June: Are you OK?

Moira: Yeah, I'm great. What about you? How's Waterford?

June: Forget him. I don't ... I just want to hear about you. Tell me everything.

Moira: I took the train into Boston. Like we planned. I remembered a safe house. A Quaker family. They about lost their shit when they saw an Aunt at the front door. I got lucky. They knew someone in the Underground.

June: What's the Underground?

Moira: Femaleroad. Cute, right? They're smuggling out handmaids out of the country. Trying to, anyway. I didn't get that far. Office park, outside the city. They shot the guys who helped me.

June: What happened?

Moira: Never found out. Not that it matters anyway.

June: God, Aunt Lydia must've...she must've shit a brick when you got back to the Red Centre.

Moira: They didn't take me back. I was a corrupting influence. They took me somewhere else. After they finished their questions, they gave me a choice: the colonies or Jezebel's. It's a few good years before your pussy wears out. All the booze and drugs you want. Food's good. We only work nights. I mean, it's not so bad.

J: We're going to find a way to get you out of here.

Drawing from Martínez-Sierra's(2006) study, this clip offers our students AV support in the form of costumes, casting, and acting (Hurley-Powell, 2020), which allows them to gain a more profound understanding of the ST, attempt more creative practices when making translating decisions (Pérez-González, 2014a and 2014b; O' Sullivan & Cornu, 2018) and appreciate diversity, especially via the character of Moira.

Martínez-Sierra (2006, p. 294) finds that rather than restricting translators, visual components often contribute to a better understanding of target texts. In the scene, Commander Waterford has clandestinely taken Offred to Jezebel's, a state-sponsored brothel where the Commanders mingle with prostitutes. However, whereas the ST makes no mention of the clothes worn by the protagonists, the scene does. Indeed, in the series, this is the first time in which, once a Handmaid, Offred is made to wear something other than her red uniform, and it is striking for viewers to see her in that provocative dress. In Jezebel's Offred sees Moira working there. Moira wears an ill-fitting Playboy bunny costume. They pretend not to recognize one another, but then Moira gives Offred a signal to meet her in a private room. The dimmed lights, the high number of sex workers and beds, and the harem-style décor further highlight the sordidness of the place.

Between hushes, Offred learns what has happened to Moira and is disappointed to hear the fatalism in her voice. The scene provides important information in the form of paralinguistic features (Martínez-Sierra, 2006, p. 294), which comprise the non-verbal qualities of a voice, such as intonation, rhythm, tone, timbre, or resonance, among others. These, in turn, are associated with expressions of emotions such as screams, sighs, or laughter (Chaume, 2003, p. 222). Offred is taken aback by the passivity in Moira's voice and misses the old Moira who was so sassy, rebellious, and full of life. Whilst in the ST the main emotion shown by Moira is indifference, her voice is richer in the clip, where irony, sarcasm, and defiance can also be appreciated, giving a more rounded idea of who the character really is. Narrative silence (Poyatos, 1994) is in this sense key, as in the scene it is mainly through the pauses Moira takes when the events to narrate to Offred are too painful that her sense of defeat and fear are exposed. This narrative silence is accompanied by the complicit stares of the two protagonists, which give an idea of how strong their friendship is and how big their tribulations are.

Hurley-Powell (2020, p. 91) remarks that in the novel, the narration of the hostile and violent reality of Gilead takes place through Offred's simple observations. However, in the excerpt to be translated by our students, it is not always easy to distinguish between the dialogue between Moira and

Offred and Offred's inner thoughts. The series scene facilitates this distinction by visually showing when each character speaks and offers additional AV support in the form of kinetics. Indeed, Moira's initial hand movements and her leaning back emphasise her sense of humour in the face of tragedy, but these movements later give way to a position of holding her knees with her face down when retelling the most painful moments of her story. Offred's stares are intense and painful, and she can't help to shake her head faintly but repeatedly as she experiences the mix of disappointment, sadness, and expectation shown in the ST. Furthermore, the manner in which the lines said by each character are reformulated can help our students overcome the lexical challenges posed by the ST (chiefly, idioms and colloquialisms that will be listed in the next epigraph).

Finally, from an EDI perspective, whilst the ST does not make reference to the protagonists' appearances, the scene from the series show that Moira is a Black woman with short, black hair who is a lesbian (played by Samira Wiley) and Offred is a white woman with long, blonde hair who is straight (played by Elisabeth Moss). Moira, although clearly defeated at present, possesses irony, rebellion, boldness. Offred speaks in shushes and more modestly. The scene sends another, fundamental message to our students: despite their differences in terms of race, sexuality, and personality, both women are victims of domestic and sexual violence. In particular, the inclusion of the character of Moira provides our students –especially those belonging to ethnic minorities and the LGBTQI+ community– with the opportunity to be mirrored in the public sphere of the screen and, through our students' imagination, the ST.

Although the eradication of domestic violence is prominent in traditional feminist agendas and affects the lives of all women, regardless of their origin, their race, their culture, their religion, their sexuality or their social class, not all survivors have the same access to support or recognition. Indeed, stereotypes can create obstacles to assistance, making some groups more likely to suffer from domestic violence (Simpson & Helfrich, 2014). Human Rights Campaign figures indicate that 44% of lesbian women experience intimate partner violence, compared to 35% of heterosexual women. Moreover, within the former groups, LGBTQI+ Black victims are more likely to suffer physical intimate partner violence. Due to the fact that the majority of the gender-based violence awareness movement has centred around heterosexual women, the inclusion of a Black, LGBTQI+ character like Moira, who is a survivor of gender-based violence, seems particularly significant. Indeed, through the incorporation of this scene from the series as AV support for our students to translate the ST, not only can students grasp a better understanding of the source material and develop essential linguistic skills

such as listening comprehension, pragmatic competence, but they can also foster key social-emotional skills such as inclusivity, empathy, and integrity while raising awareness about gender-based violence and preventing it through the learning of healthy relationships.

2.2. *Fine-tuning close reading skills and fostering soft skills through mediation*

Following the first reading of the ST and general discussion about the links between the literary work as fiction and its political significance, students are prompted to carry out a pre-translation textual analysis. In particular, students are prompted to deepen their understanding of the ST and identify the chief translation challenges that are posed by the specific excerpt from the novel. This informs their decisions as translators and equips them with the tools to better define their translation strategy. Based on the exhaustive list of questions put forward by Carreres, Noriega-Sánchez and Calduch (2018, pp. 24-25) in *Mundos en palabras. Learning Advanced Spanish Through Translation*, the table below summarises the main issues and related questions to be discussed by students in their groups:

Subject, author and context Textual structure and cohesion	Grammar and vocabulary Stylistic elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the author and what is their aim? • What is the overall message or theme of the text? Is there a feminist message? • What is the textual typology? • What is the intended readership? • Are there any extralinguistic references? • How is the text structured? • What are the linking words and cohesive devices used? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the lexical repertoire? Are there any technical terms? • What kind of grammar and syntactic structures appear in the text? • Are there any idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms? • What is the language variety used in the text? • Does the text use a single register? • Are there any figures of speech?

Table 1. Questions to be discussed in groups

Source. Elaborated by the author

Here, the emphasis is put on both translation as communication and as learning and collaboration, and the table's discussion-based approach aims to fine-tune students' translation skills, to improve their command of Spanish, and to introduce them to feminist translation history and strategies. Also, by

capitalising on the plot's feminist message, and through the use of mediation (Trovato, 2016; North & Piccardo, 2017), my approach focuses on the development of their interlinguistic and plurilingual abilities and promotes EDI values. As Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021, p. 162) propose Transmedia storytelling as a didactic strategy for language teaching should not be limited to the adaptation of one code to another (in our case, from the source text to the series clip), but rather it should propel students to learn in a narrative world that encompasses different media as well as the understanding of different types of language. In this way "the story expands, new characters or situations appear that cross the borders of the fictional universe" (Scolari, 2013, p. 15). Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021, p. 162) posit that working with transmedia narratives should be a learning experience that stimulates students by prompting them to putting to use their oral, listening, reading and written skills; however, I will add that besides fostering the traditional four skills, learning with transmedia narratives also has the potential to develop students' mediation skills.

Capitalising on their different levels of fluency, different nationalities, and different mother tongues, students are divided into heterogeneous groups of about 4 students. Each student should work with their groupmates to provide answers to the pre-translation questions in the table above, as these issues equips them with the necessary tools to carry out a successful translation. Given that the ST poses lexical challenges (colloquialisms such as *swashbuckling*, *damned*, *off time*, *don't give a piss*) and idioms (*figure out*, *act it out*, *live it through*, *give in*, *go along*, *save her skin*), epistemological challenges (Gilead institutions such as the Red Centre, the Colonies, Jezebel's) and structural challenges (combination of dialogue and inner thoughts), it can be anticipated that not all students are able to answer all questions correctly or completely.

The groups have to use mediation with the aim of preparing satisfactory answers to the pre-translation questions. Highlighting the need to incorporate mediation into Spanish as a foreign language syllabus, and emphasising the link between translation and mediation, Trovato (2016) avows that mediation is the result of merging two skills: communicative and translative competences. Thus, in this exercise, to improve their translative competence, each group needs to navigate their members' differing levels of Spanish grammar, knowledge of American varieties of English, awareness of different registers, familiarity with the novel and the series, and knowledge of feminist struggles around the world. This negotiation, in turn, boosts their communicative competence as they are prompted to practice complex communicative skills in the context of the language classroom. In order to bridge the linguistic, cultural and epistemological gaps, the communicative

skills they use are not only the traditional language skills –reading, writing, listening and speaking. Indeed, the exercise also involves more complex skills such as reformulating ideas, condensing information, providing definitions, explaining extralinguistic and cultural references, shifting registers, etc. Sánchez-Vizcaino and Fonseca-Mora (2020) avow that working with transmedia narratives can boost our students' soft skills such as leadership, creativity, critical analysis, autonomy, and cooperation, and indeed, the importance of these *soft skills* cannot be underestimated, for much of our language students' future work will involve interpersonal interaction. Indeed, interaction is a crucial skill and one for which our language lessons should provide activities aimed at its development. After the lesson, students shared informal feedback, expressing how positive, enriching, and eye-opening they found the session. They highlighted the introduction to feminist translation and appreciated the opportunity to consider different strategies and explore ideological and linguistic choices in depth. Many noted that the session deepened their understanding of translation as a political act and inspired them to reflect critically on their own practice as translators.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has presented a didactic proposal based on the translation of an excerpt from *The Handmaid's Tale*. Besides pursuing the aims of fine-tuning students' translation skills, developing close textual analysis, and fostering mediation as a mode of communication, the proposal also seeks to promote EDI values. Given that *The Handmaid's Tale* is a transmedia narrative text that over the year has been narrated in different media and different codes, I have followed Andrade-Velásquez and Fonseca-Mora (2021) recommendation to apply transmedia narratives as an innovative methodological technique in the educational context for the development of the linguistic competences of a foreign language. In particular, the students of SPAN0034 Translation into Spanish, a final-year mandatory translation course which is part of University College London's BA Spanish and Latin American Studies, worked with the following additional AV materials: a news clip about a 2020 handmaid-style protest in the United States and the corresponding scene from the Hulu series.

The news clip highlighted the ways in which the story bridges fiction and political reality and foregrounds the relevance of the main feminist preoccupations in the novel –suppression of female agency, gender-based violence, loss of women's reproductive rights– and helped students grasp the importance of this context in the excerpt to be translated.

Whilst in the novel, female subversion is principally conveyed through language, in the series, cinematography is a key vehicle to portray female

defiance and champion inclusivity. Sikov (2010) highlights the power that film and television have to reveal a deeper meaning by visually drawing attention to a theme or character through cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, visual elements, paralinguistic elements, costumes, or kinetics. In this sense, the corresponding scene from the series provided students with the necessary tools to overcome the main lexical, structural, and epistemological challenges by allowing them to better grasp the nuances in the ST and attempt more creative practices. An additional benefit was the cast of actress Samira Wiley as Moira, which allowed our students to have a wider, more equal understanding of gender-based domestic and sexual violence and to be introduced to a more diverse, inclusive range of literary and film characters.

The proposal concluded with a pre-translation exercise in which students were divided into small, heterogeneous groups. Based on the exhaustive list of questions put forward in *Mundos en palabras. Learning Advanced Spanish Through Translation* (Carreres, Noriega-Sánchez and Calduch, 2018, pp. 24 – 25), students are presented with a series of questions that summarise the main challenges they encounter when translating the ST. Through mediation, each group not only worked towards a better understanding of the excerpt and an agreement on the best translating strategies, but they also fine-tuned their soft skills.

REFERENCES

- Andrade-Velásquez, M. R., & Fonseca-Mora, M. C. (2021). Las Narrativas Transmedia en el Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 12(2), 159–175. <https://doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM.17795>
- Atwood, M. (1985). *The Handmaid's Tale*. Anchor Books.
- Buyse, K., & Fonseca-Mora, M.C. (Eds.) (2017). Tecnologías y Segundas Lenguas. *Comunicar*, XXV (50), 1–63. <https://www.revistacomunicar.com/pdf/comunicar50.pdf>
- Carreres, Á., Noriega-Sánchez, M., & Calduch, C. (2018). *Mundos en Palabras: Learning Advanced Spanish Through Translation* (1st ed). Routledge.
- Carrola, M. Y. (2021). Activists in Red Capes: Women's Use of The Handmaid's Tale to Fight for Reproductive Justice. *The Journal of Undergraduate Ethnography*, 11(1), 89–107. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v11i1.10869>

- Castro, O., & Ergun, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Feminist translation studies: Local and transnational perspectives*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315617531>
- CBC News. (2022, June 24). *Handmaid's Tale costumes used in abortion rights protests* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySslUJlicOc>
- Chaume, F. (2003). *Doblatge i Subtitulació per a la TV*. Eumo.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- de Lotbinière-Harwood, S. (1991). *Re-belle et infidèle: La traduction comme pratique de réécriture au féminin / The body bilingual: Translation as a re-writing in the feminine*. Éditions du remue-ménage / Women's Press.
- European Expert Group on Sexuality Education. (2016). *Sexuality Education – What is it?* *Sex Education*, 16 (4), 427–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1100599>
- Hurley-Powell, M. (2020). *Vision and Revision: Transmedia Representations of Agency in The Handmaid's Tale Novel, Graphic Novel, and Television Series*. *Iperstoria: Journal of American and English studies*, 16, 90–109. <https://doi:10.13136/2281-4582/2020.i16.915>
- Liptak, A. (31 October 2017). *How The Handmaid's Tale Inspired a Protest Movement*. *The Verge*. <https://www.theverge.com/2017/10/31/15799882/handmaids-tale-costumes-cosplay-protest>
- Martínez-Sierra, J. J. (2006). *Translating Audiovisual Humour. A Case Study*. *Perspectives*, 13(4), 289-296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09076760608668999>
- North, B., & Piccardo, E. (2017). *Mediation and the Social and Linguistic Integration of Migrants: Updating the CEFR Descriptors: Some Lessons from Research / Les Enseignements de la Recherche*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110477498-011>
- O'Sullivan, C., & Cornu, J. F. (2018). *History of Audiovisual Translation*. In L. Pérez-González (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 15–30). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315717166>

- Pérez-González, L. (2014a). Translation and New(s) Media: Participatory Subtitling Practices in Networked Mediascapes'. In J. House (Ed.), *Translation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Advances in Linguistics Series (pp. 200–221). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pérez-González, L. (2014b). Multimodality in Translation Studies: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. In S. Bermann, & C. Porter, (Eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies* (pp. 119–131). Willey-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118613504.ch9>
- Poyatos, F. (1994). Paralanguage and Extrasomatic and Environmental sounds in Literary Translation: Perspectives and Problems. *TEXTconTEXT*, 10(1), 25–45.
- Sánchez-Vizcaíno, C., & Fonseca-Mora, M. C. (2020). Mediación y Pensamiento Crítico en el Aprendizaje de Lenguas: el Análisis de Videoclips Musicales. *RESED. Revista de Estudios Socioeducativos*, 8, 98-115. http://dx.doi.org/10.25267/Rev_estud_socioeducativos.2020.i8.8
- Santo, A. (2019). Retail Tales and Tribulations: Transmedia Brands, Consumer Products, and the Significance of Shop Talk. *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, 58(2), 115–141. <https://doi:10.1353/cj.2019.0005>
- Sardinha, L., Maheu-Giroux, M., Stöckl, H., Meyer, S. R., & García-Moreno, C. (2022). Global, Regional, and National Prevalence Estimates of Physical or Sexual, or Both, Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in 2018. *The Lancet*, 399(10327), 803–813. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02664-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02664-7)
- Scolari, C. (2013). *Narrativas Transmedia: Cuando Todos los Medios Cuentan*. Communication Papers.
- Sikov, E. (2010). *Film Studies: An Introduction*. Columbia University Press.
- Simpson, E. K., & Helfrich, C. A. (2014). Oppression and Barriers to Service for Black, Lesbian Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 26(4), 441–465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2014.951816>
- The Handmaid's Tale Brasil. (2017, June 4). *The Handmaid's Tale | June e Moira se encontram em Jezebels* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a27V4eRunSQ>
- Trovato, G. (2016). *Mediación Lingüística y Enseñanza de Español/LE. Cuadernos de Didáctica del Español/LE*. Arco/Libros.

- UCL. (2025, August 18). *Spanish Language III (SPAN0034)*. University College London. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/module-catalogue/modules/spanish-language-iii-SPAN0034>
- University College London. (n.d.). Student statistics. UCL. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/student-statistics>
- UNESCO. (2018). International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach; Overview. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>
- von Flotow, L. (1991). Feminist translation: Contexts, practices and theories. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 4(2), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.7202/037094ar>