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THE CONCEPT OF ROOTEDNESS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ВКОРІНЕНОСТІ В ПЕРЕКЛАДОЗНАВСТВІ

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This study explores the concept of rootedness as a theoretical and practical category within contemporary translation studies. Traditionally overshadowed by notions of mobility, hybridity, and cultural fluidity, rootedness has remained underexplored despite its significance for understanding the translator's identity, ethics, and sociocultural positioning. In contrast to the idealized image of the neutral or "invisible" translator, this paper presents rootedness as a dynamic framework that encompasses cultural, linguistic, ideological, and affective embeddedness. The analysis draws on foundational theories by Antoine Berman, Lawrence Venuti, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said, situating rootedness at the intersection of postcolonial critique, translator subjectivity, and cultural resistance. The research emphasizes that rootedness should not be equated with essentialism or nationalism, but rather with an awareness of one's situatedness in cultural history and linguistic tradition. It explores how the translator's conscious (or unconscious) rootedness influences translational strategies, ethical choices, and audience engagement, especially when working with marginalized or subaltern voices. Particular attention is given to the Ukrainian context, especially since the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. The paper examines how Ukrainian translators – many of whom have been displaced or forced into exile – negotiate rootedness amid trauma, loss, and geopolitical rupture. Case studies include the cultural and translational activism of Iryna Starovoyt, Ostap Slyvynsky's War Diaries project, and the international initiatives led by Kateryna Kazimirova and the Translators for Ukraine collective. These examples demonstrate that rootedness can be reconstituted under conditions of forced migration, functioning as a resource for cultural resilience, ethical authorship, and national representation in the global literary field. By combining theoretical perspectives with contemporary empirical examples, this study proposes rootedness as a productive category for translation theory – one that challenges the false binary between local and global, and affirms the translator's role as both cultural mediator and politically engaged subject. The findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of translation as a context-dependent, ethically charged, and ideologically situated act, particularly in contexts of postcolonial transition and wartime crisis.

Key words: rootedness, translator subjectivity, postcolonial translation, Ukrainian literature, cultural mediation.

Праця досліджує концепцію вкоріненості як теоретичної та практичної категорії в сучасному перекладознавстві. Традиційно упосліджена поняттями мобільності, гібридності та культурної плинності, вкоріненість залишається недостатньо дослідженою, незважаючи на її значення для розуміння ідентичності, етики та соціокультурного позиціонування перекладача. На відміну від ідеалізованого бачення нейтрального або «невидимого» перекладача, ця стаття представляє вкоріненість як динамічну структуру, що охоплює культурну, лінгвістичну, ідеологічну та афективну вбудованість. Аналіз спирається на фундаментальні теорії Антуана Бермана, Лоуренса Венуті, Гаятрі Співак, Гомі Бхабхи та Едварда Саїда, розміщуючи вкоріненість на перетині постколоніальної критики, суб'єктивності перекладача та культурного опору. Дослідження підкреслює, що вкоріненість не слід ототожнювати з есенціалізмом чи націоналізмом, а радше з усвідомленням власної ніші в культурній історії та лінгвістичній традиції. Воно досліджує, як свідомі (чи несвідомі) вкоріненість перекладача впливає на перекладацькі стратегії, етичний вибір та залучення аудиторії, особливо під час роботи з маргіналізованими або підвладними культурами. Особлива увага приділяється українському контексту, особливо після повномасштабного російського вторгнення у 2022 році. У статті досліджується, як українські перекладачі, багато з яких були переміщені або змушені покинути країну, досягають вкоріненості посеред травм, втрат та геополітичної кризи. Стаття досліджує культурний та перекладацький акти-

візм Ірини Старовойт, проєкт «Воєнні щоденники» Остапа Сливинського та міжнародні ініціативи, очолювані Катериною Казиміровою та колективом «Перекладачі для України». Ці приклади демонструють, що вкоріненість може бути відновлена в умовах вимушеної міграції, функціонуючи як ресурс для культурної стійкості, етичного авторства та національного представництва у світовому літературному полі. Поєднуючи теоретичні перспективи із сучасними емпіричними матеріалами, це дослідження пропагує вкоріненість як продуктивну категорію теорії перекладу – таку, що ставить під сумнів хибну бінарність між локальним та глобальним, і утверджує роль перекладача як культурного посередника та політично залученого суб'єкта. Результати дослідження сприяють більш глибокому розумінню перекладу як контекстно-залежного, етично спрямованого та ідеологічно обумовленого акту, особливо в контексті постколоніального переходу та воєнної кризи.

Ключові слова: вкоріненість, суб'єктивність перекладача, постколоніальний переклад, українська література, культурне посередництво.

Relevance of the Problem. In contemporary translation studies, the growing interest in identity, place, and belonging has brought renewed attention to the concept of *rootedness* – a notion traditionally associated with cultural stability, territorial attachment, and historical continuity. While much of the discipline has focused on mobility, hybridity, and deterritorialization – particularly under the influence of poststructuralist and postcolonial paradigms – the idea of rootedness presents an important counterbalance that invites reconsideration of the translator's situatedness in cultural, linguistic, and political space.

Rootedness in translation is not merely about a translator's origin or geographic affiliation; it concerns deeper epistemological and affective ties to language, worldview, and communal narratives. In a globalized world where translation often serves as a medium of displacement or cultural approximation, rootedness becomes a framework for exploring the ethical, ideological, and emotional dimensions of translation practices. It challenges the neutrality of the translator and reframes translation as an act of commitment and positioning – culturally, historically, and politically.

In the context of rising nationalism, forced migration, and identity politics, the question of where – and to what – a translator is “rooted” has gained practical urgency. This is especially visible in cases where translation is used to assert linguistic sovereignty, recover marginalized voices, or maintain cultural continuity under conditions of threat or diaspora. Rootedness, therefore, is not a static or essentialist category but a dynamic and often contested stance that can either reinforce hegemonic paradigms or serve as a tool for resistance and cultural survival.

Despite its relevance, the concept of rootedness remains under-theorized within translation studies. Most scholarly attention has focused on cosmopolitan, mobile, or transcultural translator identities, often at the expense of those who work from or for locally embedded perspectives. Addressing this gap allows for a more inclusive and balanced understanding of translator subjectivity and opens a dialogue between global translation flows and local forms of cultural transmission.

Given the complex tensions between rootedness and mobility, origin and destination, tradition and innovation, this study aims to conceptualize rootedness as a productive category for translation theory and practice. By doing so, it contributes to expanding the theoretical vocabulary of the discipline and provides new tools for analyzing translation as a deeply contextual and culturally situated act.

In the Ukrainian context, this notion becomes particularly urgent in light of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, which has triggered one of the largest refugee crises in Europe since World War II. Millions of Ukrainians were forced to leave their homeland, including a substantial number of writers, academics, and translators. These individuals now operate in host countries not only as linguistic mediators but as cultural agents who represent and defend their nation's identity in exile. For many of them, translation is not merely a professional activity but a form of political resistance and cultural survival.

This historical rupture has reconfigured the translator's position from within: no longer situated in stable local environments, Ukrainian translators now work from positions of physical and emotional

displacement. This condition poses a fundamental question: can rootedness be preserved – or reconstituted – under conditions of exile and war? How do experiences of forced migration, trauma, and national solidarity reshape the ethics and politics of translation?

Moreover, translators who fled Ukraine often find themselves negotiating dual allegiances – to their native culture and to the expectations or constraints of the hostland. This dynamic revives and complicates earlier theoretical frameworks such as Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space [1, c. 36–39]," as diasporic translators produce work that is neither entirely embedded in their homeland, nor fully assimilated into the host culture.

At the same time, the war has foregrounded the strategic role of translation in building international solidarity. Ukrainian translators now engage in acts of "translational activism", working to make Ukrainian voices heard globally, translating testimony, literature, journalism, and policy documents. Their rootedness in Ukrainian language and experience provides unique epistemic authority, even as their physical and emotional geographies shift.

Thus, the war has forced a reevaluation of rootedness not as a static notion, but as a flexible and contested position shaped by crisis, mobility, and resistance. Translation becomes a tool not only for intercultural communication but for defending memory, identity, and sovereignty. This makes the concept of rootedness essential for understanding how translators operate under conditions of geopolitical rupture.

The present study addresses this timely and complex issue by situating rootedness at the intersection of translation ethics, identity, and agency – particularly in the Ukrainian wartime and postmigration context. It contributes to the broader field of translation studies by offering a framework that acknowledges translators as culturally and politically situated actors whose work reflects both internal belonging and external displacement.

Analysis of Studies and Publications. The notion of rootedness in translation studies intersects with a variety of themes, including cultural identity, translator's subjectivity, ethics of translation, and the politics of language. While not always explicitly named as such, rootedness often appears in discussions on the translator's embeddedness within specific cultural, historical, and ideological contexts.

One of the foundational thinkers in this domain is Antoine Berman, who introduced the idea of the "ethical project of translation" as a respectful openness to the Other, which nevertheless begins from a rooted subjectivity [2, c. 12–15]. In his seminal work *L'épreuve de l'étranger* [2], A. Berman emphasizes the translator's responsibility to the foreign text and culture, but also acknowledges the translator's deep involvement with their own linguistic and cultural soil. His reflections implicitly tie translation to a sense of rootedness – one that shapes the translator's horizon of understanding.

Lawrence Venuti also addresses the issue indirectly through his concepts of domestication and foreignization. In *The Translator's Invisibility* [3], L. Venuti argues that the translator's cultural and ideological position influences their choices, even when the goal is to preserve foreignness. The debate on the translator's visibility thus opens space to consider how rootedness – understood as affiliation with a certain cultural and ideological milieu – affects translation strategies. L. Venuti argued for a more ethically aware translator who resists domestication and asserts the foreignness of the source text, implicitly foregrounding the role of the translator's own cultural embeddedness [3, c. 1–15].

Gideon Toury, as a representative of the descriptive school, contributes by positioning translation as a norm-governed activity [4, c. 25–47] deeply embedded in the target culture. His theory does not use the term "rootedness", but his work demonstrates how cultural norms shape translation, reflecting the translator's location within a given socio-cultural system.

From a postcolonial perspective, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha bring attention to the translator's cultural situatedness and the power dynamics involved in acts of mediation. G. Spivak, in *The Politics of Translation* [5, c. 179–200], insists on the translator's intimate engagement with both languages, particularly when translating subaltern voices. This intimacy, rooted in linguistic

and cultural familiarity, serves as a form of epistemic rootedness. Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasized the political and ethical responsibility of the translator, especially in postcolonial contexts, where linguistic choices are never ideologically neutral. Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space [1, c. 36–39] remains pivotal for understanding diasporic and hybrid translation practices, where rootedness becomes a site of negotiation rather than a fixed location.

A critical contribution to this discourse also comes from Edward Said, whose groundbreaking work *Orientalism* [6, c. 1–28] laid the foundation for postcolonial critique. Although E. Said did not write extensively on translation as a practice, his analysis of representation and power relations between the West and the “Orient” has deeply influenced translation theory. E. Said's notion of “affiliation” versus “filiation” in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* [7, c. 17–30] parallels the concept of rootedness. He argues that intellectuals – including translators – are never neutral; their interpretations are informed by both inherited cultural traditions (filiation) and adopted ideological commitments (affiliation). This dual positioning resonates with how translators often negotiate personal and political rootedness while engaging with texts across cultures.

Edward Said's work on exile and intellectual marginality, particularly in *Reflections on Exile* [8, c. 173–186] and *Representations of the Intellectual* [9, c. 44–62], offers a crucial theoretical foundation for discussing the translator as an exilic figure. E. Said viewed exile as both a traumatic dislocation and a unique vantage point that enables critical distance and transgressive insight. In translation studies, this has inspired scholars to reframe displacement not only as loss, but as a condition that sharpens cultural awareness and interpretive agency.

The **aim of this study** is to explore the concept of rootedness as a theoretical and practical category within contemporary translation studies, with a particular focus on its manifestations in situations of displacement, migration, and sociopolitical upheaval. The study seeks to clarify how rootedness influences the translator's identity, agency, and ethical orientation, especially in contexts marked by war and forced migration.

Presentation of the Main Research Material. In the Slavic and post-Soviet space, the concept of rootedness becomes especially relevant in light of linguistic imperialism, resistance to Russification, and national identity formation. Ukrainian translation studies have only recently begun to address these dimensions systematically, though a number of scholars have paved the way for such inquiries.

In this context, Mykola Zerov (though more a practitioner than a theorist) stands as a symbolic figure whose neoclassical translation strategy emphasized national rootedness and cultural elevation. His work represents early efforts to root translation practice in the Ukrainian linguistic tradition [10, c. 215–278].

Among contemporary Ukrainian scholars, Roksolana Zorivchak significantly contributed to the development of national translation studies, emphasizing the role of cultural specificity and the Ukrainian linguistic code. In her research, she frequently refers to the “national-cultural” matrix within which translation occurs [11, c. 17–44] – an idea that resonates closely with the notion of rootedness, although not always articulated with this specific terminology.

Olha Semykina, analyzing translation in Ukrainian diasporic contexts, has explored how translation functions as a mechanism for cultural preservation. In her studies, translators are not viewed as neutral intermediaries but as actors committed to sustaining national identity abroad – an act inherently tied to rootedness in collective memory and cultural tradition [12, c. 92–100].

Iryna Shevchenko [13, c. 114–122] and Yuriy Shcherbak [14, c. 27–33] have also discussed the impact of the translator's worldview and ideology on the translation process, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of translator subjectivity that takes into account biographical, psychological, and cultural embeddedness.

This synthesis of Western and Ukrainian scholarship lays the groundwork for a more integrated and context-sensitive understanding of the translator's role, not as a detached mediator, but as a rooted cultural actor navigating between tradition and transformation.

In Ukrainian scholarship, interest in translator subjectivity and ideological positioning has grown since the 2010s. Scholars such as Maksym Strikha [15], Oleksandr Mokrovolsky [16], and Marianna Propopovych [17, с. 59–70] have addressed the cultural politics of translation in the Ukrainian context, particularly in postcolonial and post-Soviet frameworks. However, systematic attention to the theme of rootedness – especially in connection with war, forced migration, and trauma – remains relatively underdeveloped.

The full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 has intensified the urgency of these questions. Numerous Ukrainian translators, writers, and editors were forced to leave Ukraine, continuing their work in exile while engaging in a unique form of “translational resistance.” Among such cases is translator and editor Iryna Starovoyt, who relocated to Germany and has worked extensively on curating Ukrainian texts in translation for European audiences, emphasizing the need for “decolonizing” Ukrainian literature in the global space [18].

Another significant example is Ostap Slyvynsky, a poet, translator, and scholar who remained in Lviv but whose international engagement as a cultural mediator has sharply increased post-2022 [19]. His coordination of the “War Diaries” project, which includes translation into multiple languages, has served as a powerful documentation of civilian war experiences [20].

Kateryna Kazimirova, a literary translator currently residing in Poland, has actively participated in initiatives to promote Ukrainian literature abroad, translating contemporary Ukrainian voices into Polish and English and speaking publicly about the translator’s role in shaping wartime narratives [21].

Additionally, the *Translators for Ukraine* initiative, formed by the international literary translation community in solidarity with Ukraine, included both Ukrainian and foreign translators who mobilized to translate appeals, essays, testimonies, and poetry within days of the invasion [22]. These rapid-response translations were not only practical but also deeply rooted in the translators’ emotional and political alignment with Ukraine, further blurring the lines between professional translation and activism.

These cases illustrate that rootedness, in the wartime context, is not solely about geographical belonging but about ideological and affective commitment. Ukrainian translators in exile or semi-exile continue to act as agents of cultural continuity and resistance, crafting translational spaces that articulate both loss and solidarity.

Thus, the scholarship and practice of Ukrainian translation since 2022 reflect an evolving model of rootedness – dynamic, diasporic, ethically charged, and inseparable from the nation’s ongoing struggle for survival and recognition.

Conclusions. The concept of rootedness emerges as a critical and multifaceted dimension in contemporary translation studies, particularly in the context of global crises, displacement, and identity transformation. This research has demonstrated that rootedness is not merely a nostalgic connection to homeland or language, but rather a dynamic and often conflicted process that shapes the translator’s agency, ethical positioning, and interpretative strategies.

Through the theoretical lenses of postcolonialism and diaspora studies – particularly drawing on the works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Lawrence Venuti – rootedness can be understood as a dialogical space in which translators negotiate cultural affiliation, power structures, and linguistic memory. In this space, translation becomes a political and existential act of positioning: between home and host culture, between loss and reconstruction, between resistance and adaptation.

The Ukrainian context, especially since the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, provides an urgent and poignant case study. Ukrainian translators in exile – displaced professionals, volunteers, and cultural mediators – continue to engage with translation not only as a tool for communication, but as a form of cultural survival and testimony. Their experiences challenge the traditional view of the translator as a neutral or detached figure, revealing instead a rooted subject who must constantly reconfigure their sense of belonging and responsibility.

Ultimately, rootedness in translation is best viewed not as a fixed location, but as a mobile and generative condition. It is deeply tied to the translator's history, language, trauma, and hope – and it carries profound implications for how we understand translation ethics, representation, and cultural continuity in times of rupture. This study thus invites further interdisciplinary exploration of how rootedness operates across various translational contexts, especially those shaped by conflict, exile, and geopolitical transformation.

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