

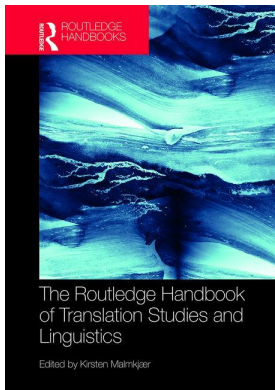
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Stylistics and translation

Jean Boase-Beier

Introduction

In order to begin a discussion of the various ways in which translation and stylistics interact, and to outline what might be involved in both a stylistic approach to translation and a translational approach to stylistics, we must first – and especially in the overall context of this handbook – consider the role and position of stylistics with respect to linguistics.

To assess where to locate stylistics as a discipline, a good place to start is with the definition of style, since stylistics is the study of style (Wales 2001, 372). Wales defines “style” straightforwardly as “the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking” (Wales 2001, 371). People write in many different contexts, and speak in a non-literary context most of the time (unless, of course, they are characters in a novel or play), so this definition of itself suggests that stylistics cannot be confined to literary texts. This is indeed the position taken by many scholars of stylistics, who would argue that its analytical procedures apply equally to non-literary texts (see, for example, Jeffries 2014, 408). Jeffries (*ibid.*) calls the stylistics of non-literary texts, especially when it focuses on ideology, “critical stylistics”. The assumption that literary and non-literary texts can be studied using similar tools and methodologies is also common in discourse analysis (see van Dijk 1985, 1–9).

Turning now to translation, we note that, whether literary or non-literary texts are involved, the style of the text is of central importance (cf. Boase-Beier 2011, 12), and at least since Roman times (see Boase-Beier 2006, 10–12) translation and style have been linked, even though the link has not always been made explicit. Stylistics has only been a recognised discipline since about the 1960s (see Wales 2001, 269) and the origins of Translation Studies are often dated to James Holmes’ use of the term in the early 1970s (see Holmes 2005, 67–80; Malmkjær 2013, 31); thus the view that the two disciplines interact in important ways is necessarily a recent one.

Historical perspectives

The question of how stylistics and translation interact is closely related to the interactions of stylistics with both linguistics and literary studies. Trying to decide whether stylistics is a

branch of one or the other suggests we regard the two areas as in opposition, but such a view risks ignoring the origins of modern stylistics. If we locate those origins, prior to the 1960s, in early work by the scholars of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (often called the Russian Formalists) – whose founding members in 1915 included poetics scholar Boris Eichenbaum, literary theoretician Viktor Shklovsky, narrative theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and Roman Jakobson, linguist, poet and scholar of translation – we can see that linguistic and literary study were not treated separately (see Lemon and Reis 1965). Of particular importance to the subject of this chapter is the fact that the study of translation was naturally regarded as an area for both linguistic and literary study. The same applies to the Prague Linguistic Circle (often referred to as the Prague Structuralists), of which Jakobson was again, in 1926, a founding member, together with Jan Mukařovský, who wrote on poetic language and Czech verse, and Vladimír Procházka, a translator and translation scholar (see Garvin 1964).

Both the Russian Formalists and the Prague Structuralists devoted part of their work to establishing the place of literary language alongside other uses of language in a functionally based view. And for both groups of scholars, translation was one of the key areas that helped them gain an understanding of meaning and how it related to structure. Translation influenced the view these early scholars of style and language shared that one could find what Jakobson calls “the essence of language” (Jakobson 1971) or “a common language” (Toman 1999).

Structuralist thinking – thinking based on an understanding of underlying and often unconscious structures in society, culture, language and literature – which influenced the Moscow and Prague scholars, and the developing discipline of stylistics, as well as literary and philosophical scholars such as Jacques Derrida or Roland Barthes, was always tied to the sense of what happens when language crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries; and translation, especially to the extent that it calls into question both nationalism and universalism, thus lay at its heart (cf. Derrida 1985, 93–161).

If we try to trace the development of stylistics we see, then, that not only were linguistics and literature intimately connected, but both were intrinsically linked with translation.

Core issues and topics

In sum, it makes sense to say that stylistics is part of both literary studies and linguistics, but neither subsumed under nor limited to either area. For this reason Leech (2008, 1–4) calls it an “interdiscipline”.

Much the same can be said of Translation Studies (cf. Holmes 2005, 68). Some have considered the area to be more allied to linguistics (Catford 1965; see also Fawcett 1997 and Malmkjær 2005), some consider it more allied to literary studies, especially Comparative or World Literature (Apter 2013, 2–6) and universities, ever at loss when it comes to interdisciplinary work, are quite likely to locate it (if anywhere) in languages.

Translation Studies and stylistics seem, then, natural allies, since both work with the same raw materials and address similar core issues (texts, language, ways of saying, different text-types), both are by nature interdisciplinary and both have been areas of intense scholarly engagement and academic growth since the late 1950s (cf. Lambrou and Stockwell 2007, 1; Arrojo 2013, 118).

However, stylistics, as the study of style in texts, has more clearly defined borders than does Translation Studies, which can be defined very broadly, to cover such aspects as the translation market, the overall modelling of the movement of texts between cultures and languages (for example in polysystem theory; see e.g. Hermans 1999) or the consideration of how

philosophy and translation interact (see Large 2014). Yet in many of the areas with which Translation Studies typically concerns itself it would be very difficult to pursue meaningful research without at least a consideration of stylistics. This is particularly the case where literary translation is concerned. Thus, for example, Jones (2011), in his detailed study of political and practical issues involved in the translation of poetry into English, emphasises the importance of style to the poetry translator's work (Jones 2011, 93–97) and hence to the academic study of their work (2011, 13). Other studies discuss the importance of stylistics for understanding how translated poetry is read (Boase-Beier 2015) and how prose translations are read (Malmkjær 2004).

In order to explore the various ways in which stylistics and Translation Studies interact we must now consider what we mean by “translation” and “Translation Studies”. Up to now I have not always made a clear distinction. Yet they are obviously not the same, even if they can quite reasonably be used interchangeably in certain contexts, as in the titles of books such as *Linguistics and the Language of Translation* (Malmkjær 2005), where “language of translation” could arguably be said to mean both the aspects of language involved in translation and the language we use to speak about translation. In most cases, however, they are not used interchangeably: the word “translation” can be regarded as a superordinate term, or hyperonym, which has two subordinate terms or hyponyms: (i) “translation” and (ii) “Translation Studies”. The latter is clear enough: it is the study of translation, defined more broadly or narrowly, depending on the context. Ignoring its general, superordinate sense, the term “translation”, both as a hyponym (i), and as the subject of Translation Studies (ii), has itself several meanings: the act of translation, on the one hand, or a translated text, on the other, are the most obvious ones.

These distinctions are presented as a simple diagram in Figure 13.1. It should be noted by those readers familiar with James Holmes' overview of Translation Studies (Holmes 2005), or Toury's understanding of it (Toury 1995, 10), or with Malmkjær's addition to it of translating as a branch of applied Translation Studies (Malmkjær 2005, 18–20), that my very simple diagram is not intended to contradict any of these because it does not aim to convey the structure of a field or discipline, but rather of the use of particular terms: we use the *word* “translation”, I would argue, as both a superordinate term and as a hyponym in the ways just described.

The distinction just made at the level of hyponyms: (i) translation and (ii) Translation Studies is fundamental to a consideration of stylistics and translation. This is so because the role of stylistics in actually performing a translation, on the one hand, or in reading a translation, on the other (these are the two uses of “translation” at the bottom level on the left of Figure 13.1), seems likely to be different from its role in the scholarly consideration of either (on the bottom right of Figure 13.1). But in practice the difference cannot always be maintained. Of course, performing a translation is not the same as studying how people perform it. Nor is, on the face of it, reading texts the same as studying how people read them. The distinction seems obvious: the position of the English reader of Müller's (1997) *Heute war ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, in Hulse and Boehm's (2001) translation *The Appointment* is not the same as the position of a Translation Studies scholar commenting on the style of the translation (for example, Boase-Beier 2013). On that basis, one could reasonably argue that stylistics has no place in the reading of translated texts by the general reader but only when they are read by the scholar. This distinction, between a supposed “general” reader and the reader who is also a stylistician, is one which has been the subject of many debates in stylistics (see Stockwell 2013). I have argued elsewhere that, when the text being read is a translation, an increased awareness of style, and of the stylistic shifts that

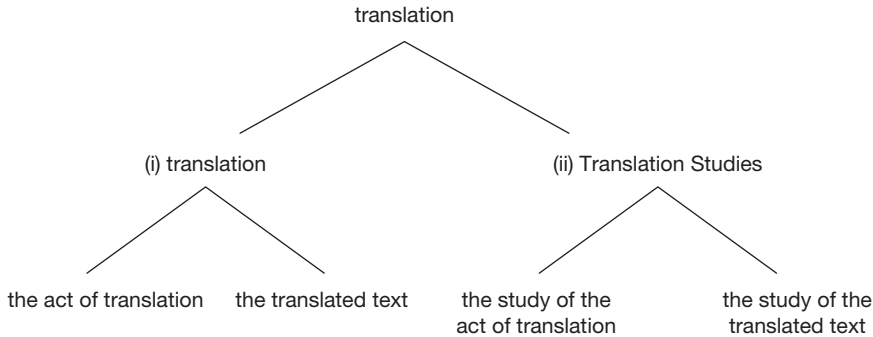


Figure 13.1 The use of the word “translation” as a superordinate term and as a hyperonym

the text is likely to have undergone, is especially desirable, so that the gap between the general and the academic reader might diminish; this is the notion of “analytical reading” (see Boase-Beier 2015, 72–85).

But I shall not pursue this question here. To avoid undue complexity, I assume on the whole that readers are readers, and that the role of stylistics in reading translated texts is not very different from its role in studying how they are read.

That translation and Translation Studies have an important role in stylistics is in part, as I suggested above, because of the multilingual Eastern European context in which the latter developed. In those early stylistic studies, different genres and registers within a language were seen to have much in common with different languages and to that extent thinking about text-types, styles, genres and registers arose naturally in a context in which different languages were at play. This is an important point, and one which is sometimes forgotten in contemporary stylistics, which can appear too resolutely monolingual, in spite of the occasional exception such as Nigel Fabb’s 1997 book, which, like the earliest structuralist work I mentioned above, discusses many different linguistic and literary traditions, not merely incidentally, but as a way of approaching a “unified account” (Fabb 1997, 1) of linguistic form in literature.

It is common for linguistics scholars to be able and willing to consider languages other than the one or ones they happen to speak, to think it important to do so and to have a good system of glosses (such as the Leipzig glossing rules; see Lehmann 1982) that make such consideration both possible and useful. The problem is far greater for literary scholars, who are often unfamiliar with systems of glossing and so can assume, somewhat bizarrely, that languages other than their own are inaccessible (cf. Corbett 2014, 290).

A belief that other languages are by nature inaccessible leads in turn to a view of translation as an act which has the primary function of facilitating access to the strange and the foreign. The contrasting view of translation as textual enhancement (cf. Benjamin 2012, 77; Boase-Beier 2015, 51–85), or as a way to deeper understanding of texts (Felstiner 1995, 20), or a means to both enrichment (cf. Benjamin 2012, 82) and greater understanding of language (cf. Jakobson 2012, 127), will be more likely to arise in a multilingual context, or in a multilingual view of translation (cf. Pym 1998, 181). In such a view, translation and the questions it raises are by nature closely tied up with the questions that motivate stylistics. These are such questions as: How do we express different nuances of meaning? Can two different forms have the same meaning? Will different readers ever read the same text in the same way? What is the role of linguistic, cultural and cognitive context in reading a text?

Such questions, typically asked by stylistics, can often be considered more fruitfully in the context of translation.

Current debates and main research methods

Most work in stylistics and translation involves one of two perspectives: what translation can tell us about style, or what stylistics can tell us about translation.

Both require close analytical reading of texts, and a comparison of source and target texts. As an example of the first perspective, we might consider the use of ambiguity in the following passage:

Ah, love, let us be true
...
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
...

These lines are taken from Matthew Arnold's famous poem "Dover Beach", written around 1851 (see Arnold 1998, 78). I have not here supplied any further context, either in terms of the rest of the poem, or in terms of the background against which Arnold was writing, and which can be considered part of his cognitive context – that which Arnold knew, thought and felt, at the time he was writing. Even without either of these wider contexts, it is possible to see that the phrase "seems to lie" is ambiguous, because the word "lie" is ambiguous. In one sense, the phrase means that the land which does indeed lie before us seems new and beautiful and dreamlike when in fact it is not. Thus it may actually lie before us, but it only *seems* to do so in this particular dreamlike way: the reality is different. But there is another meaning: let *us* be true because the land we are looking at seems (to the speaker) to lie, it seems to have the appearance of a beautiful dream when in fact it is not. This meaning of "lie" is further suggested by the precariousness of the land, a shingle beach, constantly being shifted by the sea, however stable it might appear to be.

Of course, there is a great deal more going on in this poem, and even in these few lines, than I could possibly discuss here. But it is interesting, and helpful to the stylistician, to consider the translation. Aue (n.d.) has translated "the world, which seems / To lie before us" as "*dieser Weltraum, der aufzutun sich scheint*". The interesting thing here is that "*sich auf(zu)tun*" ((to) rise up, to open out, to emerge) does not suggest the second meaning of "lie".

Rather than criticising Aue's translation (after all, *aufzutun* rather wonderfully suggests the opening up of a world of ambiguity), a much more productive way of thinking about the difference is to see that many aspects of the meaning of the original word "lie" start to become clearer when we confront it with the expression "*sich auftun*", "rise up", "open out" or "emerge". The interesting point is not the difference between lying and rising up or emerging, but the difference between a word that sends us off on at least two different ways of thinking about the state of the world described, and one that does so less obviously. The differences in

the ways of reading the original and translated poems highlight an aspect of the style of the original, and therefore of the choices that led to it, with particular clarity.

It is also interesting, from the point of view of stylistics, to consider what happens when writers translate their own work or write different versions of a text in different languages. For example, we can compare a line of Ausländer's (2012, 304) German poem "*Das Weißeste*" with her English poem "The Whitest" (Ausländer 2008, 207). The poems are close in meaning and form, and use similar assonances: "*weißeßt ... weißer ... Zeichen ... Einsiedler ... Einsamkeit ... schreibt ... Weißeste ... Zeit ...*" in the German poem and "whitest ... whiter ... cry ... fright ... dry ... writes ... signs ... isolation ... whitest ... time ..." in the English. In the German, 7 words are linked by assonance in a 17-word poem, and the proportion is very similar in English. To the stylistician this comparison suggests several things. For one thing, it suggests that the repetition is an important source of meaning in the poem and that therefore it is to be regarded as an instance of "iconicity" (see Boase-Beier 2006, 101–106), that is, of language that in form suggests its content: repetition suggests both the passage and the static nature of time. For another, it suggests that those words which carry the same sound in both languages, namely "*weiß*"/"white", "*Zeichen*"/"sign", "*schreiben*"/"write" and "*Zeit*"/"time" are being linked, both within and across languages. The links of sound suggest that those ties that work to form patterns within a language also do so between different languages. The poem can thus, when considered together with its counterpart, be seen as a meditation not only on time, but also on the connectedness of languages.

Translation, then, lies at the heart of stylistics not only because of the way stylistics developed historically, but also because translation is a particularly useful tool in understanding and analysing a text. Elsewhere (Boase-Beier 2015, 77) I have argued that this is so even if no translation exists, because the consideration of what would happen if certain words, phrases or ideas were to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries is not limited to the availability of translated versions (see also Venuti 2008, 21).

Conversely, stylistics lies at the heart of Translation Studies, and it is for this reason that the second perspective given earlier is possible. It depends upon the question of what stylistics can tell us about the ways in which textual detail is affected by translation. This is especially the case when stylistics is taken in its narrower sense of literary stylistics, which is often referred to as poetics (see Boase-Beier 2015, 15–16 for a discussion of the differences). It is particularly in the style of novels, plays and poems that we are most likely to meet stylistically complex figures, such as ambiguity, and furthermore, in literary texts such stylistic figures tend to be tied in to a repeated pattern of images and structures throughout the text. Just as, in order to see what translation can tell us about style, we need to look at the differences between original and translated text as givens, and consider as equivalences those equivalences chosen by the translator, so, too, when considering what stylistics can tell us about translation, the point is not generally to use stylistic non-equivalence as a means to judge the translation. Instead, where stylistics is particularly useful is in analysing and describing what changes the translation has made, and how these affect the reading of the text. It is essential that the stylistics of translated texts takes account of the relationship of target text to source text. Malmkjær (2004) refers to stylistics that does this, noting the patterns in that relationship, as "translational stylistics".

Translational stylistics presupposes, at least in so far as we are considering how texts are translated, rather than how they are read (see the following section), that there is a direct link between style and choice, a link highlighted by many stylisticians; see, for example, Short (1996, 68–69) or Leech (2008, 59–60).

To say that the link between style and choice is direct is not to imply that it is always recoverable. Stylistic analysis will only allow a reconstruction of what translators have

done, just as the stylistic analysis of an untranslated text will only allow reasoned reconstruction of the choices a writer made. But, on the assumption that such reconstructions are possible and interesting, it makes sense to argue that, in addition to the translational stylistics of the target text, we need to have an awareness of its poetics. That is our link with the translator's practice. I mentioned above that poetics is often assumed to be the stylistics of literary texts, as opposed to non-literary texts. But this is not the only, or indeed the most useful, distinction. Many works of cognitive poetics (poetics that considers how the mind works) are based on the assumption that the "literary mind" (Turner 1996) is the basis of all our thinking. On this view, the distinction between literary and non-literary texts is not absolute, just as it is not (as I noted above) for many critical stylisticians and discourse analysts. A more useful distinction for Translation Studies between stylistics and poetics is that, where stylistics focuses on the elements of a text that make us read the way we do, poetics takes into account the process of writing. When studying the translation of literary texts in particular, the poetics of the translator are influenced to a very great extent by the poetics of the source-text author, that is, by the system of choices the translator ascribes to the source-text author. Another way of putting this is to say that the translator's understanding of the poetics that informed the source text forms part of her or his cognitive context (the sum total of her or his knowledge, beliefs and attitudes). As I have argued elsewhere (Boase-Beier 2015, 90–91), we need, therefore, to supplement translational stylistics with "translational poetics": the poetics that gave rise to the translated text and that includes (via the translator's knowledge and interpretative and critical abilities) the reconstructed poetics of the source-text author.

While the fact that the writer of the translated text was the translator, and not the original writer, is often ignored by reviewers of translations as well as by literary critics (see Venuti 2008, 1–13), it is obvious to the translation scholar that such questions about choice, and the motivations that analysis seeks to reconstruct, are primarily questions about the translator's choices, motivations and background knowledge, when the text to be analysed is a translation.

The question of the translator's motivation and choices – of the translator's poetics – may seem to apply mainly to translations of literary texts, but in fact all types of texts translated by human agency will be partly driven by their translator's choices, against the background of her or his cognitive context. However, the constraints may be different. For many non-literary texts, constraints such as the function (for example if the text is an advertisement) or the register, that is, the set of conventional forms of expression pertaining to a particular text-type, will also form part of the translator's cognitive context. Other factors, particularly in the case of literary texts, may be literary conventions, as in rhymed poetry, different degrees of censorship in the source and target culture or various aspects of the publication process (cf. Jones 2011, 51–83). Because stylistic analysis, like all critical analysis of texts, usually has no direct access to the practice behind them, it may be supplemented by questionnaires or studies of the scholar's own translation practice, as is done by Jones (2011).

Future directions

It has often been argued recently that stylistics is primarily concerned with reading. For example, Stockwell (2002, 2) says that stylistics is primarily the study and analysis of how what we find in the text makes us read the text in the way we do. It is clear that the consideration of a translator's choices and motivations must also be concerned with how these choices relate to what the translator assumes about the readers. This also holds true for the original writer's choices. It should be borne in mind that, as I mentioned above, there are

different types of reader. It is almost certainly not the reader *qua* literary critic or translation scholar with whom the writer of original or translated texts is concerned, but the general reader. Stylistics, especially in recent years, has been greatly influenced by theories of reading and reception within literary studies, such as those of Iser (see Iser 1974); in conjunction with Translation Studies this is likely to lead to a greater emphasis on the reader's engagement with the stylistic detail of the translated text (cf. Boase-Beier 2006, 31–43) and on how the reader's engagement with the source text differs. Though this is an area in which there has not been very much work as yet, there are some exceptions, such as Hermans (2014) or Boase-Beier (2015).

As an example, consider the following lines from a 1947 novel by Fallada (2011) and its translation by Michael Hofmann, in which a postwoman, Eva Kluge, is delivering letters to addresses in Berlin during the Second World War:

Sie ist politisch gar nicht interessiert, sie ist einfach eine Frau, und als Frau findet sie, daß man Kinder nicht darum in die Welt gesetzt hat, daß sie totgeschossen werden.

(Fallada 2011, 9)

Not that she's a political animal, she's just an ordinary woman, but as a woman she's of the view that you don't bring children into the world to have them shot.

(Hofmann 2007, 3)

The German and English texts are semantically quite similar, but there are many differences of style, especially in the representation of thought. For example, “*politisch gar nicht interessiert*” (politically not at all interested) is neutral, does not contain an idiom and might represent the way the postwoman would characterise herself. On the other hand “not . . . a political animal” is a contemporary idiom, and suggests that the narrator is a speaker of contemporary English; this changes the perspective from that of the woman within the early 1940s Berlin world of the novel to that of a present-day narrator describing the woman, a narrator who is not quite taking the woman's point of view. We know that readers tend to associate narrators with the implied or inferred author, that is the person they imagine to be the author (cf. Stockwell 2002, 42), and the reader of the English version is likely, because of the idiomatic English, to associate the narrator with the translator rather than the author. Furthermore, the German uses the perfect tense for “*Kinder . . . in die Welt gesetzt hat*” (has put children into the world), suggesting that the postwoman's thoughts are being represented and that she has borne children (who might then play a role later in the novel), or that she is putting herself “as a woman” in the position of a woman who has borne children. The English version uses the present tense and so has the form of a general principle.

Overall we can see from this brief comparison that the narrator of the source text is, as it were, in Eva Kluge's head and is able to give us her thoughts. The narrator of the translated text is not, and so we are aware, as readers of the English version, of an extra layer of storytelling. It is interesting to consider here a suggestion by Hermans (2014) that translation can always be seen as a type of echoic report on something said, whereby an echoic utterance is one which communicates to the reader the attitude of the speaker to what is being said (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986, 239). Using concepts such as echoic utterance, or also the categories of indirect speech as suggested by, for example, Gutt (2000), can allow us to gain a better sense of how a reader will process a translation such as Hofmann's, where the analyst may note a change in register between the original and the translation, but where the reader will not normally have access to the original.

Another aspect of reading that a stylistic description might engage with is foregrounding, that is, the situation in which the stylistic pattern in a text serves to draw the reader's attention to a particular word, expression or feature. Foregrounding, a term based on the Prague Structuralists' term *aktualisace* (see Garvin 1964, viii; Leech 2008, 18), can be quite different in original and translated texts. Compare, for example, the following line and its translation:

to steal from it (R. S. Thomas 1993, 436)

dort zu stehlen (Perryman 1998, 49)

This is line 6 of a 10-line poem, that begins with Baudelaire's grave, and the narrator's grave, goes on to use an image of the tree of science, and finishes with an image of the tree of poetry. "It" is ambiguous: it could refer to any of these four things. Because "it" is at the end of the line, and therefore foregrounded, the English reader is more likely to consider exactly what it refers to, that is, what is stolen from, than the German reader, where the word "*dort*" (there) is vague of reference, rather than ambiguous, and is not at the end of the line, so less foregrounded. However, it is foregrounded in a different way: the notion of stealing in a particular location rather than stealing something or from someone, is in itself unusual enough to draw the reader's attention. The difference between the original text and the translation draws attention to Thomas' concern, in all his poetry, with the nature of "it", both as a referring pronoun and as a theological concept (see Boase-Beier 2014). Indeed, it could be argued that the foregrounded use of "it" (in titles of poems and even of collections) with ambiguous reference is an element of Thomas' mind-style, the way a "mental self" is presented stylistically (Fowler 1977, 103). By describing patterns of foregrounding to arrive at a description of an original author's mind-style, as manifested in the text, we are able to show how readers of original and translated texts are likely to read differently.

The fact that the number of stylistic studies of how we read translated texts is relatively small suggests that, when stylisticians use translated texts as the subject of stylistic analysis, drawing conclusions about the way we read, they are inclined to do so without realising that the fact that they are translated "changes everything", as the title of Venuti's book (Venuti 2013, 109–115) puts it. Indeed, even quite recent stylistic analysis will sometimes discuss words and phrases of a text, ascribing them to the author when in fact they are the words and phrases of a (usually unnamed) translator. Thus, for example, Hamilton (2012) discusses the words of translator E. J. Richards as though they were those of the original author Christine de Pizan, and Neary (2014, 187) analyses words that are probably those of David Wyllie as though they were Kafka's. This is not to say that such analyses are invalid – after all, the English texts exist – but only to note that the analyst might reach different conclusions if the existence of a source text had been taken into account; this is the point that Malmkjær (2004) makes, as mentioned above.

It could reasonably be expected that stylisticians, like linguists more generally, since they have the terminology and the traditions at their disposal to explain how textual detail gives rise to effects on the reader, would want to engage with the reading of translated texts, and would not be held back by a lack of knowledge of the source language. After all, most translated texts are read by readers who do not know the source language. When we discuss the reading of translated texts, then, we are concerned with what the knowledge of their translated status means just as much as with the sort of actual comparison (as in the case of the examples from Ausländer, Fallada and Thomas above) that not everyone is in a position to

carry out. Stylistics can help us to describe what it is we do when we read a translated text, and how the effects of the text are achieved.

For example, if I read Rose Ausländer's poetry in English translation, without access to the original, I am made aware that I am reading a translation in part by elements of style. Consider, for example, the following lines (cf. Boase-Beier 2015, 83):

I speak
 ...
 of weeping willows
 blood-beeches

If we were analysing the style we would assume that "blood-beech" designates the same tree as the English "copper beech". "Blood" we would assume to be the substance used as a comparison for the red leaves of the copper beech in German. Furthermore, knowing the poem to be translated from German, we would assume that the choice of "blood" is not merely an arbitrary echo of the German but perhaps has some resonance in the poem, maybe linked to the "weeping willows", and so on.

There will of course be a distinction in this case between a reader who is versed in stylistics and one who is not. But this is true of any text, translated or not.

Implications for practice

It would be a mistake to assume that, just because stylistics is a useful tool in describing how translation happens and how translations are read, it is automatically also a useful tool for the translator. It is certainly the case that a great deal of the translator's art (just as that of any writer) takes place intuitively, without recourse to theoretical descriptions or tools. And yet, because of the influence of the source text, and the translator's need to understand how it achieves its effects, stylistics can in fact be very helpful for the translator.

Jones, for example, discussing the use of many studies which either "rely on translators' memories" or on the use of a "think-aloud protocol" in which choices are recorded in real time (see Jones 2011, 10–11), and considering his own translation as an example, provides a detailed analysis of the stylistic features of the work he is translating, that of Bosnian poet Mak Dizdar (Jones 2011, 30). These include features such as metre and rhythm, deviation from syntactic norms, images and metaphors, ambiguity, and so on.

Iconicity is another stylistic feature that often plays a role in literary texts. Consider, for example, the following line from a poem by Volker von Törne, which is followed by my translation:

Den Flug der Taube kreuzte der Habicht

(von Törne 1981, 162)

The flight of the dove cut across by the hawk

(Boase-Beier and Vivis, 2017)

This is a very simple example: the iconicity of the original lies in its use of slightly unusual word order in which the object ("*Flug der Taube*", "flight of the dove") precedes the verb "*kreuzte*" ("crossed") and the subject, "*Habicht*" (hawk) comes last. This is possible in

German because the form of the definite article, “*den*” (“the”) is clearly accusative and therefore must belong to the object noun phrase. This syntactic order echoes what one might see: first the dove flying, and then the hawk cutting across its flight. My English translation keeps to a similar word order, bearing in mind the importance of iconicity, even though using it means that no finite verb is possible, if the rhythm is also considered important enough to keep. That is, the iconicity of the syntax, and the rhythm, are deemed more important than the form of the verb, even though this means that the English is not a complete sentence, whereas the German is.

As some of the examples discussed above indicate, many instances of translated poems and novels can be found where the translation differs quite substantially in its stylistics from the source text. It might be tempting in such cases to say that the translator has failed to take the style of the original adequately into account. And yet we cannot just assume that this is the case. Both stylistics and Translation Studies generally tend to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and also usually try to avoid being evaluative when describing the details of a text: what the scholar wants to know is what such textual detail, including differences between a translated text and its original, might tell us.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that greater attention to style might be useful for translators. This is not a question of a translator being expected to know the terms that stylisticians use to describe texts. It is more a question of awareness. And if translations are judged not to be good on stylistic grounds (cf. Berman 2012, 248–249), this is not because of a simple lack of stylistic equivalence with the original. It is, rather, that a translator who has little awareness of style (which includes for Berman “underlying networks of signification”; Berman 2012, 248), will be unlikely to be able to write a target text which contains similar structures and patterns.

A stylistically aware translation, on the other hand (cf. Boase-Beier 2006, 112–113) will include awareness of at least the following:

- (i) The importance of context in influencing meaning. Thus, Walter Aue, translating Matthew Arnold’s poem cited above, needed to know how the image of shifting shingle earlier in the poem relates to a larger historical context and how both relate to the ambiguity of “lie”. Such awareness helps the translator decide whether and how to keep the ambiguity.
- (ii) The fact that stylistic features of the source text reflect choices. Thus a translator of Arnold’s “Dover Beach” can make reasonable assumptions about the significance of “lie” in the original poem.
- (iii) The importance of mind-style and its influence on how to translate in cases such as that of R. S. Thomas’ poem.
- (iv) The importance of narratological distinctions like those we saw in the example from Hofmann’s translation of Fallada, such as that between a narrator, an author, and the inferred author that the reader of a text constructs; these are essential to the translator in deciding which voice and perspective to take.
- (v) How we represent speech and thought, as in the Fallada example.
- (vi) Familiarity with common stylistic figures such as foregrounding, repetition, ambiguity, indirect speech and iconicity.

A translator might of course make many of these decisions without having any awareness that stylisticians speak of “mind-style” or “inferred author” or “iconicity”. But what such awareness can do is to make the translator more likely to realise what is happening in the

original and to have a basis for judging the extent to which such stylistic features represent the choices of the author of the source text. Stylistics thus has an important part to play in the training of translators, especially literary translators.

Further reading

Boase-Beier, J. 2006. *Stylistic Approaches to Translation*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

This work examines how translation can be described, read and carried out using stylistics and the concept of style as a basis.

Boase-Beier, J. 2014. “Using Translation to Read a Poem”. In *Literary Translation: Redrawing the Boundaries*, edited by J. Boase-Beier, A. Fawcett and P. Wilson, 241–252. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

This chapter is one of a small number of current studies that explain how comparing an original text with its translation can enhance our stylistic analysis and understanding of the original.

Boase-Beier, J. 2015. *Translating the Poetry of the Holocaust*. London: Bloomsbury.

This book is a study of how the stylistic and poetic elements of the text affect, involve and engage the reader and how this interaction with the reader differs in the translated text.

Hermans, T. 2014. Positioning translators: voices, views and values in translation. *Language and Literature* 23(3), pp. 285–301.

From the point of view of narrative and narratology, this article examines the role of the translator in the translated text and how translation affects the way the narrative structures are understood.

Malmkjær, K. 2004. Translational stylistics: Dulcken’s translations of Hans Christian Andersen. *Language and Literature* 13(1), pp. 13–24.

This article explains the need for translational stylistics, that is, the stylistic study of a translated text that takes into account the text’s relation to its original.

Related topics

Relevance Theory, interpreting, and translation; Tropes and translation; Wordplay and translation.

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