

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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Abstract: This study explores the prevalence and thematic development of gender-related research within the field of translation studies. Although gender has been a subject of academic inquiry since the 1990s, comprehensive analyses of current research trajectories and thematic orientations remain scarce. To address this gap, the present paper synthesizes the contributions of Russian and international scholars through a critical review of 73 peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2016 and 2020, sourced from the Web of Science and Scopus databases. The study's results underscore the significance of adopting interdisciplinary approaches and offer important implications for extending gender-focused analysis beyond literary translation into broader translational contexts.

Key words: Translation, Gender, Feminist Translation Studies, Gender Representation, Cultural Transfer, Literary and Non-literary Texts, Gender Identity, Translation Strategies, Gender Stereotypes, Interdisciplinary Studies.

Introduction

Gender has long been a subject of inquiry across various academic disciplines, but its integration into translation studies has gained significant momentum following the second wave of feminism (1960s–1980s). Since the 1990s, scholarly engagement with the intersection of feminism, gender, and translation has grown substantially. Seminal contributions by Simon (1996) and Flotow (1997) played a pivotal role in establishing the foundational discourse on the interrelation between gender and translation practices. The convergence of these two fields has enabled a more comprehensive and critical examination of gendered dynamics in translational processes, foregrounding globally relevant gender issues within a translational context.

Recent scholarship continues to build on this foundation by mapping the evolution of feminist and gender-informed translation studies. Flotow and Scott (2014), for example, investigated the historical development of gender and translation as intersecting fields, while Flotow (2018) further examined the influence of feminist theory and the broader conceptualization of 'gender' on translation practices from an Anglophone perspective. Her work includes illustrative case studies such as feminist translations of the Bible, representations of queer discourse, and the translation of non-fiction texts. Complementing this line of inquiry, Castro and Ergun (2018) analyzed early feminist interventions in translation by focusing on literary and religious texts that are either explicitly feminist or overtly misogynistic, thereby shedding light on the

ideological dimensions of translational choices. Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of translation as both a site and a tool for negotiating gender ideologies across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The Intersection of Gender and Translation

The interplay between gender and translation has emerged as a critical area of inquiry within contemporary translation studies. Hu and Meng (2017) delineate this relationship along two interconnected axes: the influence of gender and feminist theory on translation practices, and the reciprocal role of translation in shaping and constructing gender identities and representations. This bidirectional framework underscores the complexity of the relationship, revealing how translation both reflects and produces gendered meanings.

Hu and Li (2018) further expand on this conceptual model by exploring the ways in which gender and feminism inform translational decisions. Central to this discussion is the role of the translator's gender, which can influence the selection of texts, the interpretive stance adopted, and the translation strategies employed. The authors emphasize that gender differences manifest not only in textual choices but also in stylistic and ideological orientations, suggesting that male and female translators may navigate texts differently in accordance with their gendered perspectives.

Moreover, the influence of gender on translation cannot be divorced from its cultural dimension. As Flotow (1997) argues, gender should be understood as a cultural construct, and translation, as an act of cultural transfer, must account for the gender norms and expectations of both source and target cultures. Translators, therefore, engage with gender not merely as a linguistic concern, but as a culturally embedded variable that shapes meaning and reception. When translating texts across cultural contexts with divergent gender ideologies, translators may adopt gender-sensitive strategies to negotiate or normalize representations that deviate from prevailing norms in the target culture.

Conversely, translation also functions as a powerful medium through which gender roles and identities are constructed and disseminated. This aspect is particularly salient in feminist translation studies, which foreground the role of translation in mediating ideological positions on gender. As Castro (2013a) notes, translation is not a neutral act but one that actively participates in the production of gendered discourse. Through strategic interventions — such as rewording, footnoting, or paratextual framing — translators contribute to the shaping of gender identities, challenging or reinforcing existing societal narratives.

Exploring Gender Representation in Translation

In the context of translation studies, texts are typically categorized into three distinct types: literary, non-literary, and medial texts. According to Newmark (2004), literary texts encompass genres such as poetry, fiction, and drama, which are primarily

concerned with artistic expression. Non-literary texts, on the other hand, include practical and factual content such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, names, titles, and formal documents. This category includes texts such as advertisements, films, and policy documents. Medial texts, as described by Newmark, are characterized by a non-literary subject matter conveyed through a literary form. Examples of medial texts include works related to religion, history, and cultural studies. Despite the distinct classifications, Newmark suggests that medial texts can be grouped within the broader category of non-literary texts. Furthermore, contexts related to learning, teaching, research, and professional practice are typically categorized under non-literary genres. Consequently, the research contexts of all articles reviewed in this study were categorized into either literary or non-literary texts.

While much of the existing scholarship has focused on tracing the historical development of gender studies and its intersection with translation studies, there remains a significant gap in systematic literature reviews that examine the growth and trends within this field. Although numerous studies have explored the relationship between gender and translation, the research trajectories and emerging trends within this interaction have received relatively little attention. Specifically, it remains unclear which gender-related topics have been most frequently studied in translation studies, which areas are underexplored, and the depth to which these topics have been analyzed. For example, gender representations in literary translation continue to be a prominent area of research; however, it remains uncertain whether studies have focused predominantly on stereotypical gender portrayals, the visibility of gender, or other aspects of gendered representation in translated texts.

Conclusion

This article has explored the multifaceted concept of gender in translation studies, highlighting the complex interactions between gender theory and translation practices. Through an analysis of the historical development of gender and translation, it is evident that the field has evolved significantly, particularly since the second wave of feminism. Scholars such as Simon (1996) and Flotow (1997) have laid foundational work, establishing the relationship between gender and translation as an important area of inquiry. The article has demonstrated that gender issues in translation are not merely a reflection of the translator's gender but also a dynamic process influenced by cultural norms and societal expectations, as seen in the ongoing dialogue between feminist theory and translation practices.

In examining the various text types — literary, non-literary, and medial — this study has illuminated the different ways gender is represented across genres. Literary texts often provide a fertile ground for studying gender portrayals, with much of the research focusing on stereotypical representations and the visibility of gender in translated works. Despite the substantial body of research in this area, there remain

notable gaps in the systematic review of trends in gender and translation studies. While much has been written on the historical relationship between gender and translation, fewer studies have investigated the evolution of this relationship over time or examined the specific research trajectories that have emerged.

The findings of this article underscore the need for further interdisciplinary research that bridges gender studies with translation studies, particularly in exploring the complexities of cultural gender norms and their impact on translational practices.

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