

RETHINKING FEMINIST TRANSLATION: THEORY ASPECT

ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ ФЕМІНІСТИЧНОГО ПЕРЕКЛАДУ:
ТЕОРЕТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

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This article explores feminist translation as both a theoretical paradigm and a cultural practice that has transformed translation studies since the late twentieth century. Drawing on the Canadian feminist thought, where translation was reconceptualized as an activist intervention against patriarchal language structures, the article traces the intellectual trajectories that shaped feminist translation theory.

It examines central principles such as translator visibility, ideological intervention, and strategies including supplementing, footnoting, and hijacking, as codified by Luise von Flotow. The discussion highlights the influential contributions of scholars such as Sherry Simon, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Barbara Godard, and Patricia Hill Collins, who situate feminist translation within the broader struggles for epistemological, cultural, and political agency. The article also addresses contemporary debates on decoloniality and transnational feminist dialogue, citing perspectives from C.B. Bozzano, O. Castro and E. Ergun, and A. Sifaki, who emphasize both the potential and challenges of feminist translation in global contexts. Special attention is paid to the Ukrainian scholarly tradition, where figures such as Solomiia Pavlychko, Tamara Hundorova, and N. M. Hotsa introduced feminist criticism and gender-sensitive translation studies into local academic discourse.

By connecting the Canadian, international, and Ukrainian perspectives, the article demonstrates that feminist translation is not a uniform method but a diverse and dynamic practice shaped by sociopolitical contexts, historical conditions, and cultural negotiations. Ultimately, feminist translation is shown to be both a theoretical innovation and a political project, one that foregrounds translators as agents of cultural transformation and creators of alternative discourses.

Key words: feminist translation, translator's agency, gender and translation, decoloniality, Canadian school, Ukrainian scholarship, cultural politics.

У статті розглядається феміністичний переклад як теоретична парадигма та культурна практика, що суттєво вплинула на розвиток перекладознавства з кінця ХХ століття. Спираючись на канадську феміністичну думку, де переклад був переосмислений як форма активістського втручання у патріархальні мовні структури, простежуються інтелектуальні траєкторії, що сформували теорію феміністичного перекладу.

У фокусі наукового інтересу – такі принципи, як видимість перекладача, ідеологічне втручання, а також стратегії «доповнення», «передмов та приміток» і «привласнення», кодифіковані Луїзою фон Фльотов. Аналіз підкреслює внесок Шеррі Саймон, Сюзанни де Лотбін'єр-Гарвуд, Барбари Годар та Патрісії Гілл Коллінз, які розглядають переклад як засіб боротьби за епістемологічну, культурну та політичну суб'єктність.

Особливу увагу приділено сучасним дискусіям щодо деколоніальності й транснаціональних діалогів фемінізму, зокрема у працях К.Б. Боццано, О. Кастро й Е. Ерґун та А. Сіфакі, які наголошують на можливостях і водночас парадоксах феміністичного перекладу у глобальному контексті. В українській традиції розробку гендерно чутливого перекладу започаткували Соломія Павличко, Тамара Гундорова та Н. М. Гоца, що інтегрували здобутки феміністичної критики в перекладознавчі студії.

Поєднання канадського, міжнародного й українського досвіду засвідчує, що феміністичний переклад не є єдиною методологією, а радше динамічною практикою, зумовленою конкретними соціополітичними та культурними контекстами. Врешті-решт, феміністичний переклад постає водночас теоретичним нововведенням і політичним проектом, що робить перекладача активним творцем альтернативних культурних дискурсів.

Ключові слова: феміністичний переклад, агентність перекладача, гендер і переклад, деколоніальність, канадська школа, українська наука, культурна політика.

Introduction. Feminist translation has become an influential theoretical and practical trend in translation studies since the late twentieth century. Emerging from the feminist literary movements and academic discourses, this approach emphasizes the translator's agency and foregrounds the political dimensions of language. It is particularly relevant in the context of women translators in diasporic and postcolonial traditions, including Ukraine, where feminist criticism

has significantly shaped translation scholarship. This section explores the origins, strategies, and key theorists of feminist translation, situating them within the broader postcolonial and cultural frameworks.

Feminist translation encompasses not only politically engaged textual translation strategies, as proposed by the Canadian school as key tools of feminist translation, but also any form of discursive political intervention made in various processes of translation

in pursuit of gender justice – e.g. the strategic use of translation as an apparatus of cross-border dialogue to disseminate feminist ideas and build transnational feminist solidarities [12, p. 128–129].

The purpose of this article is to investigate the theoretical foundations of feminist translation, tracing its development from the Canadian scholarship to the international and Ukrainian contexts.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.

The development of feminist translation cannot be fully understood without considering the broader intellectual shifts brought about by the postcolonial and cultural studies. Homi Bhabha's theorization of "translational culture" foregrounds translation as a site of cultural production where "newness enters the world" [1, p. 212]. For him, hybridity destabilizes fixed cultural identities and highlights "a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" [1, p. 5]. This notion resonates strongly with feminist translation, which similarly resists essentialist assumptions about language, gender, and culture, instead embracing the constructiveness and fluidity of meaning.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak takes this theorization further by situating translation at the intersection of postcolonial critique and feminist theory. She argues that "the task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency" [2, p. 179]. Agency, however, is always partial: the writer is shaped by her language yet also "writes agency" through ideological positioning. For G. Spivak, the translator's work involves both "surrender" to the rhetorical density of the text and the active "staging" of its ideological implications. Her analysis underscores the responsibility of feminist translators to attend to cultural inequalities, particularly the global dominance of English, while building solidarities across linguistic and cultural divides.

Sherry Simon expands these perspectives by linking feminist translation directly to cultural studies. She critiques earlier definitions of culture as static and self-evident [3] and instead positions translation as a contested space where power, identity, and gender are negotiated. As she observes, feminist translation "has made gender the site of a consciously transformative project, one which reframes conditions of textual authority" [3, p. 167]. This view situates feminist translation not only as a linguistic practice but also as a cultural intervention aligned with post-structuralism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism.

Other theorists have emphasized the ideological and political dimensions of these practices. Cao Shou and Cong Min argue that feminist translation theorists explicitly stood up for their trans-

lation ideology, reinterpreting the notion of "fidelity" not as loyalty to the author or the reader but as fidelity to one's own understanding and political intentions [4, p. 34]. Such reconceptualizations underscore the refusal of feminist translators to separate translation from ideology, affirming the transformative power of linguistic construction.

The border-crossing nature of feminist translation has been emphasized by scholars who highlight its epistemological, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions. As Patricia Hill Collins argues, "there is no way to know our world without crossing linguistic, cultural and epistemological borders, of taking risks both in conversation and within our own intellectual production" [5 p. xvi]. Translation, in this sense, becomes not only a textual but also an intellectual practice of encounter, exchange, and risk-taking.

This transnational dimension is echoed in C.B. Bozzano's call for "an equitable debate among north-south different feminisms, its dialogues and frictions, without reproducing colonial violence. A dialogue that shares heritages of social struggles, a geopolitical translation understood as practice that does not fall into the repetition of coloniality" [6, p. 2]. Such a vision insists that feminist translation must resist both epistemic homogenization and the reproduction of asymmetries of power.

As O. Castro and E. Ergun note, feminist translation studies (FTS) "allows us to reflect on the conditions of feminisms' emergence and development as historically situated responses to different regimes and experiences of marginalisation" [7 p. 96]. This formulation situates feminist translation within a historical and political continuum, in which different feminist movements across the globe respond to particular structures of exclusion and domination.

At the same time, the field continues to face unresolved tensions. As A. Sifaki observes, feminist academics often find themselves "facing insurmountable challenges, new paradoxes and intense ambivalences" [8, p. 111]. These tensions are equally visible in feminist translation, where translators must navigate competing demands of fidelity, visibility, solidarity, and resistance.

While postcolonial theory provided a broad intellectual frame, feminist translation as a distinct movement took shape in Québec and Canadian translation circles in the late 1970s and 1980s. The sociocultural context of Québec, marked by its diglossic situation and a sense of linguistic and political marginalization, was central to this development. As Kim Wallmach notes, Canadian feminist translation developed partly due to the negative view of mainstream translation in Québec, as well as a deep concern with language

that arose from frustration over political and linguistic powerlessness. This concern, combined with the rise of feminist writing on both sides of the Atlantic, encouraged Québécois women writers to challenge patriarchal society through innovative manipulation of language [9, p. 10].

The feminist activism of that period created fertile ground for rethinking translation as cultural resistance. S. Simon defines feminist translation as “a cultural intervention, seeking to create new cultural meanings and bring about social change,” thereby highlighting its activist impulse [3].

Pioneering theorists such as Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood explicitly framed the translator’s role as political: “This translation has used every possible feminist translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language” [10]. Barbara Godard similarly emphasized visibility, insisting that “the feminist translator... has given herself permission to make her work visible” [11]. Rejecting patriarchal demands for transparency, feminist translators positioned themselves as interventionist figures whose voices could reshape textual authority.

A group of feminist translators, including Louise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood – aligned themselves with the Canadian avant-garde, aiming to foreground authors’ voices and actively participate in the reinterpretation of texts. Louise Von Flotow, in her scientific article “Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories” has categorized their interventions into four primary strategies: supplementation, prefaces, footnotes, and textual hijacking [11, p. 80] – *supplementing*, which adds material to highlight silenced voices or gendered nuances; *prefacing and footnoting*, which reveal the translator’s role through paratextual commentary; and *hijacking*, which deliberately reorients a text to align with feminist perspectives. These strategies underscore that feminist translation is not merely linguistic transfer but a counter-hegemonic practice that foregrounds gendered power relations.

The Canadian strategies have often been taken as the universal feminist translation paradigm applicable to any texts being translated under any circumstances, ignoring, for example, that these strategies are of limited use for translations of texts ‘hostile’ to feminist concerns [12, p. 133]

During the 1990s, this approach catalyzed sustained theoretical reflection on the intersection of gender and translation, establishing gender as a critical analytical category and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue across feminist theory, literary studies, and translation studies. Scholars such as B. Godard [16],

S. Simon [3], and L. von Flotow [11] have highlighted how translations were historically associated with femininity and positioned as subordinate to original texts. Feminist translation, in contrast, emphasizes that cultural transmission is partial, context-dependent, and continuously evolving. Over thirty years after the pioneering work of Canadian researchers, scholarly engagement with the interconnected concepts of gender, women, and translation has not only persisted but intensified, expanding across diverse cultural, geographical, and disciplinary contexts.

The scholarly engagement with these concepts has continued, with ongoing reinterpretation and interconnection maintaining an active and evolving discourse in contemporary Translation Studies.

Although rooted in Canadian activism, feminist translation theory has also gained traction in other contexts, including Ukraine. The rise of gender studies in the 1990s and 2000s created a framework for integrating feminist approaches into translation studies. Solomiia Pavlychko was among the first to introduce feminist literary criticism into Ukrainian scholarship [13], laying the groundwork for later engagements with translation. Tamara Hundorova further developed gender-oriented interpretations of Ukrainian literature, creating a platform for analyzing translation as a gendered cultural practice [14].

More directly, N. Hotsa addressed feminist translation studies in Ukraine, highlighting the importance of gender analysis within translation research [15]. While the Ukrainian discourse remains less extensive than its Canadian counterpart, it demonstrates a growing awareness of feminist translation as both a critical method and a means of cultural renewal. Importantly, Ukrainian scholarship brings a diasporic and postcolonial perspective that enriches the global debate, emphasizing translation as a tool for negotiating identity and agency in contexts of cultural displacement and historical subordination.

Conclusions. The convergence of feminist, postcolonial, and cultural studies has redefined translation as a site of negotiation where power, identity, and agency intersect. H. Bhabha’s notion of translational hybridity, G. Spivak’s insistence on gendered agency, and S. Simon’s vision of translation as cultural intervention collectively illuminate the theoretical underpinnings of feminist translation. Adding to this, Hill Collins’ emphasis on crossing epistemological borders, C.B. Bozzano’s call for equitable dialogues between global feminisms, and O. Castro and E. Ergun’s historicized approach to feminist translation all highlight the multidimensionality of this practice. At the same time, as A. Sifaki reminds

us, feminist academics must continue grappling with paradoxes and ambivalences that emerge from the very tensions feminist translation seeks to address.

Thus, feminist translation emerges as a political and cultural project that challenges the neutrality of translation and repositions the translator as an active, interventionist figure. It is both a critique of patriarchal and colonial structures and a method of creating alternative meanings, solidarities, and tex-

tual authorities. In bridging linguistic, cultural, and gender divides, feminist translation not only enriches translation studies but also contributes to the ongoing struggle for equality and representation in global cultural production.

Further research in this area could explore the evolving strategies of feminist translation, its application in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, and its role in shaping global gender and cultural discourses.

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