


# Gender equality and/or inequality? Female and male translators in a Swedish digital encyclopaedia of translators

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a study of publicly available *Svenskt översättarlexikon* ‘The Swedish Encyclopaedia of Translators’ (SwET 2009), most probably the first digital encyclopaedia of translators. The study is situated in the fields of the sociology of translators, (literary) translator studies, and translation history, and focuses on how female translators are described, characterized and evaluated in the version of SwET from 2022. Three research questions are addressed in the paper: (1) What is the ratio of entries presenting female and male translators in the SwET? (2) What is the quantitative treatment of the partners in the sub-category “Translator Couples”? (3) And what are the descriptions, characterizations and evaluations of the partners in that sub-category? In response to the three RQs, the same three situations emerge: (a) gender equality and inequality, (b) gender equality, and (c) gender inequality. Possible explanations for the results reported are presented and discussed. Finally, proposals for future studies of digital translator encyclopaedias are presented.

**Keywords:** sociology of translation, literary translator studies, external translation history, female translators, *Svenskt översättarlexikon*

## Enakost in/ali neenakost spolov? Prevajalke in prevajalci švedske digitalne enciklopedije prevajalcev

### IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je predstavljena študija *Svenskt översättarlexikon* ‘The Swedish Encyclopaedia of Translators’ (SwET), ki je morda sploh prva digitalna enciklopedija prevajalcev na svetu in je javno dostopna od leta 2009. Raziskava sodi na področje sociologije prevajanja, študij (književnih) prevajalcev in zgodovine prevajanja. Študija se osredotoča na opise, karakterizacijo in evalvacijo prevajalk v SwET iz leta 2022. V prispevku so naslovljena tri raziskovalna vprašanja, in sicer, (1) kakšno je razmerje med gesli, ki obravnavajo prevajalke, in gesli, ki obravnavajo prevajalce, (2) kakšna je kvantitativna obravnavanje partnerjev v podkategoriji »prevajalski pari«, in (3) kakšni so opisi, karakterizacije in evalvacije partnerjev v tej podkategoriji. Pri vseh treh raziskovalnih vprašanjih se pojavijo tri iste situacije: (a) spolna enakost in neenakost, (b) spolna enakost in (c) spolna neenakost. Predstavljene in obravnavane so možne razlage za dobljene rezultate. Nazadnje so predstavljeni predlogi za nadaljnje študije digitalnih enciklopedij prevajalcev.

**Ključne besede:** sociologija prevajanja, študije književnih prevajalcev, zunanja zgodovina prevajanja, prevajalke, *Svenskt översättarlexikon*

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Translation has played an important role in Sweden since at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and it remains important to this day (Kleberg 2012). Svahn (2020, 15–18) concludes her summary about “Translation in the Swedish context” with the claim that “translation as a phenomenon assumes an important position in Swedish society today” (Svahn 2020, 16). Two factors that may be of importance for translators and translations in a specific society are “gender and sexual orientation [...]” (Chesterman 2009, 16). For example, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was considered quite acceptable for women to translate from, for instance, English, French and German, into Swedish. In contrast, translation from Greek, Latin and Hebrew was “considered off limits for women in Sweden as in other European countries” (Akujärvi 2018, 33).

Gender and sexual orientation may also function as a “framework for translator-centered research” (Kaindl 2021, 15). This study of female translators is based on the concept of ‘gender’ as a socio-ideological construct (cf. Santaemilia Ruiz 2011, 25) in the digital encyclopaedia entitled *Svenskt översättarlexikon* ‘The Swedish Encyclopaedia of Translators’, henceforth SwET. The SwET focuses on Swedish and Finland-Swedish translators translating into Swedish, and provides descriptions, characterizations and evaluations of translators’ professional work from the Middle Ages onwards in a specific context (cf. Kleberg 2012). The study focuses on how posterity – in this case the authors of articles in the SwET – describes, characterizes and evaluates translators included in the encyclopaedia. Contemporary assessments of translators, as well as assessments formulated by persons other than authors of the SwET articles, are included in some of the texts, and such assessments may also be of interest for future research.

The main title of this article – “Gender equality and/or inequality?” – requires a definition of the concept ‘gender equality’. Here, the definition formulated by the state agency Swedish Gender Equality Agency (SGEA 2023) is applied: “[g]ender equality means that women and men have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities in all areas of life”. Gender equality is not only a matter of gender equal ratio, but also of attitudes, norms, values and ideals “that affect the lives of women and men in many areas of society” (SGEA 2023). In this case, the male and female translators included in the SwET.

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1 I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on the first version of this article. I also thank PhD Rhonwen Bowen, who reviewed my English, and The Royal Society of Arts and Sciences in Gothenburg, who covered the cost of the language review. Finally, I thank the editors of STRIDON for good cooperation on the way from manuscript to publication. The responsibility for any errors and shortcomings in the article lies, of course, with me.

Section 2 of the article presents the SwET, research questions and research setting. In section 3, the research design is introduced. Section 4 presents and discusses the results of the analysis. The concluding section 5 summarizes the results of the study. To indicate that translators are in focus, references to articles in the SwET are made with the prefix “SwET” and article title heading, i.e., “SwET Cilla Johnson, 1911–2002”. All translations from Swedish into English in the article were done by the author.

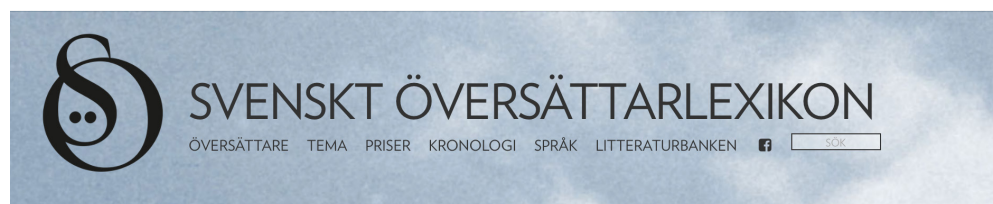
## 2. The SwET, research questions and research setting

Section 2 presents the SwET, the research questions and the research setting for the current study.

### 2.1 The SwET

The SwET has been publicly available since 2009 and was hosted by Södertörn University, Stockholm, between 2009 and 2018 (Kleberg n.d.). Since spring 2018, the SwET has been part of the Swedish Literature Bank at the University of Gothenburg. The encyclopaedia project was theoretically inspired by Pym’s appeal for “Humanizing Translation History” (2009) (Kleberg 2012, 72–73), and its result, the SwET itself, is described as “a database of bio-bibliographical articles about Swedish and Finland-Swedish translators from the Middle Ages to the present” (Kleberg 2012, 71). The overall goal for the SwET is to present “[i]n principle, all important translators into the Swedish language [...]”, but has so far only managed to include the presentation of deceased persons (Kleberg n.d.; cf. Kleberg 2009 and 2012).

The top menu of the encyclopaedia is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The top menu of the SwET on 15 June 2022.

Together with the logotype “SÖ”, and the title “Svenskt översättarlexikon”, three categories of articles are to be found. The first is bio-biographical articles devoted to individual translators, labelled Translators (“Översättare”). The second one, Themes (“Tema”), deals with different themes, for instance, indirect translation, translation of Japanese literature into Swedish, and translation of popular songs. The third category,

Prizes (“Priser”), presents various prizes for translators with Swedish as a target language and/or a source language (Kleberg n.d.). The top menu also shows the possibilities to make chronologically delimited searches (“Kronologi”) and to identify connections between translator/s and language/s (“Språk”). SwET thus covers translations made from the language of the original work and translations done via another language, functioning as the source language for the translation to the ultimate target language, i.e., Swedish. Links to the Swedish Literature Bank (“Litteraturbanken”) and the Facebook page of the SwET are available. Finally, a general search option (“SÖK”) is offered (cf. Kleberg 2009, 173).

The current guidelines for authors of SwET articles offer information about the scope, structure, and content of articles together with a few formal guidelines.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the guidelines describe the articles in the Translators category in the following way: an article consists of “a comprehensive biography, a characterization of the translator’s work and its importance for its time and for today, a full bibliography of all the translator’s published works, including performed but not printed scripts for plays, and a portrait of the person” (Kleberg 2012, 73). There is, however, no generally available information about the principles for the selection of translators or themes to be included in the SwET (Vainiomäki 2017, 6).

According to Kleberg (2009, 181), there are, however, three more precise categories of translators that are relevant for the selection of translators presented in the SwET. These are: [1] “translators of high-prestige literature, ‘canonical translators’ [...]”, [2] translators who work in the background, called “mass-producing low prestige translators [...]”, and [3] “translators who have exceeded genre boundaries”. Landqvist (2019, 1–2) suggests that [1] might be viewed as important translators, since they translate high-prestige literature and their translations are, therefore, regarded with high esteem, while [2] might be regarded as important translators, since their translations of low-prestige literature may attract many readers, and thus their work is more widely read (cf. Lindqvist 2021 on a number of possible ‘star translators’ into Swedish). One tentative interpretation of [3] is that these translators are regarded as important because they exceed genre boundaries and also translate non-literary texts, e.g., non-fiction and popular science texts, and/or multimodal texts, e.g., song lyrics and comics, since articles on such topics are included in the SwET.

2 The guidelines were sent in the form of an attachment titled *Manusanvisningar för artiklar i Svenskt översättarlexikon* 11 november 2015 by e-mail from editor Nils Håkanson, Svenskt översättarlexikon, to the author on November 28, 2019, as well as in the e-mail message itself.

Kleberg (2009, 181) thus attempts to clarify the meaning of “all important translators into the Swedish language [...]” (Kleberg n.d.). However, Kleberg’s delimitation of “potential candidates”, here with the proposed categories [1]–[3], to be included in the SwET entails a certain amount of ambiguity.

## 2.2 Research questions

No explicit information about the selection of female and male translators in the SwET is available. It is, however, well known that translating into Swedish became an increasingly common occupation for women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although many of the female translators before the 20<sup>th</sup> century are unknown today (Hjelm-Milczyn 1996, 173–94; Furuland 2007, 442, 448, 453). It is also well known that female translators in Sweden have not always been given recognition or fair financial compensation for their work (Håkanson 2021, 249). Given this background, it is of great interest to clarify how the 2022 version of the SwET, released more than ten years after the launch of the encyclopaedia in 2009, describes, characterizes and evaluates female translators. This study is operationalized using the following three research questions:

RQ (1) What is the ratio of entries about female and male translators in the SwET, and how can the ratio be explained?

RQ (2) How are the partners in the sub-category Translator Couples (i.e., two translators living together), included in the SwET categories Translators and Themes, treated from a mainly quantitative perspective?

RQ (3) How are the partners in the sub-category Translator Couples, included in the SwET category Translators, described, characterized and evaluated from a mainly qualitative perspective?

The use of the verbs “describe”, “characterize” and “evaluate” in RQ (2) and RQ (3) is motivated by Kleberg’s description of articles in the Translators category. As stated in sub-section 2.1, these SwET articles are to contain a *description* of the translator in question (a comprehensive biography, a full bibliography of the translator’s published work, a portrait of the translator), a *characterization* “of the translator’s work” and an *evaluation* of “[the] importance [of the translator’s work] for its time and for today” (Kleberg 2012, 73).

## 2.3 Research setting

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in translators and their roles in societies (cf. Pym 2009, 32; Paloposki 2013, 217), while Kaindl (2021, 24) underlines

that “the history of a society – and translation is part of society – cannot be understood without the life of the individual. We need to understand both”. In my opinion, and in accordance with Dam (2013, 18), (Literary) Translator Studies is best viewed as a particular strand of Translation Studies, focusing on translators as agents in society (cf. Chesterman 2009, 13; Kaindl 2021, 3).

The study presented here is a contribution to the sociology of translators (cf. Wolf 2007; Chesterman 2009; Zheng 2017). The study also belongs to the field of translation history (cf. Rundle 2021). More precisely, it is a study of external translation history that examines a number of research questions, among them “who were the translators, where they worked, in what conditions, what was translated, from which languages *et cetera*” (Paloposki 2013, 232; see Frank 2004, 808–10, and Pięta 2016, 357–58, on external vs. internal translation history). Several ambitious printed works that focus on translators as actors, especially with English, Finnish, French, and Spanish as their respective target languages, are presented by Kaindl (2021), Paloposki (2021) and Rundle (2021).

Turning to translators with Swedish as their target language, Milczyn-Hjelms (1996) offers an overview of Swedish fictional translators until 1900 and Håkanson (2021) presents a history of translation, translations, and translators. Literary scholars also pay attention to translations and translators in Sweden. Hansson’s study (1982) of the printed translated literature in the 17<sup>th</sup> century includes a study of the translators in question. Furuland (2007), in her PhD on publishers, authors, and fiction booklet series in Sweden 1833–1851, also pays attention to translators. Torgerson (1982), in his PhD, focuses on translations and translators of prose fiction into Swedish during three five-year periods (1866–1870, 1896–1900, 1926–1930), while translators of prose fiction into Swedish 1866–1900 are studied in Torgerson (1996). Examples of biographies on individual Swedish translators are the biographies on the male translators Carl August Hagberg (1810–1864) and Lars Arnell (1781–1856), and the female translators Catharina Ahlgren (1734–1810) and Gunnel Vallquist (1918–2016) (Monié 2008; Monié 2013; Björkman 2006; Dahl 2021).

Among digital resources with a focus on translators, the SwET is perhaps the very first digital encyclopaedia of translators (Kleberg 2012; Kaindl 2021, 15; Paloposki 2021, 73–74). The SwET has given inspiration to other digital encyclopaedias treating translators into Danish, Dutch, German, Norwegian, both Bokmål and Nynorsk, and Turkish (Landqvist 2019, 21–22; Kaindl 2021, 15–16; Paloposki 2021, 74). Previous studies of the SwET were conducted by Vainiomäki (2017) and Landqvist (2019, 2022), and the SwET is an important resource for Håkanson (2021, 5, 329–30).

### 3. Research design

The SwET provides the primary material for this study. The total number of published articles in the encyclopaedia by 15 June 2022 was 494, and any possible later updates have not been considered. As stated in sub-section 2.1, the articles in the SwET are divided into the three main categories Translators, Themes, and Prizes. The number of entries in each category is 419, 52 and 23, respectively.

The secondary material for the study consists of two other Swedish digital resources. *Svenskt kvinnobiografiskt lexikon – The Biographical Dictionary of Swedish Women*, SKBL, gives “access to 2,000 biographies of women who actively contributed to Swedish society” (SKBL). A number of these women have made their contributions to society as translators, either as their main occupation or as one of their occupations. The Swedish Library Information Service LIBRIS, “the joint catalogue of the Swedish academic and research libraries [...]”, is relevant to find information about translators included in the SwET and/or the SKBL (LIBRIS 2022a; cf. Kaindl 2021, 25, on bibliographic resources and translation studies).

The procedure used to make it possible to answer RQ (1) is a standard one; the number of female and male translators in the SwET version from 15 June 2022 was counted. As pointed out in section 1, the Swedish state authority SGEA (2023) underlines that gender equality is not only about the gender equal ratio, but also attitudes, norms, values and ideals. In order to answer RQ (2) and RQ (3), the SwET version must, therefore, be examined from a more qualitative perspective.

The SwET focuses on translators’ professional activities, but translators’ private conditions are also described (Vainiomäki 2017, 68). One frequent type of information is that of husbands, wives and/or partners. At present, all “Translator Couples” presented in the SwET, i.e., two translators living together, have lived in heterosexual relationships (Landqvist 2019, 15–16). To identify Translator Couples, henceforth TrCs, in the encyclopaedia, keyword searches with truncated forms were conducted: “giftermål\*” – “marriage; matrimony”, “make\*/maka\*” – “spouse/s” and so on (cf. Landqvist 2019, 15–16). The Swedish keywords and English translations are listed in Table 1.



**Table 1.** Swedish keywords (truncated forms) and their translations into English, in alphabetical order based on the former.

Swedish keywords	English translations of keywords
fru*	wife
giftermål*	marriage; matrimony
hustru*	wife
maka* (sg), makor* (pl.)	wife/s; spouse/s
make* (sg), makar* (pl.)	husband/s; spouse/s
partner*	partner
relation*	relation; relationship
sambo*	partner; cohabitant
separation*	separation
skilsmässa* (sg), skilsmässor* (pl.)	divorce/s
äkta maka* (sg), äkta makor* (pl)	wife/s; spouse/s
äkta man* (sg), äkta män* (pl.)	husband/s; spouse/s
äktenskap*	matrimony; marriage

The procedure to identify TrCs – and analyse the SwET articles in question – can be labelled as a content analysis, more specifically an inductive content analysis, where “the researcher might start from broader themes or *research questions* when analysing the material, the text is coded directly, with categories growing out of that coding” (Boréus and Bergström 2017, 24, 26, italics added). The analysis focuses on words and phrases that are used to describe, characterize and evaluate the females and males in TrCs (cf. Boréus and Bergström 2017, 26). The analysis was performed manually with a double coding “to ensure intrasubjectivity, i.e., the correlation between one’s own coding of the same texts at different points of time [...]” (Boréus and Bergström 2017, 28–29; cf. Boréus and Bergström 2017, 46–49, on the pros and cons of content analysis).

The content analysis procedure performed in this study focuses on how the work of female and male translators and the possible collaboration between the partners in TrCs is described, characterized and evaluated. According to Boréus and Bergström (2017, 48), content analysis can be fruitful in studies of “power, politics, oppression [...]”, in this case how female and male translators, who live together, are described, characterized and evaluated. The procedure chosen will, thus, make it possible to answer RQ (2) and RQ (3).



## 4. Results and discussion

This section is structured in terms of RQ (1)–RQ (3) and divided into sub-sections 4.1–4.3.

### 4.1 Female and male translators in the SwET

As stated in sub-section 3.1, by 15 June 2022 the total number of published articles in the SwET was 494. Among the 419 individuals in the Translator category are 124 females and 295 males. The sub-category TrCs in the Themes category adds five Translator Couples, and thus five female and five male translators. The total number of individual translators in this study is therefore 429, or 129 females and 300 males (30.1% and 69.9%).<sup>3</sup>

However, it must be noted that several translators, in addition to the 429, appear in certain articles in the Translators category. For example, Mauritz Boheman's many translations during 1889–1902 “would be easier to understand if we can assume that his wife Ezaline Boheman was involved in them [...]” (SwET Mauritz Boheman, 1858–1908). As stated in the SwET article, Ezaline Boheman also translated independently, and three translations are registered in LIBRIS, including Rudyard Kipling's children's book *Kim* (1901). The Swedish translation was first published in 1901, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition published in 1933, and an audio recording was released in 2016. (LIBRIS 2022f)

Table 2 presents information about the 129 female and the 300 male translators in the SwET who were active during the periods 1437–1699, 1700–1799, 1800–1899, 1900–1999 and 2000–2022. A number of the 429 translators were active in two centuries, such as Walborg Hedberg. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, she translated literary works by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy and Maksim Gorky, among others, into Swedish (SwET Walborg Hedberg, 1859–1931). Therefore, the total number of female and male translators in Table 2 is not identical with the number of individual translators in this study – 129 females and 300 males.

**Table 2.** Female translators (FT) and male translators (MT) in the SwET, active during the periods 1437–1699, 1700–1799, 1800–1899, 1900–1999 and 2000–2022, absolute figures and percentages.

Main categories	FT 1437– 1699	MT 1473– 1699	FT 1700– 1799	MT 1700– 1799	FT 1800– 1899	MT 1800– 1899	FT 1900– 1999	MT 1900– 1999	FT 2000– 2022	MT 2000– 2022
Translators	–	9	4	25	39	117	105	200	9	27
Themes	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	5	1	1
Total, FT and MT	– (0.0%)	9 (100.0%)	4 (13.8%)	25 (86.2%)	39 (25.0%)	117 (75.0%)	110 (34.9%)	205 (65.1%)	10 (26.3%)	28 (73.7%)

3 All percentages are given to one decimal place.

Table 2 shows a very clear dominance of male translators in the SwET before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with 34 men out of a total of 38 translators (89.5%) for the years 1437–1799. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, however, female translators account for a greater number and proportion of translators in the SwET. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of women is 39 of 156 (25.0%) and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 110 of 315 (34.9%). For the last period, 2000–2022, the number of female translators is 10 of 38 (26.3%; cf. Lindqvist 2021, 146, 149, on a group of 15 Swedish possible ‘star translators’, active 1990–2015, with 12 women and three men). Four complementary possible reasons that may explain the male dominance in Table 2 are proposed.

The first possible reason concerns the encyclopaedia as such, mainly the principles for including translators in the SwET, as discussed in sub-section 2.1. In addition, the principles for dealing with TrCs in individual articles in the Translators category or together in an article in Themes are not provided and are not evident (cf. sub-sections 4.2 and 4.3).

The second possible reason for the male dominance is that knowledge concerning female translators from the earlier periods may be scarce (Furuland 2007, 441–42). For instance, the SwET article about Carolina Wancke begins laconically with the statement “Little is known about the translator Carolina Wancke” (SwET Carolina Wancke, 1808–1879). Bachleitner (2013, 173) highlights two other reasons why such knowledge may be limited. Female translators may have published anonymous translations and may even have used male pseudonyms or non-gendered (cf. Torgerson 1982, 96–97). One example of the second situation is Ellen Wester, who “appeared under the pseudonym E. Weer” (SwET Ellen Wester, 1873–1930).

The third possible reason for the ratio of female and male translators in the SwET over the centuries focuses on translators’ situation and conditions in Swedish society. As shown in sub-section 2.2 and Table 2, female translators became more common in Sweden from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on. They mainly translated from English, French and German, as many women were able to learn these languages in their homes, while their opportunities to learn Latin, Greek and Hebrew through formal education were limited (Akujärvi 2018, 32–33). Only three female translators of ancient literature into Swedish before 1800 are identified by Akujärvi (2018, 32, 46) – Maria Gustava Gyllenstierna, Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht and Anna Maria Lenngren – and all three are included in the SwET.

Hansson (1982) states that the printed translated literature in Swedish during the 17<sup>th</sup> century comprises a total of 318 works. These were translated by 160 known or identified individuals. All 160 were men, slightly more than half of them were clergymen and the most common source languages were German and Latin (Hansson 1982,

9–16). There are, however, a few female translators who were active before the 19<sup>th</sup> century who could have been included in the SwET. Three examples are Anna Fickesdotter Bülow/Bylow (1440s–1519), Catharina Gyllengrip (d. 1669) and Anna Catharina Wefwerstedt (1704–1753), translators of religious texts from Latin, German and Danish respectively (Hjelm-Milczyn 1996, 24; Berglund 2018; Hjelm-Milczyn 1996, 32; LIBRIS 2022d; Forselius 2018).

According to Torgerson (1996), the proportion of female translators, including those who used identified pseudonyms, among translators of prose fiction into Swedish increases from the 1880s onwards. These female translators mainly translated texts in the genres “‘love and romance’, ‘bourgeois everyday life’, ‘entertainment’ and ‘moralizing story’” (Torgerson 1996, 14–15). As shown in Table 2, this “feminization” of the profession of translators in Sweden continues during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the profession is now dominated by women (Svahn 2020, 39; Lindqvist 2021, 146).

The fourth and final possible reason for the male dominance in the SwET, especially before the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, is that female translators have performed work for which male translators have received recognition and financial compensation (cf. Bachleitner 2013, 177; Håkanson 2021, 249). For instance, Gunnar Örnulf published about 50 translations of books for children and young people, mainly during the 1910s, but “[t]here are good reasons to suspect that several of these were entirely or partly done by his wife”. Three independent translations by Gerda Örnulf were published in 1913. The Örnulfs married in 1911 and divorced in 1919 (SwET Gunnar Örnulf, 1888–1935). LIBRIS reveals that the majority of Gunnar Örnulf’s entries in the database until 1919 are translations, while he is mostly registered as an author in the entries from 1920 onwards (LIBRIS 2022g). The three translations by Gerda Örnulf are not to be found in LIBRIS.

#### 4.2 “Translator Couples” in the categories Translators and Themes

Articles belonging to the sub-category “Translator Couples”, TrCs, appear in the SwET categories of Translators and Themes. Table 3 provides information about the three alternative options identified: both partners in a couple are treated in separate articles in Translators or a joint one in Themes; an article in Translators is dedicated to a female translator and her male partner is acknowledged; and an article in Translators is devoted to a male translator and his female partner is acknowledged.

**Table 3.** TrCs in the SwET (n=45): absolute figures and percentages.

Main categories	Articles about a female and a male translator	Articles about a female translator	Articles about a male translator
Translators	10	6	24
Themes	5	–	–
Total	15 (33.3%)	6 (13.3%)	24 (53.3%)

Table 3 shows that the total number of articles about TrCs is 45. Of these, 15 can be said to reflect an equal relationship, since both partners are treated in Translators (10) or Themes (5). The situation when an article in Translators is devoted to only one party, the male (24) or female partner (6), can be said to reflect a less equal relationship. A gender equal relationship is thus found in 15 TrCs (33.3%) and an unequal one in 30 (66.7%). All TrCs are active during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and/or the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and they translate from other languages than the classical languages of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. This reflects the situation noted in sub-section 4.1 about women, men, and translation in Swedish society from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, scrutinizing the results of the content analysis reveals different patterns for the categories of Translators and Themes. The relationship between the men and women in the ten TrCs in Translators can be described as equal, unequal, or non-existent.

An equal relationship is exemplified by Maj and Paul Frisch: “Together the couple did several translations [...]” Maj Frisch (1918–1980) translated both fiction and non-fiction, while Paul Frisch (1918–2011) focused on non-fiction. Both spouses translated from Danish, English, German and Norwegian, but Paul Frisch had a specific competence in one source language, since Norwegian was his mother tongue (SwET Maj Frisch, 1918–1980; SwET Paul Frisch, 1918–2011). The Frisch couple worked together and separately, they translated from the same source languages and their translation assignments had partly the same focus.

An example of an unequal relationship between the partners in TrCs is provided by Cilla and Eyvind Johnson. Cilla Johnson translated fiction from Danish, English, and Norwegian, both high- and low-prestige literature, and she also “initially helped her husband with translations that he had undertaken mainly for financial reasons [...]” (SwET Cilla Johnson, 1911–2002). Eyvind Johnson was an author, a member of the Swedish Academy, a recipient of the 1974 Nobel Prize in Literature and a translator of fiction in Danish, French and Norwegian (SwET Eyvind Johnson, 1900–1976). The Johnsons collaborated in some cases, but Cilla Johnson mastered current source languages better, produced many more translations and received prizes for her work (SwET Cilla Johnson, 1911–2002).

There are also TrCs where there was little or no collaboration between the partners, since the spouses focused on different translation assignments or translated from different source languages. These situations are exemplified by Brita and Johannes Edfelt and Karin and Alfred Jensen, respectively.

Brita Edfelt was a translator of English and German fiction, with an emphasis on German prose, and Johannes Edfelt was a poet, an editor of collected volumes of prose and poetry and a member of the Swedish Academy. He translated English, French, and German poetry, especially German (SwET Brita Edfelt, 1908–2006; SwET Johannes Edfelt, 1904–1997). The Edfelts translated partly from the same source languages, were awarded prizes, but focused on different genres. This fact is reflected in their joint translations of some of Bertolt Brecht's plays. Brita Edfelt described their collaboration as "Johannes took care of the poems; I took care of the rest" (SwET Brita Edfelt, 1908–2006).

Karin Jensen translated Danish, English, French, German, and Norwegian fiction and non-fiction and texts intended for adults and young people. She is especially renowned for her translations of the Canadian writer L.M. Montgomery's books in the Anne of Green Gables series (SwET Karin Jensen, 1866–1928). Alfred Jensen was a translator, an author, and a journalist. He translated from Slavic languages, both older and contemporary literature, prose, poetry as well as texts representing other genres (SwET Alfred Jensen, 1859–1921). The Jensens translated from different source languages, focused on different types of assignments, and received appreciation for their work, but only Alfred Jensen was awarded prizes for his translations (SwET Karin Jensen, 1866–1928; SwET Alfred Jensen, 1859–1921).

The five TrCs treated in joint articles in Themes had close working relationships, like Maj and Paul Frisch above, but these TrCs fulfilled translation tasks of different types and the partners sometimes had various complementary skills. The following three TrCs illustrate the different situations that were identified.

The spouses Ruth Bohman (1913–2011) and Ivan Bohman (1902–1970) were responsible for the second Swedish translation of Karl Marx's *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1969–1978). Ivan Bohman translated volumes 1–2 and Ruth Bohman completed the translation of volume 3, a translation much discussed and widely used (SwET Ivan och Ruth Bohman). The Bohmans worked on the same extensive source text and had a mutual political commitment that lay behind their work. Maibrit Westrin (1924–2022) and Per Anders Westrin (1924–2003) translated the weekly Disney comic magazine *Donald Duck & Co* 1957–1981. The spouses translated mainly from English but also from other languages and had complementary skills. Per Anders Westrin was a schoolteacher, a psychologist, and a journalist, while Maibrit Westrin

was a university teacher of French. Their translations were widely read, and they have been characterized as linguistic innovators in Swedish (SwET P A Westrin). The spouses Ivo Iliste (1935–2002) and Birgitta Göranson Iliste (b. 1947) translated modern Estonian literature. Iliste, who was born in Estonia and lived in Sweden from the age of 15, first made “a rough translation covered with question marks and comments. Then Göranson went through and cleaned up the manuscript and refined the nuances, after which the translators jointly compared the translation, sentence by sentence, with the original” (SwET Ivo Iliste och Birgitta Göranson Iliste). Like the Westrins, Ivo Iliste and Birgitta Göranson Iliste utilized their complementary competences, here related to the source and target languages.

### 4.3 “Translator Couples” in the category Translators

Table 3 and the SwET articles commented upon in sub-section 4.2 depict almost gender equal relationships between the partners in the 15 TrCs. However, unequal relationships are also found, since 24 articles are devoted to male translators and six to female ones. The descriptions, characterizations, and evaluations of individuals in unequal relationships are analysed in this sub-section, in relation to the rather vague general ambition for the SwET (see sub-section 2.2).

Included in Table 4 is an examination of the articles about TrCs in the Translators category, based on formulations signalling gender equality or gender inequality. Examples are “the spouses translated together”, “they translated jointly” and “the translation was done in collaboration between the spouses” in which it is assumed that they show an equal working relationship, at least on the surface text level. Formulations such as “she acted as her husband’s assistant” and “she helped her husband with the translations” are assumed to show an unequal relationship.

**Table 4.** TrCs in Translators: formulations expressing gender equality and gender inequality, absolute figures.

Formulations expressing	Articles about a female and a male translator	Articles about a female translator	Articles about a male translator
gender equality	8	4	15
gender inequality	2	–	9
Total	10	4	24

Table 4 shows that linguistic expressions of gender equality, on a text-surface level, dominate in all three categories of articles. An example in the first category is Maj and Paul Frisch in sub-section 4.2, and one in the second is Brita Björkbom, who

translated three books together with her husband Carl and about 20 books on her own (SwET Brita Björkbom, 1906–1969; LIBRIS 2022c). The figures in Table 4 do not, however, tell the whole story about how female and male translators in TrCs are described, characterized and evaluated. In the case of the third category, where only the man in a TrC is treated in an article, formulations of the type “together” may instead express gender inequality, since the woman in question (so far) is only mentioned in the article about her partner. Two examples are the TrCs Karl G. and Lilian Fredriksson (1) and Gösta and Erna Knutsson (2):

- (1) They lectured together, travelled together, wrote, and translated together. (SwET Karl G. Fredriksson, 1941–2015)
- (2) From 1957, he often did his translations together with his wife Erna. [– – –] Pretty soon she also became a translator in her own right. (SwET Gösta Knutsson, 1908–1973)

Such examples show that the articles in question must be scrutinized in detail. Based on the information in the SwET and LIBRIS, Lilian Fredriksson and Erna Knutsson deserve more attention than they have so far received in the encyclopaedia, either in terms of separate articles in Translators or together with their husbands in Themes (LIBRIS 2022h; LIBRIS 2022e).

There are a few formulations that express an unequal relationship with respect to the woman in a translator couple being judged as the more competent translator. As shown in sub-section 4.2, one such notable example is Cilla Johnson. However, there are no similar formulations in the second category in Table 4, where only the woman in a translator couple is treated in an article. This applies, for example, to Brita Björkbom in relation to her husband Carl above. In the case of the third category, it is, however, rather common for women to be described, characterized and evaluated as assistants to their translating male partners, at least on a text-surface level.

One example is Barbro Järv's contribution to her husband Harry's translation from German of Hermann Broch's *The Death of Vergil* (1966). Harry Järv's translation work “required all his spare time for three years – and Barbro Järv's work to type the translation” (SwET Harry Järv, 1921–2009). A second example is Maud Hultenberg's contribution to her husband Hugo's translations. A daughter of the Hultenbergs has claimed that her mother never translated independently “during my father's lifetime”. This claim is, however, contradicted by the SwET description in (3):

- (3) Together with his wife Maud, he [Hugo Hultenberg] translated into Swedish nearly three hundred works by authors such as Stefan Zweig, Herman Melville, Anatole France, Sinclair Lewis, Maeterlinck, Romain Rolland and Rabindranath



Tagore, plus popular science works, biographies and political literature. (SwET Hugo Hultenberg, 1870–1947)

According to LIBRIS, the Hultenbergs also published a joint translation for young adults (1909) and Maud Hultenberg translated two young adults' books (1910, 1913) (LIBRIS 2022i).

The women in question are portrayed as mere assistants of their husbands. Nevertheless, the women mentioned in articles in the Translators category may be very important for their husbands' translations. For example, Birgitta Milits is said to have played a crucial role in her husband's work, especially his translation of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* (1999): "It was not without considerable assistance from his wife Birgitta that Milits managed to find the right language level in Swedish" (SwET Alex Milits, 1932–2012). However, Birgitta Milits is not mentioned in the information LIBRIS has about Alex Milits (LIBRIS 2022b). In the case of Ruth Edlund, it is reported that she tried to reduce her own importance for joint translations with her husband Mårten – and perhaps also her importance for the translations published under her husband's name (4):

- (4) Mårten and Ruth Edlund's names appear together on seven translations between 1951–1960, most of which were detective novels, but given the husband's incredibly high output, there is reason to suspect that his wife made several contributions. In a previously mentioned interview with [Axel] Liffner [1954], however, it is only claimed that Ruth Edlund is her husband's "permanent assistant" and that she would not like to "hear about, let alone mention, her involvement". (SwET Mårten Edlund, 1913–1987)

It must be emphasized that it is not clear how much freedom SwET article authors enjoy and how the SwET research editor(s) have handled, and handle, articles in progress (cf. sub-section 2.1). Quantitative data on translations carried out by the partners in TrCs can be assessed from bibliographies in SwET articles, sometimes supplemented by information in LIBRIS. This applies for instance to the Fredrikssons and Knutssons. However, readers of the SwET may find it more difficult to assess how justified qualitative judgements about partners in specific TrCs are. Sources for the judgements are sometimes given, e.g., the Hultenbergs and Edlunds. In other cases, no such information is offered, for example, about Barbro Järv's and Birgitta Milit's contributions.

## 5. Conclusion

The main title of this article is "Gender equality and/or inequality?". In relation to the three RQs formulated, three situations emerge: (a) gender equality and inequality, (b) gender equality and (c) gender inequality.

Regarding RQ (1), gender inequality is obvious in the 2022 SwET, i.e., situation (c), and this is most striking for the periods 1437–1699 and 1700–1799. The ratio of female translators in the SwET increases from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and onwards. Four possible complementary reasons for these quantitative results are presented above, along with examples to support them.

As far as RQ (2) is concerned, two situations emerge; gender equality and inequality in the 2022 SwET, i.e., situation (a). There are some TrCs in the Translators and Themes categories where both the female and male translator in a Translator Couple are treated in the 2022 SwET, i.e., situation (b). However, there are several TrCs where an article is dedicated to the woman or the man, situation (c), but predominantly the man. Three types of professional relationships in TrCs are identified and discussed as equal, unequal, and non-existent.

With regard to RQ (3), both gender equality and inequality in the 2022 SwET emerge, i.e., situation (a). A number of women and men in TrCs in Translators are described, characterized and evaluated in an equal way, situation (b). In other cases, one of the partners is the main focus, situation (c), and typically the man. Several women who are mentioned in articles about their translating male partners may, however, be more important as translators on their own and/or as collaborating translators than is apparent in the 2022 SwET.

Based on the results, three proposals are presented for a more gender equal SwET, and these might also be useful for future studies of other translator encyclopaedias.

The first proposal is that more female translators should be identified and included in the SwET. As shown in section 4, resources such as the SKBL and LIBRIS can be of help here. This study also draws attention to women who are mentioned in articles about their partners. Therefore, existing articles in the Translators category may be developed into joint articles about TrCs in Themes or new articles about the females in question may be added in Translators.

A second proposal concerns translators and sexual orientation. As noted in sub-section 3.2, all TrCs in the 2022 SwET live or lived in heterosexual relationships. It is, however, not unreasonable to assume that there are translators in the SwET with other sexual orientations. Today, LGBTQI+ perspectives can be included in Translation Studies (cf. e.g., Baer and Kaindl 2018), and in some cases additional information about translators' sexual orientation may be relevant. One possible case is Eva Alexanderson (1911–1994), an author and a translator of works by, for instance, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir (SwET Eva Alexanderson, 1911–1994). According to the SKBL, Alexanderson came out as a lesbian in 1969, perhaps

one of the first well-known Swedes to do so (Lindeqvist 2018). Both the SwET and the SKBL state that Alexanderson's personal life, including her sexual orientation, were of importance for her own books, but nothing is said about any possible implications for her translation tasks.

A third suggestion concerns the categories Prizes and Translators in the SwET. Svahn (2021, 264) stresses that it would be highly relevant to study the recipients of translation awards in Sweden from a gender perspective, such as what translators are deemed worthy of such awards, and is there a possible connection between awards and articles in the Translators category of the SwET? Another possibility concerns translators of literature for children and young people. For example, all translations and adaptations of L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) into Swedish, published between 1909 and 2018, have been performed by women (Vogel 2021, 1). What role do female translators play for translation of this type of literature, and what attention does the SwET pay to translators of literature for children and young people?

Finally, I would like to express a personal hope, which is that the present study gives inspiration to future studies of digital translator encyclopaedias since such resources offer many possibilities for translator-centred studies. I am convinced that such encyclopaedias may tell us much about translators as important agents in society.

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SwET = Svenskt översättarlexikon 'The Swedish Encyclopaedia of Translators'. <https://litteraturbanken.se/översättarlexikon>.

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