

## Chapter 3

# Style is Fiction and Non-Fiction: Applying Stylistic Methods and Strategies to Translation and Interpretation Teaching

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter points out the advantages of stylistics in teaching translation and interpreting. By looking at the relationship between Translation Studies and Linguistics, it attempts to identify translation didactics as an area where the study of translation may profit from the methodology offered by stylistics. It explores the features of the stylistic method that may offer better insight into the translation process, such as its attention to the linguistic features and functions of texts, the systematic and critical analytical method provided, the emphasis on the variegated nature of text production and comprehension, and the hands-on approach that encourages the application of the stylistic methodology to real work situations. This chapter argues that training in the tools and methods of stylistics may enhance a translator's and an interpreter's motivation and professional performance and discusses the proposed teaching methodologies and strategies in the context of real-life teaching situations at a Master's degree level.*

### INTRODUCTION

Stylistics, as the study of language use in text, has long been appreciated for its valuable analytic approach to text. Its advantages have been particularly apparent in the study of literature and have recently proved their worth in the fields of media and multimodality. Its contribution to language and literature teaching has also been recognized worldwide. Its potential in the field of Translation Studies, however, has only tentatively been explored (Boase-Beier, 2004). Moreover, an area

of crucial importance to Translation Studies – that of translation didactics – has mainly availed itself of the tools offered by disciplines that are vital to stylistics (such as systemic-functional grammar and pragmatics) but has not yet foregrounded stylistic methodology as a valuable instrument in didactics. This essay attempts to outline the reasons why stylistic methodology may be considered a set of effective resources in teaching, both from a theoretical and from a practical standpoint. Moreover, it wishes to highlight the fact that such a methodology may be applied not only to the most

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consolidated fields of stylistic inquiry (literature) but also to many other research areas of relevance to the translator's and interpreter's profession. Hence the reference to non-fiction in the title of this contribution: the study of style provides useful insights in a variety of text typologies and may be applied successfully to all of them.

## **BACKGROUND**

A rigorous and systematic approach to the study of translation has only been developed very recently. Before the rise of Translation Studies, in fact, translation was considered neither a full-fledged discipline nor a topic worth academic attention. Since the early 1980s translation has started to occupy a more prominent position in linguistic and literary studies and has grown into a scientific field. The contribution of linguistics to the field, however, might have been to a certain extent delayed or played down because of the linguistic approach prevailing when Translation Studies emerged, namely the transformational-generativist approach. As a consequence, other disciplines have had a stronger influence on Translation Studies than linguistics. Although the 1972 manifesto *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* establishes interdisciplinarity as one of the main features of Translation Studies (Holmes, 1988), literary studies at first, and social studies at a second stage, have played a major role in influencing the development of the discipline up to this day. Key figures in Translation Studies include in fact Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Maria Tymoczko, and Lawrence Venuti, who devoted most of their attention to the cultural and political implications of literary translation at different times by applying mainly a Cultural Studies approach.

The success experienced by the transformational-generativist approach has certainly to do with its most valuable contribution to the language science, which may be exemplified by its thorough illustration of code and its systematic approach

to language inquiry. Its notion of language universals, however, and the dominant role assigned to competence at the expense of performance have been largely detrimental to the emergence of translation as an independent discipline, the practical component of which is clearly associated with the domain of performance. It is no surprise, then, that having to establish themselves as a new research field, Translation Studies decidedly rejected generativism and the linguistic approaches revolving around it.

The participation of language studies in the rise of Translation Studies, though less prominent, was of no little account. Scholars such as Mary Snell-Hornby, Juliane House and Mona Baker have indicated fundamental elements through which linguistics may give a substantial contribution to a translation science. Snell-Hornby, for example, highlights the elements in common between Translation Studies and what she calls the "pragmatic turn" in linguistics (Snell-Hornby, 1995). First of all, language is no isolated phenomenon but is related to the world around it and to other disciplines; language is culture-bound; universalist theories should be discouraged in favor of an emphasis on differentiation; disciplines work empirically and inductively with concrete language material. In addition, she identifies a specific legacy of the Prague Circle in Translation Studies: the founding concepts of systemic-functional grammar, that is a grammar focusing on functions and on use rather than on deep structures and abstract competence. Such founding concepts include the Functional Sentence Perspective and the notions of theme and rheme, given and new information, thematic progression and focus of information. These are all elements that show how form and meaning interact at different levels in the production of linguistic effect. For this reason, they were to become central both in textual analysis in Hallidayan terms, trying to encompass a global grammar of meaning, and in Translation Studies, concerned with the expression of meaning and effects in different languages. Snell-Hornby

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