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Article

Approaching Feminism in Translation: A Room of One's Own as an Example Sara Amin*

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Abstract

This research paper aims to present the feminist side of translation. It aims to reconsider and reshape translation from the feminist point of view. It does so by introducing the feminist theory to translation and applying it to some excerpts. These excerpts are taken from the great English novelist Virginia Woolf's (1977) A Room of one's own. The theory in this study is the feminist theory in translation by the famous theorist Louise von Flotow (1991). This theory contains three strategies. The first is supplementing. It means adding elements to the translation to compensate for what the language lacks, such as gender agreement in English. This strategy fills the gap between conventional linguistic norms and feminist purposes. The second strategy is Footnotes and prefaces which present explanations for translational choices and linguistic references at the beginning of the text or throughout it to make women's voices visible. The third strategy is Hijacking which is an appropriation of the text, including the changes applied to it to suit feminist translators' aims.

Keywords: Feminist translation, Strategies, Feminist issues, Woolf, Feminism.

1. Introduction

The feminist translation is a means to fight patriarchy in language and its androcentric use of it. It consists of three strategies put forward by Luise von Flotow (1991). The three strategies include supplementing, prefaces, footnoting, and hijacking. Supplementing, as the word suggests, adds elements to the translation to compensate for what the language lacks, such as gender agreement in English. This strategy fills the gap between conventional linguistic norms and feminist purposes. Footnotes and prefacing present explanations for translational choices and linguistic and cultural references at the beginning of the text or throughout it to make women's voices visible. Hijacking is an appropriation of the text, including the changes applied to it to suit feminist translators' aims. This study aims at investigating how the three strategies of feminist translation yield the language to make the feminine voice seen and heard. The reason for selecting the text is because it shows androcentricity in the translation of it though the English version is completely dedicated to feminism. What makes a feminist translation possible is the fact that the Arabic language grammar consists of both the masculine and the feminine and not a neutral one (Sadiqi, 2006).

2. Materials and Methods

This research makes use of the novel by Virginia Woolf written in 1977. It is a feminist manifesto. It also makes use of the translation of the novel by Somaiya Ramadan published in 2009. It also uses the theory of feminism in translation which was suggested by the great theorist Luise von Flotow in 1991.

2.1. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is a qualitative analytic method. The study holds an analysis of the data to judge the quality of the translation. It examines how the translation was conducted, where could the feminist strategies in translation could be noticed, and where it lacks feminism. It is to preview the translation from the feminist theory lenses. It analyses every aspect of the translation in search of the feminist voice in the translation of a text that is considered the leading writing of women's emancipation and an enlightening piece of writing regarding women's causes.

This research is to analyze feminist translation theory and criticizes the androcentric use of language. The three strategies of feminist translation theory are investigated, discussed, and analyzed in Somaiya Ramadan's (2009) rendering of *A Room of One's Own*. It is an analytic critical study that analyses what strategy did Somaiya Ramadan use in translating the text, and a critical one that investigates in which areas were the feminist strategies of translation most needed along the text since Somaiya Ramadan has violated much of the strategies in the text.

2.1.1. Gender in Language and Translation

Clive Scott (2015) rethinks and rearranges the relationship between translation, literature, and culture. According to him, conventional views of translation that used to speak only to translators and do not consider the target reader should and could be challenged. Translating literature puts translation studies further into the interdisciplinary notion of relating it to cultural aspects away from sticking only with the source text literally. If the literary translation is considered away from the source text, it might translate new kinds of knowledge or new configurations of inherited knowledge. Thus, translation reconnects a source text to the cultural milieu and redefines the cultural realms whether these cultural realms concern politics, ethnicity, gender, or intertextual fabric. In this sense, literary translation is a vehicle of proliferation Scott (2015) further asserts that if literary translation redraws disciplinary boundaries introducing in the manner new and fruitful permeabilities, thus translation of this field invites us into new coordinates of knowledge. The act of translation provides a peculiarly elastic space in which the translational mind can remodel the literary landscape. This translation in turn can take reading consciousness on journeys that conventional knowledge disqualifies. This also provides images of what rewritten literature might look like, e.g., Shakespeare in Alexandrines, narratives reframed to different ideologies, or different gender or political agendas, Dante seen through the lens of George Herbert or vice versa.

Gender in language has emerged as a field of study as a result of the women's movement in the west, especially since the 1960s when feminists began to question linguistic sexism and other types of 'patriarchal language'. It was the second wave of feminism in particular that made for the appearance and the important emergence of gender issues in language and in translation. Ever since the 1960s, language has become an important factor for feminism and its target at the same time. At that very time, gender and language started their development as a field of study. This field has witnessed different approaches to the relationship between both areas of study which in turn evoked debates and promoted the research area.

However, since the 1990s researchers have come to realize the troubles and the gap in the three models. The problem with either the dominance or difference models was in the process of conceptualizing gender as binary opposition that makes way for essentialism. In other words, gender identities are considered as static and fixed once and for all in one's childhood. But the interaction between language, individual identities, and social structure and how the interaction sustains unequal gender relations are not properly cared for (Meng, 2019).

For the sake of the conceptualization of gender, language, and translation, new perspectives have been suggested. Post-structuralism has offered new agendas, new research, and new approaches to the fields. Moreover, the revolting move in writing in the Quebec region has made way for new approaches in feminist writing and in the translation of these writings including Flotow's (1991) approach. These approaches at best attempt not to reconceptualize the mistakes of the previous approaches. They rather introduce new perspectives into the fields of gender, language, and translation.

2.1.2 Feminist Theory: Female-Based Concepts

The concept of feminist translation and its theory is a consequence of a move in writing and in the literature that goes down in the history of writing under the term: "Écriture Feminine" in writing and "the cultural turn" in translation studies.

"L' Écriture Feminine" is an avant-guarde style of writing that might also be considered under the umbrella of experimental literature. It aims at re-discovering and re-enforcing women's voices in literature. "L' Écriture Feminine", or "women's writing" was coined as a term by the French feminist and literary theorist Hélène Cixous in her essay published in 1976, holding the title *The Laugh of the Medusa*. This new wave in literature aimed at establishing a new genre in literature that differs from the traditional masculine writing styles. A genre that is specialized in the relationship between psychological and cultural conceptions of the female body and female uniqueness and difference in text and in language. This ongoing change in style and feminist literary theory was first introduced in France in the 1970s at the hands of Cixous (1976) and other theorists including Luce Irigaray (1985) and Chantal Chawaf (1978).

L'écriture feminine, a term coined by Hélène Cixous (1976), is a theory that highlights the importance of language for the psychic understanding of the self. Cixous (1976) is seeking the 'hidden signifier' in language that expresses the indescribable and what cannot usually be described, expressed, or uttered in structuralist language. It was Cixous (1976) herself who suggested that styles of writing such as stream of consciousness, adopted by writers such as Virginia Woolf-, are more free and flowing and contain a more 'feminine' structure and tone than that of most conventional styles in writing. This theory concerns itself with a ground theory work in psychoanalysis that considers how humans arrive at an understanding of their social roles. It goes on to explain how women, who may be positioned as 'other' in a masculine symbolic order, are able to restate their understanding of the world through indulging in their own otherness, both within and outside their own minds, or consciousness.

2.1.3. Feminist Writing

In her essay, *The laugh of the Medusa* (originally published as *Le Rire de la Méduse*), Cixous (1976) clearly states that: "a woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" (p.875); that is due to and similar to the fact that their sexual pleasure has been repressed and denied expression. The same applies to their voices, their character, and their mentalities as if their whole existence was marginalized. To write is to leave one's fingerprint not only on the times in which such a person might be producing their intellectual inspirations through writing but on times to follow. To write is to breathe one's inner self into paper. To write is too loudly yet gracefully and calmly press one's own and one's gender rights and demands. It is to reclaim what has been marginalized, what has been neglected, or even declined in the hands of men. Men of literature have made women their toy subjects as if clay shaped whatever way they wished. She might be the simple-minded beauty in the wait of the charming prince who will save her gentleness from the world of cruelty. Or she could be the vicious *Medusa* who vowed to destroy the world of men. Cixous (1976) was among the first to use her pen in revolt against shaping enmity out of women, stereotyping and marginalizing them. On that she says:

Write! and your self-seeking text will know itself better than flesh and blood, rising, insurrectionary dough kneading itself, with sonorous, perfumed ingredients, a lively combination of flying colors, leaves, and rivers plunging into the sea we feed. "Ah, there's her sea," he will say as SJYR 2023, **3**(4). 4 of 9

he holds out to me a basin full of water from the little phallic mother from whom he's inseparable (Cixous, 1976).

Not only that but also, she comes up with the term "white ink" referring to women's motherly writing. That is to say, they are the origin, and their writing is mothering to every other writing, a woman writes in mother's milk, i.e., white ink. To her, *Medusa* is not deadly, but she is beautiful, and she is laughing.

The School of Translation Studies has always been centered on studying translation issues from a cultural perspective, with its own distinctive cultural awareness. Because the term cultural turn of Translation Studies was proposed by Snell-Hornby (1988) and was advocated by Bassnett and Lefevere in the anthology of translation, history, and culture compiled in 1990, the school of Translation Studies began to investigate translation issues from their different cultural perspectives and formed different theories of translation studies (Liu, 2010). The renowned translation theorist Snell-Hornby (1988) in Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach enthusiastically describes a culture-oriented translation theory and states that translation is a cross-cultural communication activity; Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (1990) proposed many new concepts, including 'history', 'function' and 'Rewriting' in Translation Studies and claims that translation should adapt to cultural requirements; André Lefevere's (1992) theory of 'patronage, poetics and ideology' tackles translation by placing the literary system into the larger social and cultural context to investigate the constraints on the translation mechanism and norms that translators abide by describing different translation phenomenon. The translation studies are usually intensified by the subsequent feminist translation studies which aim to construct the feminist discourse and the postcolonial translation studies which take cultural hegemony and cultural identity as their object. All of such approaches to translation studies don't treat translation as static, but as a cultural transmission activity constrained by the outer factors, which extremely widen the horizon of translation studies to promote its academic growth and depth. Thus, it is necessary to analyze the causes, effects, advantages, and limitations in order to have a clear understanding of translation studies (Liu, 2010).

2.1.4. Feminist Translation

The feminist translation is the type of translation that is aimed at fighting patriarchal and androcentric use of language and translation. In her *Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices, and Theories,* Luise von Flotow (1991) demonstrates her theory and illustrates certain strategies concerning feminist translation. She begins by comparing equivalence in translation as opposed to the notion of making women seen and heard in the translations either of female writers or even of patriarchal texts that would be appropriated to fit the feminine perspective in translation. She begins to demonstrate these ideas by illustrating what a conventional, traditional translator vs. a feminist one would render as a translation for the following line "Ce soir j'entre dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe", a line from the dramatic work La Nef des sorcières (A Clash of Symbols) (Guilbeault et al., 1976). The conventional translation would be "this evening I'm entering history without pulling up my skirt." This translation is see-through and celebrates fidelity to the source text. While the feminist one is "this evening I'm entering history without opening my legs", which might be considered by some as deliberate over-interpretation or an unacceptable over-translation of the original one.

Feminist translation, accordingly, and as started in Canada, is an anti-traditional, creative approach to translation. This type of translation is much praised and celebrated by people like Barbara Godard, one of Canada's first and most notable translators, as it makes explicit what is implicit in addition to its shock effect which implies the "the repossession of the word by women, and the naming of the life of the body as experienced by women" (Godard, 1984, as cited in Flotow, 1991).

According to Flotow (1991), feminist translation might seem to have been developed as a means for the critique of and the focus on 'patriarchal language' by feminist writers in Quebec. In the 1970s and the 1980s, female writers emerged as demonstrating and producing work that

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was basically experimental along with their efforts to deconstruct the conventional language they perceived as misogynist. Such writers include Nicole Brossard's L'amèr (1977).

Flotow (1991), goes on to explain and illustrate the three strategies she has come to investigate in the translations of feminist texts as a means of going against the traditional. These three strategies are: supplementing, prefacing, footnoting, and hijacking. They are used in feminist translation so as to make the female voice seen and heard, that is to "attain visibility in translation as opposed to Venuti's (1995) notion of the invisibility of the translator" (Kamal, 2016).

Supplementing, according to Flotow (1991), explains the "over-translation" of a line or a text to reveal the feminine voice in it. It compensates for the differences between languages or performs "voluntarist action" on the text (emphasis in the original). Examples might include the use of the feminine letter in Arabic "o" to reveal that the addressee is in fact woman or the female audience as it is added in the translation of English verbs into Arabic. A clear example is Godard's translation of the "untranslatable" title by Nicole Brossard's L'Amèr (1977). It is almost untranslatable because it is a neologism in French that contains the three terms: mère (mother), mer (sea), and amer (bitter). The book discusses the theme of the patriarchal mother, the woman limited to reproduction and her suffocation in such unrecognized labour, and the recurrent tendency of suffocating her own children. Supplementing this wordplay in French resulted in Godard's translation of the title as follows: The Sea Our Mother+ Sea (S) mothers) +(S) sour to end like this:

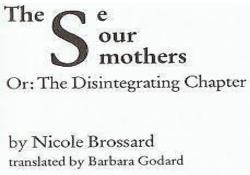


Figure 1. The title page of Godard's published translation of L'Amèr, Coach House Quebec Translations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Supplementing

As long as the text is feminist in context, feminist theory in translation seeks the application of feminist strategies to transform the text into a female-based language entirely. Supplementing, as the word suggests, adds elements to the translation to compensate for what the language lacks, such as gender agreement in English, so as to fill the gap between conventional linguistic norms and feminist purposes. It also refers to the focus on every feminine marker available in Arabic including the feminine letters (\Box), - (\Box) and the grammatical marker (\Box).

Thus, in her translation of the text (2009), Somaiya Ramadan (2009) makes way for feminine markers to form verbs, nouns, and words. However, in her translation of the text, there were other mistakes considering the use of standard Arabic language or the meaning of certain words. Here are some of the examples with the researcher's suggested translations: (Some examples of what follows are correct and do not need to be suggested or corrected translation).

Examples include

1- "But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction" (Woolf, 1977).

1- ولكن، قد تقلن، لقد طلبنا منكِ أن تتحدثي عن النساء والكتابة" (رمضان، 2009).
 الترجمة المقترحة: ولكنّكُن قد تُخبرننى أنكن قد سألتُننى عن النساء والكتابة.

2- "When you asked me to speak about women and fiction I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant" (Woolf, 1977).

2-"عندما طلبتن منى الحديث عن النساء والكتابة جلست على شاطئ نهر وبدأت أتأمل معنى الكلمات" (رمضان، 2009).

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الترجمة المقترحة: عندما طلبتنّ مني أن أتحدث عن موضوع النساء والكتابة جلست على شاطئ نهر وأخذت أتساءل ماذا تعنى هذه الكلمات؟

3- "a tribute to the Brontes and a sketch of Haworth Parsonage under snow" (Woolf, 1977). 3-" أو إقراراً بفضل الأخوات 'برونتي'ورسماً لمكان إقامتهن هوراث بارونيج وهو مغطي بالثلج" (رمضان، 2009). الترجمة المقترحة: أو ثناء على فتيات برونتي وتلميح عن مكان إقامتهن (هوارث بارونيدج) وهو مغطي بالثلج.

4- "women and what they are like, or it might mean women and the fiction that they write, or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them" (Woolf, 1977).

4-" النساء وعلى أي شاكلة هن، أو قد يعني النساء وما يكتبن، وقد يعني كذلك النساء وما يكتب عنهن " (رمضان، 2009) الترجمة المقترحة: النساء وما كتب عنهن.

5- "and you want me to consider them in that light" (Woolf, 1977).

5-"وأنكن أردتن أن أتوجه للموضوع من هذا المنحني" (رمضان، 2009) الترجمة المقترحة: وأنكن أردتن أن أتناولها من هذا المنطلق.

6- "to hand you after an hour's discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks" (Woolf, 1977).

"6- تزويدكن بعد ساعة من الحديث بركزة من الحقيقة الخالصة تستطعن إدراجها و ضمها في كراساتكن" (رمضان، 2009). الترجمة المقترحة: تزويدكن بعد ساعة من الحوار بمعلومة قيمة من الحقيقة الخالصة تستطعن إدراجها وضمها في كراساتكن.

7- "No need to be anybody but oneself" (Woolf, 1977).

7- وانتفي الداعي أن يكون المرء أي شيء غير نفسه (رمضان، 2009).

(From the context from which the sentence is taken, the speaker is a woman).

الترجمة المقترحة: وانتفى الداعى أن تكون المرأة شيئا على غير طبيعتها.

8- "Could one set that humming noise to words?" (Woolf, 1977).

8- "هل في استطاعة المرء أن يحول ذلك الطنين الى كلمات؟" (رمضان، 2009).

(From the context from which the sentence is taken, the speaker is a woman).

الترجمة المقترحة: هل في استطاعة المرأة أن تحول ذلك الطنين من الأصوات إلى كلمات؟

9- "one comes out upon a road" (Woolf, 1977).

9- "يفاجأ المرء بطريق" (رمضان، 2009).

(From the context from which the sentence is taken, the speaker is a woman).

الترجمة المقترحة: تفاجأ المرأة بطريق.

10- "I cried aloud, as one does in the dusk" (Woolf, 1977).

10- "قلت بصوت عال كما يفعل المرء في الغسق" (رمضان، 2009).

(From the context from which the sentence is taken, the speaker is a woman).

الترجمة المقترحة: قلت بصوت عال كما تفعل المرأة عند الغسق.

3.2. Prefacing and footnoting

According to feminist theory in translation, a translator should provide a preface in which she explains her translation and the changes she made to the translation. A feminist translation must include changes to the text. Any text that is about women or written for women must be translated into the feminist voice. After translating it via the use of the two strategies of supplementing and hijacking, the translator should make use of the third strategy which is prefacing and footnoting. In this strategy, a translator explains the translation she has conducted in the feminist voice. And in footnoting she must add more information about women's writing and make way for feminist commentaries to make the feminist voice more visible.

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3.3. Hijacking

Hijacking is an appropriation of the text including the changes applied to it to suit the feminist translator's aims. To hijack the text is to appropriate it to add cultural and linguistic changes. Whether these changes such as the use of the Euphemism are used to elaborate more on critical issues discussed by Woolf in the source text or cultural changes made to existing dilemmas introduced in the text. Parts of the text include the time when Woolf (1977) refers to her sex as being "the most discussed animal" in men's books along the history of writing and philosophy. Ramadan (2009) has transformed this concept that in its implicit meaning refers to how men have dehumanized women, she simply used the invisibility strategy and used a euphemism 'ożeń', which in English means "creation/creature/". Hijacking the text means that Somaiya Ramadan should have added her own account of Arabic female writers.

4. Conclusion

Feminist criticism investigates male dominance in the literary canon and successfully imposed a reassessment of how such canon was constructed. Consequently, if the 18th century is considered from a post-feminist perspective, it does not seem like a century dominated by male writers, but rather as the age when women began to make a major contribution to intellectual life. Culture and language are closely connected to each other. Language carries the culture of people and is the major vehicle through which the members of society communicate. Each nation has its own culture and different nations enjoy variant cultures. Hence, what is culture?

This study aimed at discussing, criticizing, and investigating the androcentricity in the translation of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* into Arabic. This was done in light of Luise von Flotow's (1991) theory and strategies of feminist translation. It reflects upon and evaluates the Arabic translation of Virginia Wolf's novel by Somaiya Ramadan (2009) within the scope of Flotow's (1991) three strategies of feminist translation. These strategies are namely supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking. Flotow (1991) indicates that supplementing, as the word suggests, adds elements in the translation to compensate for what's missing or what the language lacks, such as gender agreement in English, in an attempt to fill the gap between conventional linguistic norms and feminist purposes. Footnotes and prefacing present explanations for translational choices and linguistic/cultural references at the beginning of the text or throughout it in order to make women's voices visible. Hijacking is an appropriation of the text including the changes applied to it to suit feminist translators' aims. All of this proves as a way to interfere with the text so as to transfer what has been lacking in a patriarchal society, Language and cultural background, and surroundings that form the masculine societies, which is women's presence.

Writers and some of the linguists and authors of exegeses who write in the Arabic language are always focused on the use of masculine pronouns, nouns, and verbs to express for and talk about women, i.e., it is in a way an androcentric use of language that ran down the most important books in Arabic history. This study aimed at proving that the three strategies of feminist translation could possibly yield the language to make the feminine voice seen and heard. It concludes that feminist translation in the Arabic language is only possible via the focus on the use of feminine grammatical marks, suffixes, prefixes, pronouns, nouns, and verbs to achieve a translated text that is written and translated by women for women.

The study discusses what is feminism in translation, what are the strategies of feminist translation and how should this text be translated accordingly. It analyses Ramdan's (2009) translation of the novel starting with its title of it. It concludes that the translation by Ramadan (2009) is androcentric. Not only that but also the translation was not in precise Arabic standards, and it wasn't linguistically acceptable.

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مقال

الملخص العربي

النسوية في الترجمة: "غرفة تخص المرء وحده " نموذجاً سارة أمين*

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هذا البحث يناقش نظرية النسوية في الترجمة. كما يهدف إلى إعادة دراسة الترجمة من وجهة النظر النسوية. ولكي تصل الباحثة إلى هذا الغرض من البحث تقوم بإعادة ترجمة نص ذكوري ليصبح نسوي عن طريق تطبيق نظرية النسوية في الترجمة. هذه الاقتباسات التي ستقوم الباحثة بترجمتها هي في الأصل مأخوذة من رواية للكاتبة فيرجينيا وولف نشرت عام 1977 بعنوان "غرفة تخص المرء وحده". أما النظرية النسوية في الترجمة فهي تعود إلى المفكرة لويز فون فلوتو وقد وضعتها في عام 1991. هذه النظرية تشمل في طياتها ثلاث استراتيجيات هامة: الأولي هي التكميلية والثانية هي المقدمة والحواشي والثالثة هي السيطرة على النص. فأما الاستراتيجية الأولي فتشير إلى إكمال النص بما ينقصه من عناصر ليست موجودة في النص الأصلي عند الترجمة ولكنها تشير إلى النسوية. وأما الاستراتيجية الثانية فتشير إلى وضع مقدمة وإضافة حواشي تقول بها المترجمة كيف جعلت النص المترجم نسوي في طياته. وأما الثالثة والأخيرة فالغرض منها السيطرة على النص بمعني إضافة طابع النسوية في الترجمة. فيه خاصة إن كان ذكوري الأصل أو متعسف ضد المرأة. الثلاث استراتيجيات معا يخدمن مبدأ النسوية في الترجمة. وختمت الباحثة الدراسة بإظهار كيفية ترجمة نص نسوي موجه إلى النساء من الإنجليزية إلى العربية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الترجمة النسوية، استراتيجيات، قضايا نسوية، فيرجينيا وولف، النسوية.