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Neutral language in English-Polish translation.

Język neutralny w tłumaczeniu angielsko-polskim.

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Abstract

This study examines the translation of English nonbinary language into Polish, with the aim of identifying, categorising, and evaluating the techniques used in this process. The research addresses the growing need for inclusive language practices and explores how translators navigate the structural and cultural constraints of Polish when rendering gender-neutral expressions. The methodology consists of comparative textual analysis. Selected literary works, television series, and video games were analysed to determine how such forms are translated in practice and what strategies are employed. The findings indicate that the pronoun “ono/jego” is the third most commonly used Polish pronoun among nonbinary people outside of the masculine “on/jego” and the feminine “ona/jej,” and may function as a neutral equivalent to the English singular “they/them.” However, translations of nonbinary pronouns remain inconsistent: neopronouns are frequently replaced with “ono/jego,” this form is not always maintained consistently, and in some cases it is replaced with binary gendered pronouns. Rare instances of innovative neologisms were also observed. These results highlight the lack of standardisation in translating nonbinary language into Polish and point to ongoing hardship in translation due to societal and linguistic norms. The study underscores the need for greater awareness, consistency, and creativity in translation practices to better reflect nonbinary identities in Polish-language texts.

Keywords: inclusive language, neutral language, nonbinary language, nonbinary, nonbinary pronouns, translation, translation techniques, Polish language, English language, pronouns, neutral pronouns, neo-pronouns

Abstrakt

Niniejsza praca analizuje przekład angielskich odniesień niebinarnych na język polski, koncentrując się na identyfikacji, kategoryzacji oraz ocenie stosowanych technik translatorskich. Badanie odpowiada na rosnącą potrzebę stosowania języka inkluzywnego i ukazuje, w jaki sposób tłumacze radzą sobie z ograniczeniami strukturalnymi i kulturowymi języka polskiego przy oddawaniu form neutralnych płciowo. Metodologią badawczą stanowiła analiza porównawcza tekstów. Wybrane utwory literackie, seriale telewizyjne oraz gry wideo zostały przeanalizowane pod kątem stosowanych rozwiązań translatorskich oraz strategii przekładu. W pracy wskazano, że zaimek „ono/jego” jest trzecim najczęściej używanym przez osoby niebinarne zaimkiem w języku polskim poza „on/jego” oraz „ona/jej” i może pełnić funkcję odpowiednika angielskiego liczby pojedynczej „they/them”.

Jednocześnie tłumaczenia zaimków neutralnych pozostają niespójne: neozaimki są często zastępowane przez „ono/jego”, forma ta nie zawsze jest konsekwentnie utrzymywana, a w niektórych przypadkach zastępowana jest przez formy binarne. Odnotowano również rzadkie przypadki innowacyjnych neologizmów. Uzyskane wyniki wskazują na brak standaryzacji w przekładzie języka osób niebinarnych na język polski oraz ujawniają trudności tłumaczeniowe spowodowane normami językowymi i społecznymi. Praca podkreśla potrzebę większej świadomości, spójności oraz kreatywności w praktykach translatorskich, aby lepiej odzwierciedlać tożsamości niebinarne w tekstach polskojęzycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: język inkluzywny, język neutralny, język niebinarny, niebinarność, zaimki niebinarne, przekład, techniki translatorskie, język polski, język angielski, zaimki, zaimki neutralne, neozaimki

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M. Kristofek



Table of contents

Abstract.....	2
Abstrakt.....	2
Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1: Neutral and nonbinary language.....	10
1.1 The attempt to define the inclusive, neutral, and non-binary languages.....	10
1.2 History of terms used to name people outside of the gender binary.....	11
1.3 Preferred terms in English and Polish.....	12
1.4 Neutral pronouns in English.....	14
1.5 Neutral pronouns in Polish.....	15
1.6 Pronoun use: statistics.....	17
1.7 Summary.....	18
Chapter 2: Types and strategies of translation.....	19
2.2 Types of translations.....	20
2.3 Literary translation.....	20
2.4 Audiovisual translation.....	21
2.5 Game localisation.....	24
2.6 Translation techniques.....	26
Chapter 3: Nonbinary and gender-neutral language in literary texts, audiovisual media, and video game localisation: case study.....	30
3.1 Methodology and research material.....	30
3.2 Literary examples.....	31
3.3 TV show examples.....	35
3.4 Narrative video game example.....	41
3.5 Life simulation video game example.....	47
3.6 Summary.....	52
Conclusion.....	52
References.....	54

List of tables

Table 1: Timed text guidelines across different streaming platforms.....	23
Table 2: Translation techniques according to Vinay & Darbelnet (1958: 30-40).....	27
Table 3: Translation techniques according to Nida (1964: 227-233).....	28
Table 4: Dialogue with Polish translation from “The Freeze-frame Revolution” by Peter Watts.....	32
Table 5: Dialogue with Polish translation from “The Freeze-frame Revolution” by Peter Watts.....	33
Table 6: Dialogue with Polish translation from “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee.....	34
Table 7: Dialogue with Polish translation from “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee.....	34
Table 8: Dialogue with Polish translation from “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power”.....	36
Table 9: Dialogue with Polish translation from “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power”.....	37
Table 10: Dialogue and its Polish translation from ‘One Day at a Time.....	40
Table 11: Dialogue and its Polish translation from “One Day at a Time”.....	40

List of figures

Figure 1: Preferred terms in English and Polish.....	13
Figure 2: Most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns in Polish.....	17
Figure 3: Most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns in English.....	17
Figure 4: Screenshot from Baldur’s Gate 3 showing character creator.....	43
Figure 5: Screenshot from Baldur’s Gate 3 featuring gameplay and a dialogue line.....	44
Figure 6: Screenshot from Baldur’s Gate 3 featuring a dialog log.....	45
Figure 7: Screenshot from Baldur’s Gate 3 featuring a dialog log.....	46
Figure 8: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker, with the nonbinary identity selection highlighted.....	48
Figure 9: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker and its advanced options.....	49
Figure 10: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of life stages available for Parafolks.....	50
Figure 11: Screenshot from Paralives, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of relationship types.....	51
Figure 12: Screenshot from Paralives, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of relationship types.....	51

Introduction

The increasing visibility of nonbinary and gender diverse individuals in public life, media, and digital space has brought the question of linguistic representation of contemporary sociolinguistic translation studies. While English has developed relatively well-established strategies for gender neutral and nonbinary reference, mostly by using the singular they/them pronouns, Polish, as a highly gendered language, lacks any universally accepted grammatical or lexical means of referring to individuals outside the gender binary. This asymmetry poses a significant challenge for translators working with source text that includes nonbinary characters, self-identification, or neutral language. The present thesis investigates how this challenge is being addressed in practice across three distinct domains: literary translation, audiovisual translation, and video game localisation.

The primary aim of this study is to identify, categorise, and evaluate the translation techniques employed when rendering English language nonbinary references into Polish. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), as well as Nida (1964), the analysis systematically examines a corpus of empirical examples drawn from published novels, television series, and contemporary video games. A secondary objective is to compare the frequency and consistency of different strategies across media types, and to assess whether emerging practices are gaining traction among translators and being accepted by Polish speaking nonbinary audiences.

The study draws on a selection of 21st-century narrative and interactive works featuring non-binary and/or gender nonconforming characters in prominent roles. The literary texts included are “The Freeze-Frame Revolution” by Peter Watts (2018) and “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee (2019). Audiovisual sources comprise selected episodes of “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power” (Season 4, Episodes 2 “The Valley of the Lost” and 4 “Pulse,” 2019), as well as “One Day at a Time” (Season 2, Episode 3 “To Zir, with Love,” 2018). The analysis also incorporates the video games Baldur’s Gate 3 (2023) and Paralives (2026).

The work is structured into three main chapters: Chapter 1 establishes the linguistic foundation by defining inclusive, neutral, and nonbinary language, outlining the historical development of terminology for identities outside the gender binary, and comparing English and Polish usage, with particular attention to neutral pronouns and their frequency. Chapter 2 situates the study within translation studies, reviewing key definitions and types of translation, and distinguishing between literary, audiovisual, and video game localisation, alongside relevant translation techniques. Chapter 3 constitutes the empirical core, presenting a

comparative case study across multiple media: literature, television, and video games. It allows an analysis of how nonbinary and gender-neutral language is represented and translated, with attention to both linguistic strategies and medium-specific constraints.

The study is grounded in comprehensive review of current sociolinguistic data, which provides empirical evidence of self-preferred labels and pronoun usage among nonbinary individuals. These findings serve as a baseline against which translation decisions are evaluated. The scope of the analysis is limited to English source materials translated into Polish covering different media types. Within each medium, the focus is on direct and indirect references to nonbinary identity, including pronoun, self-descriptions, and grammatically marked verb forms.

Chapter 1: Neutral and nonbinary language

As language both reflects and reinforces societal norms, shifts in attitudes towards gender identity have prompted corresponding changes in linguistic structures and usage. This chapter establishes the foundational terminology and sociolinguistic background necessary for the subsequent translation analysis.

1.1 The attempt to define the inclusive, neutral, and non-binary languages

Language is more than a mere system of communication – it reflects and reinforces societal norms, values, and ideologies through vocabulary, syntax, and patterns of expression. As societies evolve and attitudes toward identity, power, and inclusion shift, so does the language. Forms, which were unheard of 200 years ago, are commonly used nowadays, and vice versa – some common phrases from that time went out of use.

One such societal shifts is the increasingly common use of inclusive language. According to Vos, Misiek, and Gołębiowska (2025: 7) “inclusive language is the broadest term – it is used to show care and attentiveness in avoiding exclusion through language – that is, avoiding racism, xenophobia, sexism, classism, stigmatizing, etc.”¹. Inclusive language is an umbrella term with many subcategories, and this work will be focused on two of them: neutral language and nonbinary language.

As described by the abovementioned authors, “gender neutral language describes that subset of inclusive language that focuses on forming messages in a way that does not deepen gender stereotypes and to make each addressed person feel included despite the strong androcentric nature of the Polish language” (Vos, Misiek, and Gołębiowska 2025: 7). Later, a distinction is made, defining nonbinary language as a mode of communication that “allows nonbinary people, and other people outside of the gender binary easier express themselves in a manner consistent with their identity” (Vos, Misiek, and Gołębiowska 2025: 8).

According to the abovementioned definitions, gender neutral language is used in situations, where the speaker wants to avoid being sexist or gender exclusionary, or where previously accepted wording no longer fits the current social norm. An example of such a shift can be the current use of the word *firefighter* instead of the outdated *fireman*, or *police officer* in place of *policeman* to avoid suggesting the gender of people working in these fields. In standard Polish usage, masculine plural forms are conventionally employed as a generic

¹ All translations from Polish sources are mine, MK.

means of reference, even when the gender composition of the group is mixed or unspecified, so the use of neutral language can be implemented in the use of feminine forms alongside the masculine ones, e.g. *general* and *generalą* (both meaning a military general).

Another way of achieving gender neutrality in Polish is using personal language. This is most often done by replacing the two gendered forms by a singular, descriptive form, e.g. *osoby studenckie* (student persons) instead of *studenci i studentki* (male student and female students). However, if personal language form is used alongside other gendered forms, as in *studenci, studentki i osoby studenckie* (male students, female students, and student persons), it can be interpreted as a use of nonbinary language, since its purpose is to acknowledge those students that do not fit into either of the other two gender categories.

This distinction illustrates how language can acknowledge identities that exist outside of the traditional male – female binary. To better understand this, it is important to define what ‘nonbinary’ means in this context. In psychological and sociolinguistic research, the term ‘nonbinary’ is typically used to describe individuals “who do not identify within the gender-binary system (male vs. female), not falling exclusively in man/male or woman/female normative categories” (Scandurra et al. 2019: 1).

1.2 History of terms used to name people outside of the gender binary

Individuals who did not identify as either male or female have been documented in ancient civilisations across the globe, with the earliest known reference to people blurring the distinction between men and women dating back to the 23rd century BCE in ancient Mesopotamia (cf. Academus 2021). Other such identities include East Asian *hijras*, and Thai *kathoeys*, (Arcimowicz 2006) all of whom are regarded as representing a third gender within their respective cultures, even though in most cases they are not formally recognised by law. Early American settlers likewise took note of individuals who crossed socially defined gender roles, gender expression, and sexual orientation in numerous Native American tribes. These individuals are referred to as ‘Two-Spirit’, a term coined in 1990 during a Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference.

In that same year, another term, ‘genderqueer’, applicable to individuals who were not Native American, was defined in a publication issued by the Unitarian Universalist Association titled “The Welcoming Congregation Handbook: Resources for Affirming Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and/or Transgender People”. In this work, a genderqueer person is described as “a person whose understanding of her/hir/his gender identification transcends

society's polarized gender system" (Unitarian Universalist Association 1990). This definition aligns closely with that of the word 'nonbinary' proposed by Scandurra (2019), quoted earlier, and the two terms are frequently used interchangeably in both academic discourse and everyday language.

The first known use of the term 'non-binary' dates back to a 1941 scientific journal, where it was employed to describe systems that are not composed of two parts. In the early 2010s, the use of the adjective was broadened to refer to a person whose identity does not fit within the traditional two-gender system, commonly referred to as the gender binary. It remains unclear who first applied the term in this sense; however, the new usage spread rapidly through the Internet forums and online communities, and for many individuals it eventually replaced its predecessor. Originally, only the hyphenated form was used, but in recent years the spelling 'nonbinary' has become more common. The word is often shortened to 'NB', and the use of this acronym led to the coining of the term 'enby'. The creation of this form is commonly attributed to the user "revolutionator", who proposed it in 2013 on the social media and blogging platform Tumblr as a gender-neutral alternative to a 'boy' or a 'girl'.

1.3 Preferred terms in English and Polish

It should be noted that due to the complicated history, and the lack of standardisation across the globe there is no single universally accepted term used to refer to gender identities outside the male–female binary. Instead, a number of terms are in use, including, but not limited to, 'nonbinary', 'genderqueer', 'queer', and culture-specific terms discussed earlier, as in 1.2.

In social practice, these terms are not fully synonymous: each of them may emphasise slightly different aspects of gender identity, and gender expression, and their meanings may vary depending on cultural, linguistic, or individual context. In this text, the above terms will be treated as functionally equivalent and used to refer collectively to gender identities that do not conform to the binary model of male and female.

At the same time, the choice of the primary term used throughout this paper is not arbitrary. In order to reflect actual current preferences of people outside of the gender binary, this text draws on available statistical data concerning the frequency of use of individual terms in both Polish and international surveys.

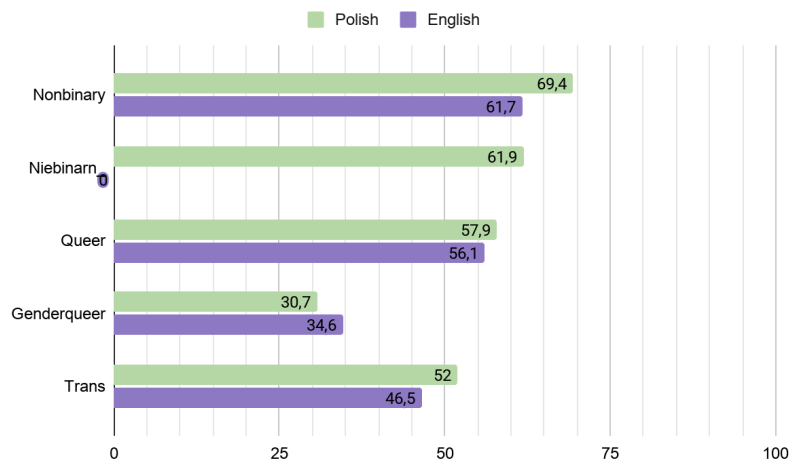


Figure 1: Preferred terms in English and Polish (data from *Niebinarny Spis Powszechny 2025*; and Gender Census 2025; source:own compilation)

As seen in figure 1, according to the Polish Nonbinary Census, a multiple-choice survey conducted in 2025 on the website zaimki.pl, the term ‘nonbinary’ was selected by 69.40% of 1584 respondents, making it the most frequently used label among the surveyed group. The second most popular option (61.90%) was the Polish adaptation of the term, *niebinarny*. The term ‘queer’, derived from ‘genderqueer’, ranked third, with 57.90% of participants indicating its use. The label ‘genderqueer’ itself was chosen by 30.70% of respondents, which indicates that the newer term ‘nonbinary’ was used by more than twice as many participants as the term it was originally intended to replace.

These results are mirrored in the 2025 edition of a comparable international study, namely the worldwide Gender Census conducted on the website gendercensus.com and addressed primarily to English-speaking participants. In this survey, ‘nonbinary’ was also the most frequently selected term, receiving 61.7% out of 43,096 responses, followed by ‘queer’ in second place (56.1%), with the full term ‘genderqueer’ getting less responses (34,6%). The third most popular option, selected by 46.5% of respondents, was the umbrella term ‘trans’. In the Polish survey, however, ‘trans’ occupied the fourth position (52%), which can be attributed to the methodology of the study, as it took into account both Polish and English variants of the term.

On the basis of the data from both of those surveys, the term ‘nonbinary’ is adopted as the default term meaning “individual who does not identify as either male or female” in this text, as it appears to be the most commonly used self-descriptor. Other terms are retained where they are historically, culturally, or analytically necessary.

1.4 Neutral pronouns in English

Just as the terms used for nonbinary people have evolved over time, so have the pronouns used to refer to individuals outside of the gender binary. The most natural choice for the English language structure is the use of singular ‘they’. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the use of the pronoun ‘they’ in reference to a singular individual can be traced back to the early 14th century. In the Middle English translation of the French poem *Guillaume de Palerne* (authors of the poem and the translation are unknown, so are the precise dates) the translator used the pronoun ‘they’ in a singular form to refer to a person of unspecified gender. This got popularised as a grammatically correct form and can be now found in dictionaries. In the early 21st century, with the rise of advocacy for nonbinary people, singular ‘they’ became the default neutral singular pronoun, and in 2019 the entry for the word ‘they’ in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary was expanded to include the definition “used to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary” (Merriam-Webster 2019).

Another option naturally fitting into the language structures of the English language is the pronoun *it*, which is grammatically neutral. This pronoun, however can be defined as “used as subject or direct object or indirect object of a verb or object of a preposition usually in reference to a lifeless thing” (Merriam-Webster 2025), which makes its use in reference to a person seem dehumanizing to many.

A relatively recently popularised phenomenon is the use of neopronouns, which can be the most easily described as “pronouns that fall outside the range of the typical, he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs” (Tinkler 2020). The oldest occurrence of this can be traced to 1858, when Merriam-Webster noted the use of *Thon*, a conjugation of *That one*, as a singular pronoun. According to the Gender Census this pronoun is still used by a small margin of nonbinary people. More attempts to create a universal set of neopronouns took place throughout the 20th century. An example of this can be *Co/Co/Cos/Cos/Coself* created by Mary Orovan, who came up with the neopronoun in the year 1970 (Baron 1981, as cited in McCord 2024).

The most popular neopronoun set in use today is *xe/xem/xyr/xyrs/xemself*. The coinage of this pronoun set can be credited to Don Rickter who used the pronouns in the Unitarian Universalist publication in 1973. According to the Gender Census the second most used set of neopronouns *fae/faer/faer/faers/faeself*. It was created by the user “eidolan” on the

platform Tumblr, and while the exact date of creation is unknown, the pronoun started spreading across the blogging site sometime in 2013. 'Fae/faeself' belongs to a subcategory of neopronouns called nounself pronouns, that are "A type of third-person singular neopronoun constructed [...] from a referent noun." (Wictionary 2025).

1.5 Neutral pronouns in Polish

Contrary to English, no personal neutral pronoun is as widely socially accepted as its English counterpart. The Polish third person singular pronoun *ono* is most commonly defined not as neutral, but as neuter, thus being primarily used for non-persons, such as objects, animals, abstract or indefinite things and only secondarily for people, mainly very young children; outside those cases, referring to a person as *ono* is generally considered unusual and often felt as impersonal or dehumanizing. (Bralczyk 2021 as cited in Mach 2021), According to *Poradnia Językowa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*:

Traditionally, people did not use these forms – they reached for the masculine or feminine gender [...] In recent years, however, the situation has changed: some people who do not identify with the male or female gender, who do not fit into the binary gender paradigm, choose neuter forms" (Hącia, 2025).

As it is pointed out by Hącia (2025), despite its traditionally impersonal connotations and its rarity in reference to people, *ono* has increasingly been adopted by some Polish-speaking nonbinary individuals as it is the easiest grammatically natural solution within a language that lacks an established gender-neutral personal pronoun. Since Polish is a heavily gendered synthetic language, adopting *ono* as a personal pronoun also requires the use of associated possessive and inflected forms, rather than a single standalone pronoun. There are multiple pairings of *ono* with a third-person singular possessive pronoun. The website *zaimki.pl* lists the following combinations:

- i. *ono/jego* – standard neuter grammatical gender, where the possessive pronoun is the same as in the male grammatical gender;
- ii. *ono/jej* – neuter grammatical gender with female possessive pronoun;
- iii. *ono/jejgo* – neuter grammatical gender with combined male and female possessive pronouns;
- iv. *ono/jeno* – neuter grammatical gender with postgender elements;
- v. *ono/jenu* – neuter grammatical gender with postgender forms;
- vi. *ono/ich* – neuter grammatical gender with plural forms.

All of the pronoun combinations listed would typically be used with the neuter singular form. That includes using the endings *-om*, *-oś*, *-o*, when conjugating a verb, i.e. *robiłom* (neuter form of ‘I did’), and the ending *-e* when conjugating a noun i.e. *przystojne* (neuter form of handsome).

Using such forms can seem confusing in a modern setting, but the earliest instances of such form being recognised as correct date back to 1796, where in a Polish grammar textbook written for German people *Praktische Polnische Grammatik für Deutsche*, forms *byłom*, *byłoś*, *było* (neuter form of ‘I was’, ‘you were’, ‘it was’) are listed as a correct neuter gender of the singular in the past tense (Adamowicz 1796: 90). The same can be found in *Grammatyka języka polskiego przez Maxymiliana Jakubowicza ułożona*, another Polish grammar textbook from 1823, which also lists the second person neuter forms for a past future tense as *miałoś być*, *albo tyś miało być* (neuter forms of ‘you were supposed to be’). Despite being grammatically correct, both the first and the second person forms of the neuter have been deemed archaic due to the apparent lack of practical uses, “they were considered to be potential forms or, at best, reserved for fairy tales and fables” (Hącia, 2025).

This lack of a modern set of neutral pronouns and grammatical rules for Polish led to the creation of a new set of pronouns, *onu/jenu*, named *dukaizmy* and/or *dukatywy* (Dukaisms and/or Dukativs) after their creator – Polish science fiction author – Jacek Dukaj. In his novel “*Perfekcyjna Niedoskonałość*” published in 2004 those pronouns are used by ‘posthuman’ beings of his creation, who are beyond our understanding of sex and gender. Because of this, these pronouns are also called postgender pronouns, and in the case of mixing more typical Polish pronouns with Dukaj’s creations i.e. *ono/jenu* the possessive pronoun *jenu* is called a postgender form, or postgender elements like in the case of *ono/jeno*, since *jeno* is neither a traditionally correct form nor one of the dukaisms, but it is heavily influenced by them. Dukaisms are coherent and analogous to normative forms, but some linguists don’t see them as necessary forms in real life (Bańko, as cited in Szczerbiak & Żelazińska, 2022).

Another solution used by a subset of nonbinary Polish users is copying and directly translating English pronouns. This, however, causes yet another divide, because the neutral ‘they/them’ has two translations into Polish: feminine plural form *one/ich*, traditionally used only for exclusively female groups, and the masculine plural form *oni/ich* used both male and mixed groups. There is precedence for a limited use of plural in reference to a single person in formal settings in Polish, but it is considered outdated and it applies only to masculine second person plural. Generally, this form of borrowing from English is considered to be incorrect.

1.6 Pronoun use: statistics

Despite the wide range of gender-neutral pronouns available in both Polish and English, not all of these pronoun sets are equally widespread and used by nonbinary individuals. The frequency of pronoun set usage is examined in both the *Niebinarny Spis Powszechny* (Polish Nonbinary Census) and the international Gender Census, the latter addressed primarily to English-speaking respondents. Both surveys offer multiple choice questions, allowing the participants to pick more than one set of pronouns they feel comfortable using.

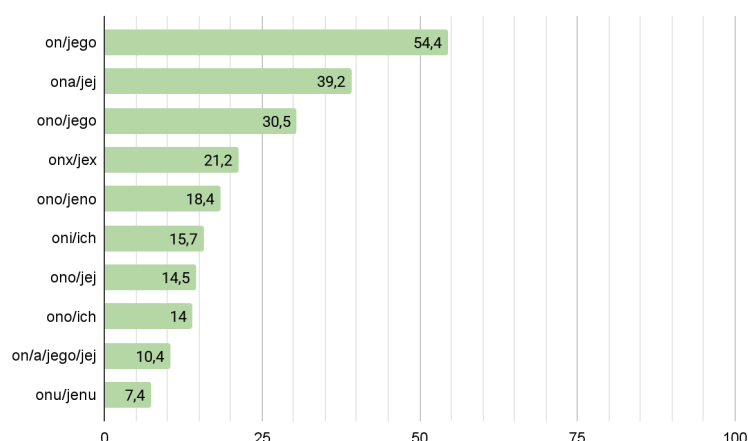


Figure 2: Most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns in Polish (data from *Niebinarny Spis Powszechny 2025*; source: own compilation)

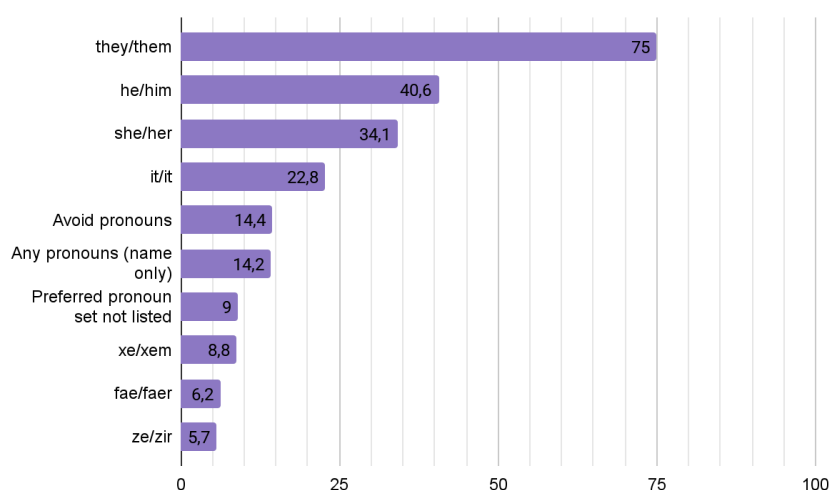


Figure 3: Most commonly used gender-neutral pronouns in English (data from Gender Census 2025; source: own compilation)

As seen in figure 2, the most frequently selected Polish forms are, *on/jego*, followed by *ona/jej*. These two sets are grammatically masculine and feminine singular forms, respectively, indicating that the majority of respondents rely on existing binary pronouns in

their daily life, leaning towards the masculine. This asymmetry reflects the broader tendency of masculine forms to function as the unmarked or default category in standard Polish usage. The structurally consistent with Polish inflectional patterns pronoun set *ono/jego* takes third place, being used by one third of the respondents.

Similarly, as seen in figure 3, most English speaking participants picked the forms well established in standard English language, with three quarters admitting to using the standard neutral form ‘they/them’. According to the Gender Census, ‘he/him’ pronouns are used more often than ‘she/her’ pronouns, despite ‘he’ not being used as a generic pronoun in English. ‘He/him’ may nonetheless be perceived by some speakers as less socially marked than ‘she/her’, particularly in contexts where masculinity is treated as normative or unremarkable.

English exhibits a clear preference for a single neutral pronoun set that is widely accepted in contemporary usage. Polish, by contrast, lacks a neutral singular pronoun accepted in standard formal registers, which results in a more fragmented distribution across binary, neuter, innovative (postgender forms and neopronouns), and plural-based forms. Statistically, this is reflected in the absence of a dominant category comparable to ‘they/them’ in English and the relatively even spread of lower-frequency options.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has established the terminological and empirical groundwork for analysing the translation of nonbinary identities. It distinguished between inclusive, neutral, and nonbinary language, tracing the historical emergence of terms such as nonbinary, genderqueer, and culture-specific designations, and demonstrated through survey data that nonbinary is the most frequently preferred self-label among gender-diverse individuals. Further this chapter examined the pronoun systems available in both languages, revealing that while English has wide use of the singular ‘they’, Polish lacks a standardised neutral personal pronoun, with the *ono/jego* pronoun set being the most popular neutral pronoun among the surveyed.

Chapter 2: Types and strategies of translation

The preceding discussion has outlined the linguistic landscape of inclusive, neutral, and nonbinary language use in Polish and English, including pronoun sets, and self-identification terms available to speakers outside the gender binary. The following section shifts the focus from linguistic description to translation theory, reviewing foundational definition of translation, and specific techniques translators employ, when structural or cultural mismatches arise between source and target languages. These theoretical tools are then applied in the subsequent analysis of empirical examples, enabling a systematic examination of how nonbinary references are rendered across different media and language pairs.

2.1 The attempt to gather and compare translation definitions

Defining translation is a fundamental part of linguistic studies focusing on translation. One of the most influential early attempts is that of Roman Jakobson, who in his essay “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (1959) conceptualizes translation as the interpretation of verbal signs through other signs, and distinguishes between three types: intralingual (rewording the text within the same language), interlingual (proper translation between the text in a source language into a text in the target language), and intersemiotic (transmutation between different sign systems). This model foregrounds the interpretative nature of the translation process, emphasising that translation is a process of re-coding between sign systems.

A different but equally influential approach is proposed by Eugene Nida, in the book “Toward a science of translating : with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating” (1964) where he defines translation as “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Nida 1964: 159). Nida’s definition places particular emphasis on equivalence. His approach shifts attention from structural correspondence to communicative effect, stressing legibility, function, and communicative effect of the translated text.

While those frameworks remain foundational, they do not explicitly address the challenges posed by contemporary developments in language use, particularly the emergence of new forms of expression, such as neutral and nonbinary languages. As such, a

reconsideration of both translation types and techniques is necessary in order to account for how nonbinary identities can be represented across different media and language systems.

2.2 Types of translations

There are several approaches to the categorisation of translation types. While some categorisations attempt to divide them by technologies or methods used in the process of translating, the most common classifications are by type of content that is being translated. There is no universal list of translation types by type of text, but most commonly listed and agreed-upon are:

- i. literary translation – translation of texts that are primarily artistic in nature, such as novels, poetry, and drama;
- ii. technical translation – translation of specialized texts within fields such as science, engineering, or information technology;
- iii. audiovisual translation – translation of multimedia content containing visual and auditory elements, either in form of translating subtitles or dubbing, such as movies, and TV series;
- iv. legal/institutional translation – translation of texts produced within legal, governmental, or administrative contexts, such as contracts, legislation, or official documents; (Baker and Saldanha 2011);
- v. game localisation – adapting video games for different linguistic and cultural contexts, which includes modifying dialogue, user interfaces, cultural references, and sometimes gameplay elements to ensure accessibility, coherence, and an appropriate player experience. (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013).

This thesis restricts its analysis to the literary translation, audiovisual translation and game localisation, as they are most relevant to the research focus.

2.3 Literary translation

The category of translation is very broad, and it can be further divided into multiple subcategories by specific text types. Each of the types poses different challenges to the translator, but they are collectively characterised by a primary focus on aesthetic, expressive, and artistic qualities. The main hardship when translating any kind of literary text lies in the need to reproduce both semantic content and emotional effect. The translator needs to relay the 'voice', the writing style of the author, and all the meanings of the text; both the literal

meaning of the words, and the meaning hidden behind the stylistic choices. In the case of some literary works, the translator needs to make choices which result in changing the literal layer of the text in favour of better representing the author's intent of capturing certain emotions.

Translation of poetry is the most challenging in terms of capturing the author's intent and requires the most creative solutions from the translator. Because of poetry's limited form, each word in a poetic work is chosen deliberately by the author to convey a specific mood and emotion. This indicates that the meaning of poetry is often up for the reader's interpretation, so the translator must choose one of the multiple readings of the text. This, however, is not the only difficulty in translating poetry. Each form of poetry has specific rhythm, syllable count, and a rhyming scheme, and they cannot differ between the work in the target language and the original piece.

Translation of novels poses a separate assortment of difficulties, the main one stemming from the length of this literary form. To put a novel into another language, the translator needs to produce hundreds of pages of writing, simultaneously keeping the author's style, the book's mood, and the personalities of the characters, as well as taking artistic liberties to convey humour, implied meanings, and wordplays. Translated novels will be received by an audience of readers who have cultural backgrounds and contexts differing from those of the author, so specific references need to either be changed or sufficiently explained in either footnotes or translator's notes. In the case of translation between Polish and English there is also a difference in the writing conventions when it comes to dialogues. In novels written in English dialogues are signified by the use of quotation marks, and Polish novels most commonly use hyphens or en-dashes.

2.4 Audiovisual translation

The term 'audiovisual' in the context of translation means a medium in which spoken language is combined with images, sound, and music, thus involving both sight (video) and sound (audio). Audiovisual translation typically applies to films, television series, broadcasts, streaming shows, animated content, online videos, commercials, and advertisements. In recent years, the rapid rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+ or PrimeVideo has significantly increased the demand for audiovisual translation. Despite that, the process of translating this type of content remains challenging due to the technical constraints put on the translator. A translator must remain faithful to the original content, both in meaning and tone,

while keeping the dialogue coherent and fluent. This requires balancing literal translation with necessary adaptations to the target language and cultural context.

Translating lines for dubbing (replacing original audio with lines recorded by actors in another language) is made particularly challenging by the need to synchronize the translated dialogue with the existing audiovisual elements. The translated dialogue must fit in the time constraints imposed by the original material, and, what is most important, match the mouth movements. For example, an English word ending with a bilabial plosive (/p/, /b/, /m/) like “lamp” cannot easily be replaced with a word ending in an open vowel like “see” without visible mismatch. Moreover, the utterance in the target language must precisely match the length of the dialogue in the source language in order to avoid mouth moving without a sound being made, or, on the contrary, a dialogue continuing while the person speaking on screen has clearly finished the sentence. On top of that, the translation must match visual cues, like gestures, pauses, and other physical movement, and avoid the overlapping of dialogue lines with music and background sounds. Despite all those complexities, the translation work needs to be completed in a relatively short time, especially in the case of TV-shows with new episodes airing every week.

While dubbing is constrained by lip movements and line delivery length, subtitling is constrained by reading speed and spatial limitations. Subtitles must fit within a limited number of lines (typically 1–2) and a maximum width of the screen; because of this, very strict character limits are implemented in guidelines released by entertainment streaming platforms. Each streaming service has its own subtitle specification, forcing translators to adapt.

Platform	Max. character number per line	Max. line number	Reading speed	Minimum duration	Maximum Duration
PrimeVideo	42	2	“For Adult Programs: 17 characters per second. For Children’s Programs: 13 characters per second.” “If the text cannot be condensed, the following priority should be followed: [...] let the reading speed go up to 21 characters per second.”	“Approx. five-sixths of a second per subtitle event”	7 seconds per subtitle event.
Disney +	42	2	“Traditional content should be 20 CPS.” “Children’s content should be 17 CPS”	“minimum 1 second”	“maximum 7 seconds”
Netflix	42	2	“Adult programs: Up to 17 characters per second Children’s programs: Up to 13 characters per second”	“5% of a second per subtitle event”	“7 seconds per subtitle event”
HBO Max	42	3	NA	NA	NA

Table 1: Timed text guidelines across different streaming platforms (data from POLISH (POLAND) LOCALISATION STYLE AND TECHNICAL GUIDE; Polish Timed Text Style Guide; Disney digital supply chain subtitle and closed captioning style guide version 1.1.1.; Media Ingest Specifications: Timed Text; source: own compilation)

As seen in table 1, even though most platforms' standards are identical in certain aspects, such as character number per line, and only vary marginally in others (one fifth of a second longer minimal duration time on Disney+ when compared with other platforms), some guidelines like reading speed change drastically between platforms. While PrimeVideo and Netflix agree on the same base reading speed, Amazon allows the upper limit to be extended by 4 characters per seconds when the volume of translated dialogue is too great and impossible to condense in any other way. Disney+, however, puts baseline reading speed for children's content at 17 characters per second, which equals Netflix's and Prime's guidelines for adult reading speed. Because of this, Disney's baseline adult reading speed is automatically also higher, with the guidelines putting it at 20 characters per second, which is only 1 character slower than Amazon's high intensity subtitles. Because of those differences, translators may need to produce different versions of the same subtitle for different platforms, or constrain their work to the most restrictive standard to ensure that the content can be put out on different platforms.

2.5 Game localisation

Videogame localisation is very similar to audiovisual translation in certain aspects, while staying very unique in its form. Certain difficulties, such as time constraints and lip movements are shared between the two due to the fact that most video games combine voiced lines of dialogue with visual aspects. The main difference lies in the fact that video games, unlike videos, are highly intractable. In most cases, the player has a key role in choosing the order in which dialogue is played, which means that every line needs to be self-reliant, without leaning too hard on information and context from a different piece of dialogue.

Unlike movies or TV shows, games are a complex mix of elements, which means that dialogue, both written and spoken, is not the only text being translated. Depending on the game type, games often contain substantial amounts of nonlinear text, such as: user interface, item logs and their descriptions, settings, achievements with descriptions, tutorials, notification pop-ups, in-game environmental elements (graffiti, puzzles, signs), error messages, control input descriptions, map labels, and many more specific pieces of writing. All of those can be easily omitted due to their sheer amount, which can force the translator to be especially careful.

The problem with the amount of fragmented text is furthered by the diversity of the gaming industry. While books, shows, or movies often rely on similar structures, each game

franchise is different, and major elements can differ from game to game even within the same series. With technological development, more elements are added with each instalment, and that leads to increased complexity. Furthermore, the technical aspect is not the only consideration in game localization. For a game translation to succeed, it must preserve the logic of communication between the game and the player in a way that does not feel unnatural. When playing a video game, the player sinks into the world being portrayed, and not a single word can feel out of place. For example, modern slang like “cool” or “bro” feels jarring in a medieval setting, and a futuristic hacker character using phrases such as “thy” or “Prithee” would look equally out of place. A successful game translation should remain coherent, playable, and immersive.

Another, and one of the most persistent difficulties in video game localization is the lack of context provided to the translator. Unlike any form of literary translation, where source texts are typically presented in a coherent, linear format, game content is usually extracted into spreadsheets or translation databases that strip each line of its original environment. Translators often receive thousands of isolated lines sorted alphabetically or numerically rather than by function or scene. As a result, a seemingly simple word like “ready” might appear dozens of times, yet serve completely different purposes: a button to start a match, a status indicator in a multiplayer lobby, a character’s spoken line, or a tooltip prompt. Without access to screenshots, a playable build, or even basic metadata indicating where a line appears, the translator is left to guess. This guesswork inevitably leads to inconsistencies and pragmatic errors, i.e. translations that are linguistically correct but feel wrong when the player actually encounters them in the game.

Beyond the general lack of context, English–Polish translation presents a distinct set of grammatical challenges that complicate game localization. English relies heavily on word order to convey grammatical relationships, whereas Polish employs a complex system of cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, locative, and vocative) to indicate the function of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives within a sentence. This structural difference becomes problematic when translators encounter isolated strings. An English word such as ‘wolves’ requires the translator to know whether ‘wolves’ appears in a quest title, a loading screen tip, or a combat log, as each context demands a different case form – *zabij 5 wilków* (‘kill 5 wolves’, accusative) for a straightforward objective, but potentially *polowanie na wilki* (‘hunting for wolves’, genitive) for a quest name. Similarly, English lacks grammatical gender for most nouns, while Polish assigns gender to virtually everything, affecting verb forms and adjectives. A simple UI label like ‘New’ attached to an item could

become *nowy* (masculine), *nowa* (feminine), or *nowe* (neuter) depending on the noun it modifies – information the translator rarely receives. Verb aspect further complicates matters: Polish distinguishes perfective from imperfective verbs (e.g. *zabić* vs. *zabijać*), forcing the translator to infer whether an action is completed or ongoing without any contextual cues. These grammatical features, natural to Polish speakers, become sources of constant uncertainty when lines are stripped of their functional environment, often resulting in inconsistent declension or gender mismatches that undermine the player's immersion.

2.6 Translation techniques

The preceding sections have examined how translation can be defined, how its various forms can be categorised, and how it operates within specific domains such as literature, audiovisual media, and game localisation. Translation, however, is not merely a matter of finding dictionary equivalents. It is a process involving a series of deliberate, teachable procedures. These procedures, commonly referred to as translation techniques, range from relatively direct operations, such as borrowing a word from the source language or translating literally, to more indirect ones, such as altering grammatical structures. The first linguists to propose a list of such procedures were Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet in their *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation* (1958).

In their work they name two main types of translation methods: literal translation and oblique (indirect) translation. Literal translation transfers a source text word-for-word into the target language and is used when both languages share sufficient structural and cultural compatibility. Oblique translation becomes necessary when literal rendering is impossible, unnatural, or nonsensical.

Further in the text they highlight specific techniques, listed as ,borrowing, calque, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Borrowing occurs when a word or expression is transferred directly from the source language into the target language without translation. Calque is a type of borrowing where the source language expression is translated literally, piece by piece, into the target language. Transposition involves changing the grammatical category of a word or phrase without altering its meaning. Modulation changes the point of view, perspective, or logical approach of the source message without altering its meaning. Equivalence refers to translating an expression, usually an idiom or fixed phrase, using a completely different expression in the target language that serves the same function in its own cultural and linguistic context. Adaptation involves replacing a cultural reference,

situation, or concept from the source text with something different that is familiar and appropriate to the target culture.

Technique used	English example	Polish translation example	Explanation
Borrowing	‘I like jazz’	<i>Lubię jazz</i>	The word ‘jazz’ is directly imported in the form and meaning.
Calque	‘He works in that skyscraper’	<i>On pracuje w tym drapaczu chmur</i>	The compound word ‘skyscraper’ is translated piece by piece.
Transposition	‘After his arrival’	<i>Po tym, jak przyjechał</i>	The grammatical category of ‘arrival’ is changed from a noun to a verb phrase, but the meaning is not changed.
Modulation	‘It is not difficult’	<i>To jest łatwe</i>	The negative is changed for a positive, changing the way of expressing the idea, while keeping the meaning.
Equivalence	‘It’s raining cats and dogs’	<i>Leje jak z cebra</i>	A different idiom is used to keep meaning and function.
Adaptation	‘He has invited me to high school prom’	<i>Zaprosił mnie na studniówkę</i>	The concept of ‘prom’ does not exist in Polish culture, the most culturally equivalent event is <i>stundiówka</i> .

Table 2: Translation techniques according to Vinay & Darbelnet (1958: 30-40) with examples provided by the author

Different strategy types worth mentioning include addition, subtraction, and alteration, as described by Eugene Nida in his book “Toward a science of translating: with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating” (1964).

Technique used	English example	Polish translation example	Explanation
Addition	‘He shrugged.’	<i>Wzruszył ramionami.</i>	Polish requires more specific wording and clarification, so ‘shoulders’ is added to make the meaning clear and natural
Subtraction	‘He shrugged his shoulders.’	<i>Wzruszył ramionami.</i>	‘His’ is removed, as it is implied, and adding it would be unnatural, unnecessary or redundant
Alteration	‘He gave me a look.’	<i>Spojrzał na mnie.</i>	The same meaning is conveyed in two different ways, changing a noun phrase into verb to keep the text natural

Table 3: Translation techniques according to Nida (1964: 227-233) with examples provided by the author

Examples presented in table 3 illustrate samples of translation corresponding to the techniques proposed by Eugene Nida.

Addition involves introducing elements into the target text that are not present in the source text. According to Nida, additions make explicit what is implicit in the original, clarify ambiguous structures, or satisfy grammatical requirements of the target language. When properly used, additions do not change the semantic content; they merely change how the information is communicated.

Subtraction is the removal of source text elements in the target text. Nida argues that subtractions are the negative counterpart of additions: they make explicit information implicit without diminishing the overall semantic content. This technique is justified when preserving formal elements would damage naturalness or when the source contains redundancy that the target language does not require.

Alteration covers all adjustments that are neither additions nor subtractions. This broad category includes changes to sounds (phonological adjustments), grammatical categories (e.g. shifting number, gender, or tense), word classes (e.g. adjective to adverb),

order of elements (syntax), clause and sentence structure, and semantic problems involving single words or exocentric expressions (idioms). In essence, alteration is any necessary modification that does not simply add or remove material but transforms existing material.

Vinay and Darbelnet's system offers specific techniques, but is often seen as tied to particular languages and cultures. In contrast, Nida's broader, more flexible framework is sometimes questioned for its subjective measure of 'equivalent effect'. These two models are not opposing; rather, Vinay and Darbelnet's practical methods can work effectively within Nida's communicative approach. A comprehensive translation practice may benefit from integrating both: applying Vinay and Darbelnet's techniques while guided by Nida's principle of achieving communicative equivalence.

Chapter 3: Nonbinary and gender-neutral language in literary texts, audiovisual media, and video game localisation: case study

Building upon the theoretical framework established in the preceding chapters, this chapter applies the outlined translation typologies and techniques to empirically drawn data from literary texts, audiovisual media, and video game localisation. The analysis focuses specifically on how nonbinary and gender-neutral language is rendered in Polish translation of English content, with particular attention to pronoun selection, grammatical consistency, and the translation strategies employed. By examining excerpts from novels, television series, and interactive digital medium, this chapter aims to identify recurrent patterns, shifts, and potential limitations in current translation practice regarding nonbinary representation across different media forms.

3.1 Methodology and research material

The research material consisted of a deliberately selected set of 21st-century narrative texts and interactive media that feature non-binary and/or gender nonconforming characters in significant roles. The primary literary sources included “The Freeze-frame Revolution” by Peter Watts (2018) and “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee (2019). Audiovisual material included selected episodes from “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power” (Season 4, Episode 2 “The Valley of the Lost” and Episode 4 “Pulse”, 2019), as well as *One Day at a Time* (Season 2, Episode 3 “To Zir, with love”, 2018). Interactive media included the video games “Baldur’s Gate 3” (2023) and *Paralives* (2026). These works were treated as comparative case studies representing different media formats: prose literature, animated television, live-action television, and video games.

All materials were examined in their officially released English-language versions, and Polish-language versions, including original texts, licensed streaming subtitles, and in-game localization where applicable. No fan translations or unofficial modifications were used. The analysis focused on consistent viewing/reading/playthrough conditions, with repeated access to specific scenes, dialogue segments, and narrative passages where relevant to ensure accuracy in interpreting linguistic choices and localization strategies.

The selection criteria were based on three main factors. First, all works were required to be released after 2010 to ensure relevance to contemporary language use and localization practices, particularly due to the emergence and normalization of non-binary terminology in

English and Polish languages. Second, each sample needed to include at least one non-binary or gender nonconforming character whose narrative role extended beyond minor or background representation, ensuring sufficient textual or audiovisual material for analysis. Third, the works were chosen to represent a range of media formats to allow for cross-medium comparison of translation and localization strategies.

The research employed a comparative qualitative methodology. The primary method was close reading and close viewing combined with comparative analysis of translation and localization choices across languages and media formats. All selected fragments were analysed using translation techniques as defined by Eugene Nida (1964) and by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), allowing for a systematic classification of strategies. The study examined how gendered language, pronouns, character naming, and identity markers were rendered in subtitles, dubbing, and game localization systems. Where applicable, differences between source text and localized versions were identified and categorized, with attention to consistency, omission, adaptation, and creative reinterpretation. The analysis was interpretive rather than quantitative, focusing on patterns of representation and translation strategy rather than frequency-based measurement.

3.2 Literary examples

Having outlined the theoretical framework in the previous chapter, the following analysis applies the translation strategies to selected examples of literary translation drawn from two novels. The material consists of four excerpts (two from each work), presented in a tabular form.

Language	Quote
English	“Ow! What the fuck, Lian!” Kaden was clutching hir right arm where Lian had stabbed it with the dismembered thorn. She stabbed again as I watched, in the thigh this time. Kaden howled and went down. Dao took a step forward; one of his companions clapped a hand on his shoulder and he quieted.
Polish	– Au! Lian, pojechało cię? – Kaden ściskało prawą rękę w miejscu, gdzie Lian dźgnęła ją odciętym kolcem. Ukłuła je po raz kolejny, tym razem w udo. Kaden zawyło i padło. Dao zrobił krok

	naprzód. Jego anioł stróż położył mu dłoń na ramieniu. Uspokoił się.
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Table 4: Dialogue with Polish translation from “The Freeze-frame Revolution” by Peter Watts. Translation by: Wojciech Próchniewicz

Language	Quote
English	I crutched Kaden back to the exit, hir good arm around my shoulder, our respective good legs taking the weight of our respective bad ones. Kaden’s wounds went deeper than mine; se hissed, clenched hir teeth with each step as we hobbled away from the light. Eri’s singularity, close below, added weight to every step. “She’s changed,” I said. “Had to,” se gritted. “Put this whole thing together while you were sleeping with the enemy.” I let hir take more of hir weight on the next step— “Shhhhit...” —and took it back, point made. “We’re all sleeping with the enemy, Kaden. Anyone who wasn’t would’ve been dead a thousand builds ago.” “If you say so.” “It’s inspiring to see you show such generosity to someone who just came within a few centimeters of slicing open your femoral artery.” “Like she said. Gotta sell this.” Kaden’s face turned toward me; in the dark, it might as well have been a radar dish. “She better be right about you.”
Polish	Poprowadziłam Kaden do wyjścia, jego zdrowe ramię owinięte wokół mojego ramienia, a nasze zdrowe nogi niosące nasze uszkodzone. Rany Kaden sięgały głębiej niż moje – syczało, zaciskało zęby z każdym krokiem, gdy kuśtykaliśmy w ciemność. Osobliwość Eri, niedaleko pod spodem, dodatkowo obciążała każdy krok. – Zmieniła się – powiedziałam. – Musiała – wycodziło przez zaciśnięte zęby. – Zorganizowała to wszystko, kiedy ty

	sypiałaś z wrogiem. Pozwoliłam mu bardziej obciążyć nogę przy następnym kroku... – Kurr... ...i podniosłam go z powrotem, gdy dotarło. – Kaden, wszyscy śpiamy z wrogiem. Każdy, kto nie śpiał, tysiąc budów temu już by nie żył. – Skoro tak mówisz. – To inspirujące, patrzeć, jakie mile jesteś dla kogoś, komu brakowało paru centymetrów, żeby ci przeciąć tętnicę udową. – Tak jak mówiła. Musimy mu to sprzedać. – Kaden zwróciło twarz do mnie. W ciemności równie dobrze mogła to być antena radaru. – Oby się nie myliła co do ciebie.
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Table 5: Dialogue with Polish translation from “The Freeze-frame Revolution” by Peter Watts. Translation by: Wojciech Próchniewicz

Excerpts from “Freeze-Frame Revolution”, are presented in tables 4 and 5, including both dialogue and narrative passages referring to Kaden, a non-binary crewmate on a starship. Watts chose to write Kaden using ‘se/hir’ pronouns, which is not a commonly used set of neopronouns. In the Polish version of the book, the translator – Wojciech Próchniewicz – opted for the pronoun set *ono/jego* which remains consistent with the grammatical norms of Polish, rather than introducing a neopronoun set that is not established in the language. This translation represents modulation in Vinay and Darbelnet’s sense, since the non-binary pronoun system “se/hir” is not directly reproduced but re-expressed through the Polish grammatical category “ono/jego”. It results in a shift in perspective, but does not change the meaning.

In the table below are presented excerpts from Yoon Ha Lee’s science fiction book “Dragon Pearl”, featuring dialogue between the main character, Kim Min, and one of the supporting characters, Sujin.

Language	Quote
English	Sujin came up next to Haneul. “You haven’t been studying, have you?” they asked. “Isn’t it enough that we have classes all day? This is leisure time. You’re supposed to be doing something fun.”

Polish	Sujin pojawiło się obok Haneul. – Nie uczyłeś się chyba, co? – zapytało . – Nie wystarczy ci, że mamy lekcje przez cały dzień? Teraz jest czas wolny. Powinniśmy robić coś zabawowego.
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Table 6: Dialogue with Polish translation from “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee. Translation by: Agnieszka Fulińska i Aleksandra Klęczar

Language	Quote
English	Sujin and I walked toward the elevator that would take us to the bridge level. The goblin was more subdued than usual, and it made the distance seem to stretch forever. Had they heard about my run-in with the captain? If so, I wished they’d just ask me about it and end the suspense.
Polish	Razem z Sujin ruszyliśmy do windy, która miała nas zawieźć na poziom mostka. Dokkaebi było bardziej posępne niż zwykle, przez co droga dłużyła się w nieskończoność. Czy słyszało o moim spotkaniu z kapitanem? Jeśli tak, wołałabym, żeby mnie zapytało i skończyło tę niepewność.

Table 7: Dialogue with Polish translation from “Dragon Pearl” by Yoon Ha Lee. Translation by: Agnieszka Fulińska i Aleksandra Klęczar

As presented in tables 6 and 7, one of the major supporting characters, like Kaden, is a nonbinary member of a spaceship crew. Sujin, is a Dokkaebi, a mythical being from Korean myths, often called Korean goblins. Their preferred pronouns are ‘they’ and ‘them’, which aligns with the most common neutral pronoun choice among English-speaking nonbinary people. The translation duet of Agnieszka Fulińska and Aleksandra Klęczar chose *ono/jego* to represent Sujin’s identity.

Although “ono/jego” is not a direct formal equivalent of English “they/them”, its documented usage in non-binary communities in Polish described in section 1.6 suggests that it may function as a pragmatic equivalent in terms of communicative effect. In Vinay and Darbelnet’s model, this can be interpreted as equivalence, as it fulfils a similar communicative function in Polish non-binary discourse, particularly given its attested usage in community preferences. In Nida’s framework it aligns more closely with dynamic equivalence as it

prioritises the communicative effect and recognisable non-binary reference within the target-language context over formal correspondence.

In both works, the translators adopt neuter singular forms in rendering the characters' speech, which aligns with the forms deemed grammatically correct by Adamowicz (1796: 90), as outlined in section 1.5.

3.3 TV show examples

Following the analysis of literary translation, selected examples of audiovisual translation are examined from two television series. The material consists of four excerpts (two from each series), presented in tables and analysed in terms of the translation of spoken dialogue and its rendering in the target language.

Language & medium	Dialogue
English CC	[Double Trouble] It's not what I want from you, but what you want from me. [Catra] All I want from you is for you to stop being me. [DT] Oh, sorry. I plain forgot. Sometimes I just get so lost in my character. Ta-da! Thank you, thank you. [Scorpia][Gasps] I gotta sit down. [C] This is what you really look like? [DT] More or less. Of course, we all wear costumes. I just happen to be able to wear other people as costumes. For a price.
Polish Subtitles	[Kłopotowski] Chodzi o to, czego ty chcesz ode mnie. [Catra] Tylko tego, żebyś przestał być mną. [K] Przepraszam. Zapomniałem. Czasem zatracam się w postaci. Dziękuję. [Scorpia] Ohh! Chyba muszę klapnąć. [C] Tak wyglądasz? [K] Mniej więcej. Wszyscy nosimy kostiumy. Ale moim kostiumem są inni ludzie. Za odpowiednią cenę.
English Dubbing	[Double Trouble] It's not what I want from you, but what you want from me. [Catra] All I want from you is for you to stop being me! [DT] Oh, sorry. I plain forgot. Sometimes I just get so lost in my character. Ta-da! Ah

	thank you, thank you. [Scorpia] Ahh! I gotta sit down. [C] This is what you really look like? [DT] More or less. Of course, we all wear costumes. I just happen to be able to wear other people as costumes. For a price.
Polish Dubbing	[Kłopotowski] Sęk nie w tym, czego ja chcę od ciebie, ale czego ty chcesz ode mnie. [Catra] Jedyne czego ja chcę, to że masz przestać być mną! [K] O, sorki. Niedopatrzenie. Czasem aż za bardzo wczuwam się w rolę. Ta-da! Dziękuję, dziękuję. [Scorpia] Muszę usiąść. [C] To tak naprawdę wyglądasz? [K] Mniej więcej. Rzecz jasna wszyscy nosimy kostiumy. A ja po prostu mogę nosić innych jako kostium. Ale nie za darmo.

Table 8: Dialogue with Polish translation from “She-Ra and the Princesses of Power”, season 4, episode 2 “The Valley of the Lost”. Dubbing translation: Agnieszka Wagner. Subtitle translation: information not available.

Language & medium	Dialogue
English CC	[Double Trouble] Here’s your stop, kitten. What are you going to tell your boss about all his shiny new bots getting blown up? [Catra] I’m going to say “You’re welcome for testing them before we moved ahead with our big plan. Obviously they were garbage. Hey, thank you, by the way, for saving me. I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t shown up. [DT] Well, I live to serve. For a price, of course. [DT] Marvelous! And don’t worry darling, I’ll keep a better eye on Glimmer. Who knew she was so powerful?
Polish Subtitles	[Kłopotowski] To twój przystanek. Co powiesz szefowi o rozwalonych botach? [Catra] “Nie ma za co. Przetestowałam je, zanim wcieliliśmy w życie nasz plan. To był złom.” Dziękuję, że mnie uratowałeś. Nie wiem, co bym bez ciebie zrobiła. [K] Żyję, by służyć. Za odpowiednią cenę.

	[K] Wspaniale. Będę miał Glimmer na oku. Jest bardzo potężna.
English Dubbing	[Double Trouble] Here's your stop, kitten. What are you going to tell your boss about all his shiny new bots getting blown up? [Catra] I'm going to say "You're welcome for testing them before we moved ahead with our big plan. Obviously they were garbage. Hey, thank you, by the way, for saving me. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't shown up." [DT] Well, I live to serve. For a price, of course. [DT] Marvelous! And don't worry darling, I'll keep a better eye on Glimmer. Who knew she was so powerful?
Polish Dubbing	[Kłopotowski] Twój przystanek, kiciu. I co powiesz szefowi o lśniących nowością botach, które wysadziło w powietrze? [Catra] Powiem mu tak: Podziękuj za przetestowanie ich przed finalną fazą wielkiego planu. To ewidentnie był szmelc. Hej. Dzięki, tak w ogóle. Za uratowanie mnie. Nie wiem co bym zrobiła gdybyś się nie pojawił. [K] Cóż, żyję, żeby służyć. Nie darmo, rzecz jasna. [K] Doskonale! I nie martw się skarbie, będę mieć oko na Glimmer. Kto by przypuszczał, że ma taką moc!

Table 9: Dialogue with Polish translation from "She-Ra and the Princesses of Power", season 4, episode 4 "Pulse". Dubbing translation: Agnieszka Wagner. Subtitle translation: information not available.

Tables 8 and 9 contain excerpts of dialogues in both voiced and subtitled forms of the animated TV series "She-Ra and the Princesses of Power". The character named Double Trouble, introduced to the supporting cast in season 4, is canonically non-binary within the series; however, the selected material does not include instances of third-person reference. Moreover, first-person reference in English does not convey gender information and therefore does not signal gender identity. Jacob Tobia in an interview for Entertainment Weekly confirms the character's identity by using 'they/them' pronouns for Double Trouble, even explicitly stating "Double Trouble uses they/them pronouns. Some people use they/them pronouns" (Gomez & Tobia 2019).

Despite Double Trouble's non-binary identity, the Polish translation consistently employs masculine grammatical forms in both second- and first-person contexts in reference to the character, replacing gender-neutral marking with a binary grammatical category in the target language. While it seems that in the dubbing translation Double Trouble avoids using personal forms to refer to themselves, in the subtitles a singular masculine form is used: "And don't worry darling, I'll keep a better eye on Glimmer." becomes "*I nie martw się skarbie, będę mieć oko na Glimmer.*" in the dubbing, and "*Będę miał Glimmer na oku*" in the subtitles. The subtitles, besides being significantly shorter due to omission forced by technical constraints of audiovisual translation (described in 2.4) change neutral form of 'I will have' (*będę mieć*) to a masculine one (*będę miał*).

Regardless of the medium (subtitles vs. dubbing), other characters refer to Double Trouble using masculine forms: "Hey, thank you, by the way, for saving me. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't shown up" is translated to *Dzięki, tak w ogóle. Za uratowanie mnie. Nie wiem co bym zrobiła gdybyś się nie pojawił* in the dubbed version, and in the subtitles to *Dzięki, że mnie uratowałeś. Nie wiem, co bym bez ciebie zrobiła*. The dubbing uses the masculine form *pojawił* ('shown up'), while subtitles avoided using gendered language in that segment, instead using it in *uratowałeś* ('saved me'). Moreover, in both versions, the character's name is adapted to *Kłopotowski*, which carries a typically masculine morphological ending ("-ski").

The analysed examples illustrate different translation strategies: modulation in the neutralisation of gender-marked verb forms ("*będę mieć*"), modulation or adaptation in the replacement of non-binary pronouns with masculine forms, and adaptation in the morphological and cultural restructuring of the name 'Double Trouble' into *Kłopotowski*.

In the tables below are presented transcripts from the episode "To Zir, with love" from the Netflix TV show 'One Day at a Time' consisting of the dialogue between the show's main characters, Elena and Penelope Alvarez, a recurring character, Syd, and two minor characters.

Language & medium	Dialogue
English CC	[Elena] Anyway, this is the advocacy group I was telling you about. The Feminist Gamers of Echo Park. We've been hanging out online and this is our first meeting IRL. [Penelope] Welcome. What's everybody's name? [Dani] I'm Dani, my pronouns are 'she' and 'her' [Syd] Syd. My pronouns are 'they' and 'them' [Margaux] I'm Margaux. Pronouns 'Ze' and 'Zir' [P] I'm Penelope, my thoughts are 'huh?' and 'what?' Seriously, what is happening? [E] Well, because some people are gender non-conforming, they have preferred pronouns.
Polish Subtitles	[Elena] To grupa interesu, o której wam mówiłam. [Penelope] Witam. Jak się nazywacie? [Dani] Dani. Moje zaimki 'ona' i 'jej' [Syd] Syd. Zaimki 'Oni' i 'ich' [Margaux] Margaux. Zaimki 'zon' i 'zej' [P] Penelope. Pytam: 'Co?' i 'Że jak?' Poważnie. O co chodzi? [E] Nie poddają się ograniczeniom płciowym i używają wybranych przez siebie zaimków.
English original voice lines	[Elena] Anyway, this is the advocacy group I was telling you about. The Feminist Gamers of Echo Park. [Penelope] Welcome. What's everybody's name? [Dani] I'm Dani, my pronouns are 'she' and 'her' [Syd] Syd. My pronouns are 'they' and 'them' [Margaux] I'm Margaux. Pronouns 'Ze' and 'Zir' [P] I'm Penelope, my thoughts are 'huh?' and 'what?' Seriously, what is happening? [E] Well, because some people are gender non-conforming, they have certain preferred pronouns.

Polish Voice Over	[Elena] To grupa, o której ci mówiłam. Feministyczni Gejmerzy. Spotykaliśmy się w sieci, a teraz w realu [Penelope] Dzień dobry, jak się nazywacie? [Dani] Dani. Moje zaimki to ‘ona’ i ‘jej’ [Syd] Syd. Zaimki ‘oni’ i ‘ich’ [Margaux] Margaux. Zaimki ‘ono’ i ‘onego’ [P] Penelope. Nic nie kumam. Co robicie? [E] Nie mieścimy się we wzorach genderowych. Sami dobieramy zaimki.
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Table 10: Dialogue and its Polish translation from ‘One Day at a Time’, season 2, episode 3 ‘To Zir, with love’.

Voice over translation: information not available. Subtitle translation: Ewa Nowicka

Language & medium	Dialogue
English CC	[Syd] She has a girlfriend. She’s so lucky. Hey, uh, do you want to split that cookie? [Elena] Huh? Wait. Oh... [S] Oh, nevermind. Uh, I thought... Sorry. Sorry, sorry. [E] No, no! Gay! Me gay! [chuckles] [S] Oh. Uh, me gay, too
Polish Subtitles	[Syd] Ma dziewczynę. Szczęściara z niej. Podzielisz się ze mną tym ciastkiem? [Elena] Zaraz... [S] Nieważne. Myślałam... wybacz. [E] Nie! Homo! Ja, homo! [S] Ja homo też.
English original voice lines	[Syd] She has a girlfriend. She’s so lucky. Hey, uh, do you want to split that cookie? [Elena] Huh? Wait. Oh... [S] Oh, nevermind. Uh, I thought... Sorry. Sorry, sorry. [E] No, no! Gay! Me gay! [chuckles] [S] Oh. Uh, me gay, too
Polish Voice Over	[Syd] Ma dziewczynę. Szczęściara. Podzielimy się ciastkiem? [S] Nieważne. Przepraszam. Pomyliłam się. [Elena] Ja lesbijka! [S] Ja też lesbijka

Table 11: Dialogue and its Polish translation from “One Day at a Time”, season 2, episode 3 “To Zir, with love”.

Voice over translation: information not available. Subtitle translation: Ewa Nowicka

In season 2 of the show a nonbinary character named Syd is added to the cast as a supporting character. Table 10 present excerpts of the show dialogue in which Syd introduces themselves, alongside two other gender non-conforming characters, Dani, using the typically female ‘she/her’ pronouns, and Margaux, who uses ‘ze/zir’, which is one of the more popularized sets of neopronouns.

Each of the translations (subtitles and voice over) approaches the translation of those pronouns differently. While ‘She/her’ and ‘they/them’ are translated one to one as *ona/jej* and *oni/ich* in both versions, ‘ze/zir’ gets two different interpretations. In the voice over the pronouns are translated as *ono/onego*, using the most common subject form with an archaic neuter genitive form. It is neither the most natural form for the Polish language, nor a form commonly used by nonbinary Polish speakers. The subtitle translation goes in a different route – a new set of neopronouns *zon/zej* is created by the translator for the character of Margaux. It is formed based on the Polish grammatical structure of *on/jej*, adding the initial consonant /z/ that creates an auditory link to the English forms ‘ze/zir’.

Dialogue quoted in table 11 shows a lack of consistency in both versions of the translation. While both subtitles and voice over initially present Syd’s pronouns as *oni/ich* (‘they/them’), later in that same episode both versions abandon that choice when Syd is referring to themselves. The line “Oh, nevermind. Uh, I thought... Sorry.” becomes *Nieważne. Myślałam... wybacz* in the subtitles, using the feminine form *Myślałam* for ‘I thought’, and in the voice over the line is translated as *Nieważne. Przepraszam. Pomyliłam się* having Syd use the feminine form of ‘I was wrong’ (*Pomyliłam się*).

The analysed examples illustrate three distinct strategies: modulation in the adaptation of neopronouns to existing grammatical forms (“ono/jego”), adaptation and addition through neologism in the creation of new pronoun sets, and alteration resulting in the reassignment of binary gender marking, as seen in the use of feminine forms for a non-binary character.

3.4 Narrative video game example

Unlike the previously discussed literary and television series examples, in the case of narrative-driven video games like RPG’s (Role-Playing Games), the translation does not pertain to a specific character. In these games, it is the player who has extensive creative control over the character they create and play as, and in some cases one of the available options is a more or less complex ability to create a non-binary player character and choose the form of their expression (cf. Wolf 2021).

An example of an RPG game is Baldur's Gate 3, a narrative-driven role-playing video game developed by Larian Studios, featuring extensive narrative content, branching dialogue, and character interaction. In the game, the player has the option to pick one of six predetermined player characters (all of which are gender conforming), or one of two customisable characters, that the player will later control through the game.

The following section presents selected examples from Baldur's Gate 3. The examples are documented in the form of screenshots taken directly from the game by the author.

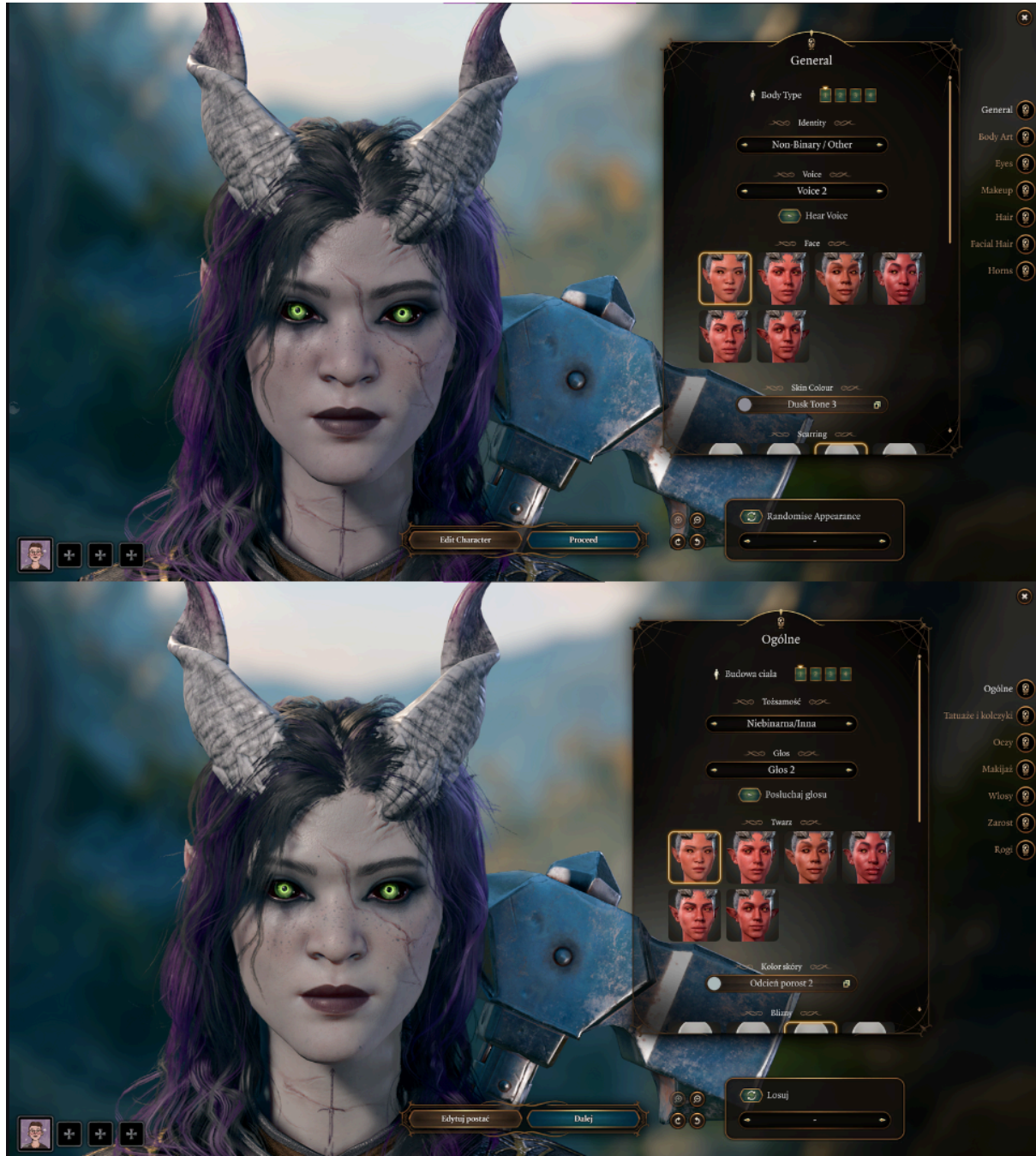


Figure 4: Screenshot from Baldur's Gate 3 showing character creator in English (above) and Polish (below).

When creating a playable character in Baldur's Gate 3, the player can customise not only their character's appearance, but also the character's body shape and voice (both with feminine and masculine options), as well as their gender identity, (as seen in Figure 4) which in game is tied to a specific pronoun set. The options are: 'Male' (he/him), 'Female' (she/her) and 'Non Binary/Other' (they/them). The options are identical in the Polish localisation: *Mężczyzna* (on/jego), *Kobieta* (ona/jej), and *Niebinarna/Inna* (ono/jego).



Figure 5: Screenshot from Baldur's Gate 3 featuring gameplay and a dialogue line in Polish (left) and English (right)

Figure 5 shows the first line of dialogue that is possible to trigger in-game. It is a line spoken by the player character and in English it is "Might still be stuck inside if we hadn't been attacked", which in Polish (with the character's gender preference set to nonbinary) is translated to *Pewnie wciąż bym tam tkwilo, gdyby nie atak na statek*. The use of 3rd person singular neuter past tense is consistent with the neutral forms considered grammatically correct in the Polish language.



Figure 6: Screenshot from Baldur's Gate 3 featuring a dialog log between an illustrative player character (here named Violet) and a Narrator, in Polish (left) and English (right)

The game has a Narrator, a character that tells the player character what they can feel, hear, or sense. Figure 6 shows a dialog log from one such interaction. In it, the Narrator tells the player character in second person what they sense and feel in reaction to approaching a monster. In the Polish localisation, the Narrator consistently uses conditional verb form in second person singular to refer to the character.

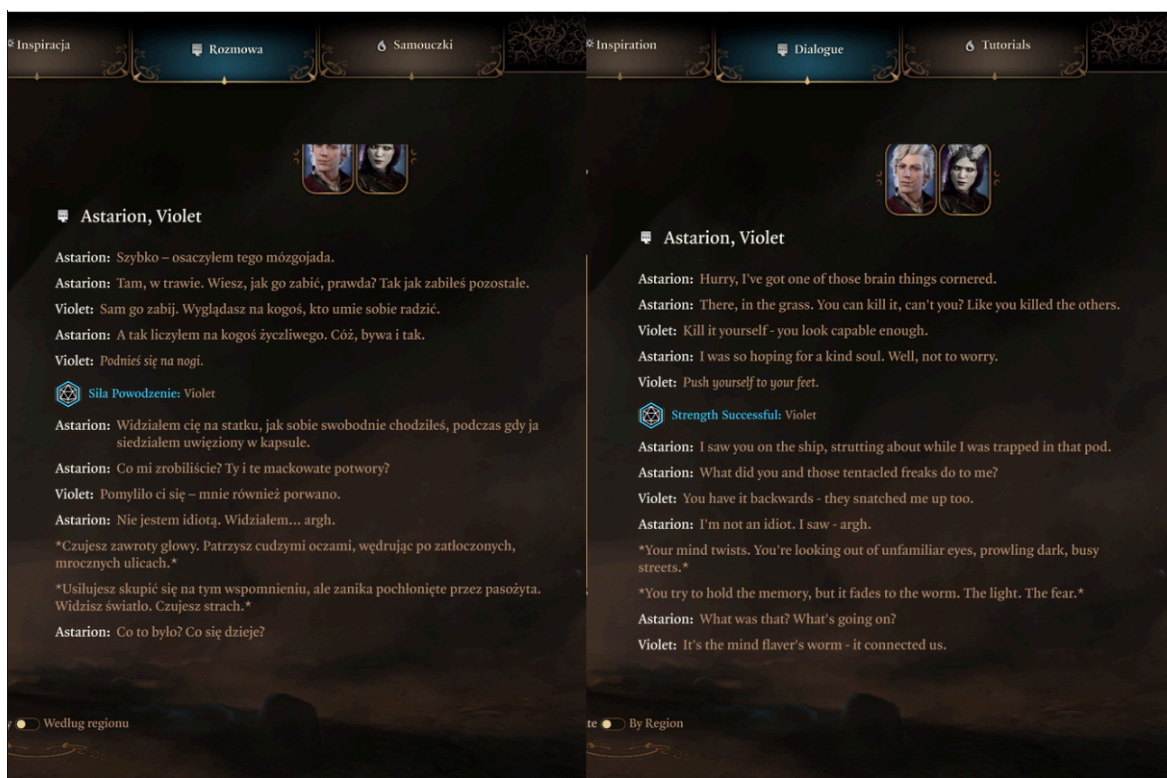


Figure 7: Screenshot from Baldur's Gate 3 featuring a dialog log between an illustrative player character (here named Violet) and a game character named Astarion, in Polish (left) and English (right)

This use of neuter forms, however, is not consistent throughout the game. Most of the translated dialogues look similar to the one in figure 7 – both the player character (despite having their gender preference set to nonbinary) and other characters in the game refer to them using ‘he/him’ pronouns and masculine verb forms. It is not character dependent, and both ways of referring to the character are used interchangeably.

The translation of singular “they” as “ono/jego” can be classified as modulation, as it involves a shift from a gender-neutral pronominal system in English to a neuter-based grammatical solution in Polish. The meaning is preserved, but the perspective of gender reference is restructured in accordance with Polish grammatical constraints. The rendering of singular “they” as “on/jego” constitutes modulation resulting in a shift from gender-neutral reference to masculine grammatical marking. As a result, the non-binary neutrality of the source text is replaced by a binary gender category in the target language.

The translation shows inconsistency in the rendering of singular ‘they’, alternating between neuter-based forms (*ono/jego*) and masculine forms (*on/jego*). This suggests a potential issue in the localisation process. However, the exact cause cannot be determined based on the available data. It may be related to miscommunication, inconsistencies in

translation files, or implementation, but this remains speculative and cannot be verified within the scope of this study.

3.5 Life simulation video game example

According to “Encyclopedia of Video Games: The Culture, Technology, and Art of Gaming”, the term ‘simulation games’ “refers to video games that involve the player in controlling several elements of a dynamic system that is modeled by the video game” (Wolf 2021: 932). Later in that same book, life simulation games are distinguished as a subcategory, with “The Sims” given as an example. None of The Sims titles in the Polish localisation include non-binary character creation options, despite their availability in the English-language versions. As a result, this case is not directly relevant to the present analysis. However, a more recent title in the same genre released in early access on May 25 2026 called “Paralives” provides relevant material for examination, which is documented in the form of screenshots taken directly from the game by the author.

In “Paralives”, the player has the ability to create up to 8 characters, called ‘Parafolks’ (*Para*, in Polish singular, *Pary* in Polish plural). Paralives features a highly flexible character creation system (Paramaker) built around a single adjustable body model rather than gendered character frames. The system enables extensive modification of body proportions, facial features, and height, and does not restrict clothing appearance, or voice options based on gender selection.



Figure 8: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker, with the nonbinary identity selection highlighted in English (above) and Polish (below)

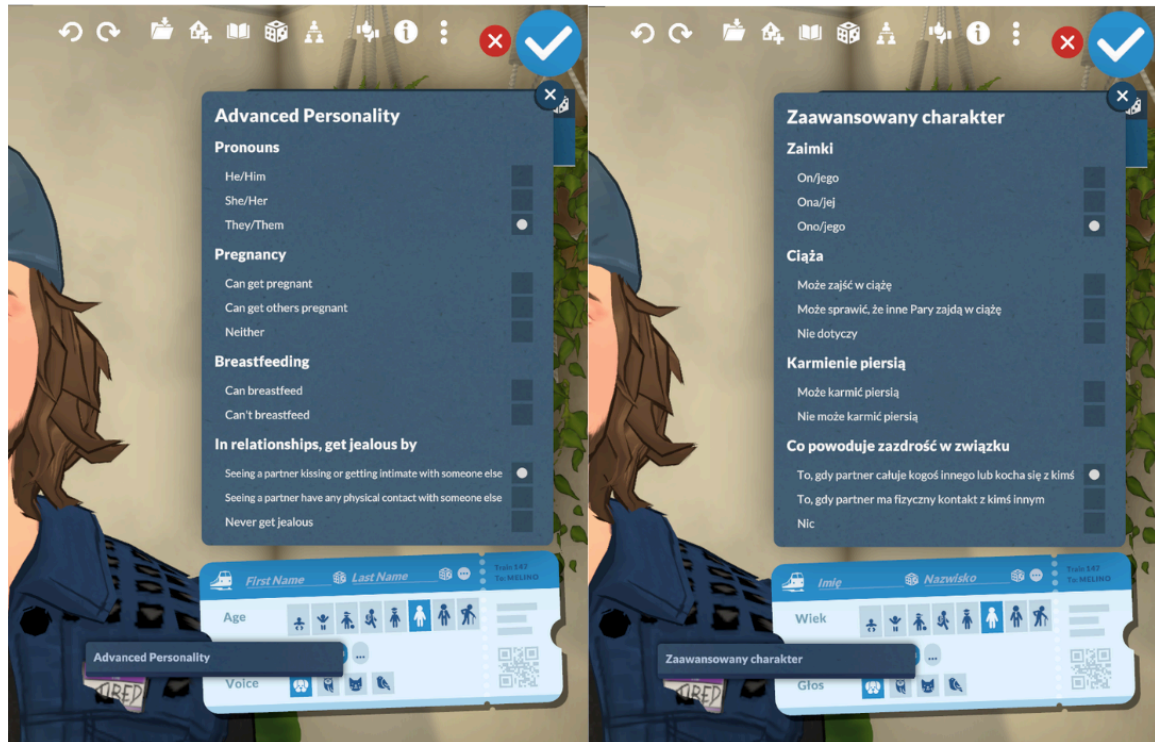


Figure 9: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker and its advanced options, with the English (left) and Polish (right)

When creating their characters, players may choose from ‘Male’, ‘Female’, and ‘Non-binary’ gender identities, as seen in figure 8. In Polish, the options are analogous: *Mężczyzna*; *Kobieta*; *Osoba niebinarna*. It is worth noting that the translator chose to use the personal language form instead of the neutral *niebinarne*. Figure 9 showcases how all three available gender identities can be further customised with pronouns and physical characteristics, such as the option to breastfeed or get pregnant. The pronouns available in English are ‘he/him’, ‘she/her’ and ‘they/them’ translated to *on/jego* *ona/jej* and *ono/jego*. The pronouns are not tied to chosen gender identity and can be mixed freely.



Figure 10: Screenshot from “Paralives”, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of life stages available for Parafolks in Polish

Besides the character’s appearance and fully customizable gender identity, the player can also change the age of their Parafolk by choosing one of the 9 existing life stages: Baby; Toddler; Child; Pre-Teen; Teenager; Young Adult; Adult; and Elder. Figure 10 shows the Polish translation for four of those life stages for a Parafolk whose gender identity is set to nonbinary. ‘Adult’ and ‘Young adult’ were translated to *Dorosłe* and *Młode Dorosłe*, ‘Elder’ to *Seniorcze* and ‘Teenager’ to *Nastolatko*. The first three forms are adjective forms used as nouns, while the form referring to a teenager is a neologistic gender-neutral form created by the translator.

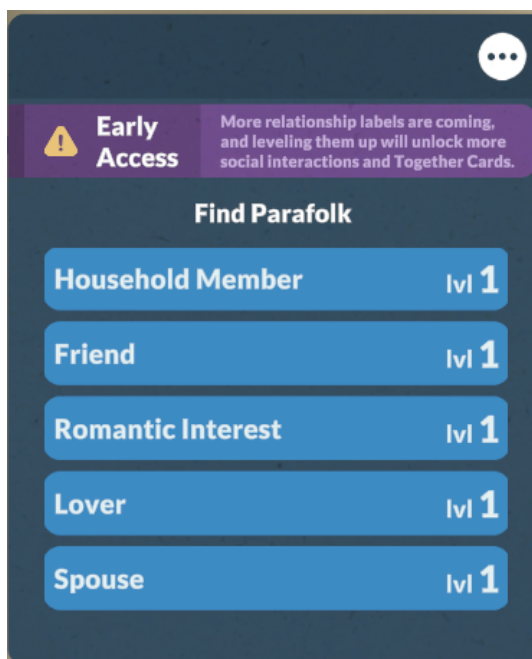


Figure 11: Screenshot from Parolives, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of relationship types for Parafolks in English

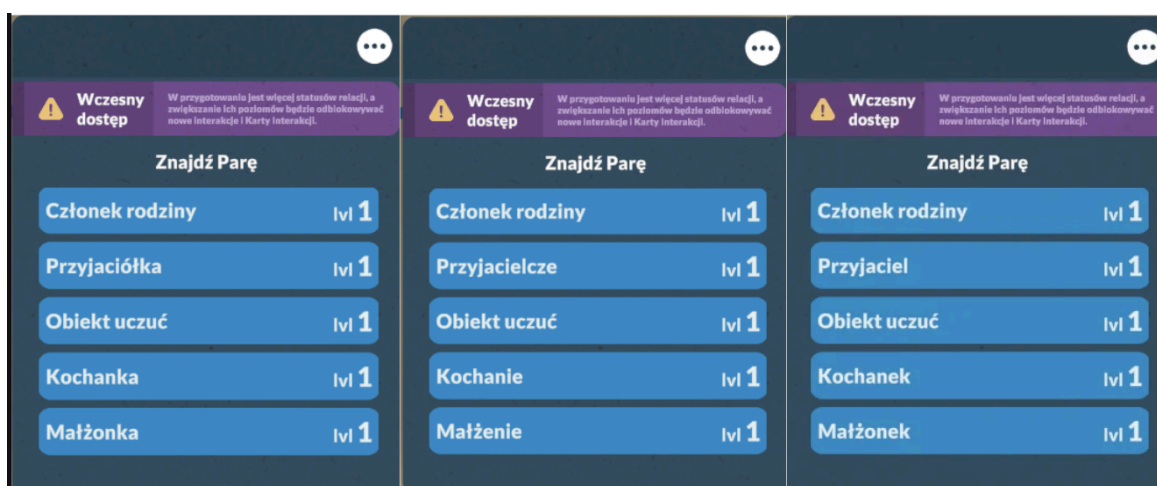


Figure 12: Screenshot from Parolives, featuring the Paramaker and a selection of relationship types for Parafolks in Polish

One of the features available in the game is an advanced relationship system. Figure 11 presents a set of chosen available relationship types: Household Member; Friend; Romantic Interest; Lover; and Spouse. Figure 12 presents the translation of the same types, in all available gender identity options; female on the left, male on the right, and nonbinary in the middle. The ‘Household member’ and ‘Romantic Interest’ are translated neutrally as *Członek rodziny* and *Obiekt uczuć* for all three gender identities. The rest of the male and female variants are translated analogously with a direct correspondence to the terms in the

source language. For a Parafolk with the nonbinary identity, neologistic gender-neutral forms are created: *Przyjaciółcze* for a ‘friend’; *Kochanie* meaning a ‘lover’; and *Małżenie* as a translation for a ‘spouse’.

Przyjaciółcze is a form derived from *przyjaciel* with an uncommon suffix *-cze*. It is a non-standard, constructed form intended to function as a gender-neutral reference to a “friend”, achieved through morphological alteration of the lexical root. *Kochanie* is typically a vocative form, here used as a noun. *Małżenie* is also a non-standard neologism derived from the lexical root of *małżotnka/małżonek*, replacing the gendered suffixes *-onka/-onek* with a neutral *-enie* as an attempted gender-neutral reference to a spouse, achieved through morphological reduction of gender-marked derivational suffixes.

The analysed examples illustrate two distinct strategies. The use of *ono/jego* utilises a system-internal solution, where a gender-neutral reference is re-expressed through existing grammatical resources of Polish corresponding to modulation. The creation of forms such as *przyjaciółcze* and *małżenie* constitutes adaptation through neologism, involving the introduction of new lexical items to compensate for the lack of established non-binary forms in the target language.

3.6 Summary

Chapter 3 presents a comparative case study analysing how nonbinary and gender-neutral language is translated and localized across different media formats, based on selected literary, audiovisual, and video game materials. It examines how gendered language, pronouns, and identity markers are rendered in Polish, focusing on translation strategies identified through Nida’s (1964) and Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1958) frameworks. The analysis shows that literary translations tend to rely on neuter forms such as *ono/jego*, often at the expense of neopronoun distinctions, while audiovisual translations display inconsistency ranging from erasure of nonbinary identity to experimental but unstable solutions. Video game localization reveals both progress and persistent challenges, with some titles attempting structured nonbinary representation but suffering from inconsistencies, and others introducing more systematic and innovative approaches, including creating new gender-neutral forms. Overall, the chapter highlights that successful representation depends on consistency, sensitivity to nonbinary usage, and morphological innovation, whereas less successful cases are marked by erasure, contradiction, or reliance on binary language structures.

Conclusion

The analysis of literary, audiovisual, and video game materials reveals systematic patterns and significant variability in how nonbinary identities are rendered in Polish translation. In literary translation, both examined works employed the neuter pronoun set *ono/jego*, which, while grammatically established, carries traditionally impersonal connotations in Polish. This choice reflects the prevalent pronoun preferences among Polish nonbinary individuals; however, in the case of “FreezeFrame Revolution”, it results in the erasure of neopronouns.

In audiovisual translation, the treatment of nonbinary characters proved less consistent. “She-Ra and Princesses of Power” rendered the explicitly nonbinary character of Double Trouble using exclusively masculine forms, including a masculine-suffixed name adaptation (*Kłopotowski*), effectively erasing the character’s gender identity. Conversely, “One Day at a Time” demonstrated greater variation: while binary pronouns were translated directly, the neopronoun *ze/zir* received two different renderings; the neuter *ono/onego* in the voice over and the novel neologism *zon/zej* in the subtitles. The translation later abandoned the nonbinary marking by having the character Syd use feminine verb forms, revealing the lack of consistency.

The video game examples illustrated both advanced and persistent challenges. Baldur’s Gate 3 offered players a nonbinary option tied to *ono/jego*, and the player character’s first dialogue line correctly uses neuter past tense. However, the localisation proved inconsistent, as the same character frequently referred to elsewhere in the game using masculine forms *on/jego*, suggesting implementation or coordination issues. By contrast, Paralives presented the most comprehensive approach to date: it offers a nonbinary identity option (*osoba niebinarna*), decouples pronouns from gender selection, and introduces creative neologistic forms such as *przyjaciół* (friend), *małżenie* (spouse), and *nastolatko* (teenager). Paralives therefore demonstrates that systematic, respectful rendering of nonbinary identities in Polish is achievable when attention and resources are devoted to the task.

Taken together, the findings indicate that while no single universally accepted strategy for translating nonbinary language into Polish currently exists, the most successful instances combine grammatical consistency, community-informed choices, and deliberate morphological innovation. The least successful instances are characterised by erasure, inconsistency, or reliance on binary forms that contradict the source text’s explicit nonbinary forms and representation.

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