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Preserving Stylistic Features in Literary Translation

الاحتفاظ بالخصائص الأسلوبية في الترجمة الأدبية

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Abstract: Style is of a paramount importance in studying literary texts. In fact, an author uses a set of devices not only to lend his text its aesthetic value, but also to provide the reader with clues to the intended interpretation. Hence, translating style may be the most challenging part in literary translation. The purpose of this research paper is to examine whether, and to what extent the stylistic features of the source text can be rendered into the target text. Thus, extracts translated from English into Arabic were analysed in order to show the method adopted by translators to deal with stylistic features of the source text. The analysis indicated that stylistic features should be studied carefully during the process of translating a literary text because these features provide the reader with important clues to the intended meaning. However, due to the linguistic discrepancies and the cultural differences between languages, preserving the stylistic features of the source text is not always as straightforward.

Keywords: Intended Interpretation; Literary Text; Literary Translation; Style; Stylistic Features.

ملخص: يشغل عنصر الأسلوب حيزًا مهمًا في دراسة النصوص الأدبية. يتمثل الأسلوب في مجموعة الأدوات الأسلوبية التي يوظفها الكاتب من أجل تحقيق القيمة الجمالية لنصه. فضلًا عن ذلك، يمكن أن تمد الأدوات الأسلوبية القارئ بدلائل تساعد للتوصل بالمعنى المقصود. من هذا المنطلق، يمكن أن تشكل ترجمة الأسلوب إحدى العقبات التي قد تعترض سبيل المترجم أثناء ترجمته للنصوص الأدبية. نحاول من خلال هذه الدراسة البحث في إمكانية الاحتفاظ بالخصائص الأسلوبية للنص الأصل ونقلها في النص الهدف. ومن أجل ذلك، قمنا بتحليل بعض الأمثلة المترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية، حيث توصلنا إلى أنه يتعين على المترجم - خلال العملية الترجمة - دراسة الخصائص الأسلوبية للنص الأصل، وتحليلها تحليلًا دقيقًا لأنها قد تنطوي على

دلائل مهمة تحليل القارئ إلى المعنى المقصود من قبل صاحب النص الأصل، وإن تمكن من الاحتفاظ بها فلا يتردد في ذلك. إلا أننا توصلنا من ناحية أخرى إلى أنّ التباين بين اللغة الأصل واللغة الهدف على مستوى البنيات اللسانية والخلفيات الثقافية، يجعل مهمة المترجم في الاحتفاظ بالأدوات الأسلوبية للنص الأصل، ونقلها في النص الهدف غاية في الصعوبة، وقد يكون ذلك مستحيلا في بعض الحالات.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأسلوب، الترجمة الأدبية، الخصائص الأسلوبية، المعنى المقصود، النص الأدبي.

1. INTRODUCTION

The style of an author is the most significant feature in studying a literary text. In fact, stylisticians stress the importance of identifying the main features of the literary text that make it distinct and different from other types of texts. Moreover, the literary text is per se an act of expression, and has unique qualities that are extremely challenging. Stylisticians focus on studying the phonetic, structural, and semantic patterns, which cannot be analysed under the norms of the standard language. Indeed, the writer of literary texts uses these elements in a specific way in order to lend his text its aesthetic value. Therefore, attention should be given to the way the writer uses the language to create his piece of writing because it has an important bearing on the interpretation process.

In the field of translation studies, style was the subject of many researches, for instance, many scholars have devoted special attention to the study of style such as Venuti (1995), Wilss wilfrom (1996), Boase-Beier (2006), Hasan Ghazala (2011), and Gutt (2014). They have stressed the importance of studying and analyzing stylistic features in literary translation.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of the stylistic features of the source text in literary translation, and to see to what extent these features can be rendered in the target text.

Through the analysis of extracts translated from English into Arabic, this study aims at showing the importance of preserving stylistic features of the source text in the target text because they make the target reader familiar with the style of the author of the source text, and provide him with subtle clues to the intended meaning.

2. Review of Literature

Style as leech (1976) stated is the dress of thought. It is definitely an essential component of a literary text; it consists of a set of stylistic properties and

rhetoical devices used by the writer in order to create a profound impact on the readers, ergo, the style of an author is the most significant feature that should be taken into account when it comes to studying a literary text.

2.1 Style: A Debatable Concept

Style is a debatable concept in stylistics, in fact; different definitions were given to this concept. For instance, Hasan Ghazala (2011:37) links style to the choice of words, grammatical patterns, and syntactic structures: “Style is a linguistic choice in the first place. A linguistic choice made on the basis of options available in language”.

In the same vein, Leech and Short (1981:10) see that style means the way of using language by an individual in a specific situation for intended purposes: “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on”. They lay emphasis on the uniqueness of style, which stems from the choices made by the speaker or writer in order to achieve a specific purpose. Thus, literary texts are analysed under a linguistic approach. In addition, Leech and Short put forward a checklist of stylistic categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context.

According to Crystal (1987: 323), style refers to “any situationally distinctive use of language, and of the choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language”. Wales (2001: 371) defines style as “the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking”.

As it has been mentioned above style is a polysemantic concept, for instance, many attempts have been made to define it according to different areas of study such as sociolinguistics, textual linguistics, literary criticism, pragmatics, etc. In general, style can refer to language style or author’s style.

2.2 Stylistic Features:

Writers tend to use language in a specific way in order to achieve the aesthetic purpose – that is, their choice contributes significantly to achieving novelty and uniqueness of the language in a given piece of writing. In stylistics, the term ‘feature’ is used to refer the writer’s or speaker’s preferences in terms of linguistic forms. However, there is no precise definition of stylistic features; for instance, Leech and Short (1981: 64) define a stylistic feature as the occurrence of a linguistic or stylistic form or category in a text. The linguistic categories include

nouns, transitive verb, and negative. On the other hand, stylistic categories, which are more complex, include alliteration, balanced sentences, personification ...etc.

For Riffaterre (cited in Ghazala Hasan: 40) stylistic features are those distinctive and unpredictable facts, which must have a specific character, otherwise they will not be different from linguistic facts. Thus, stylistic features are those linguistic or formal features of a text, which are not used for their own sake, but are opted for by a writer because of their significance to the interpretation of the text (Wales, 2001: 438). For example, the use of transitive verbs in a text is a linguistic feature; however, it becomes a stylistic feature if it is quite frequent in the text or it is not used in the text. Moreover, the most established stylistic features, according to Ghazala (2011: 41), are: deviation, foregrounding, ambiguity, simplicity, complexity, nominalization vs verbalization, parallelism, repetition, transitivity, intransitivity

3. Style in Literary Translation:

The translation of a literary text is completely different from the translation of other types of texts. In fact, style, the fundamental component of the literary text, may be the most challenging part in literary translation. Hence, the translator should make the target reader familiar with the style of the writer of the source text. Indeed, style is the means used by the writer to express the ideas he wants to convey, the beliefs he adheres to, and the positions he adopts.

The translation of the literary text can raise a range of issues. In fact, the most difficulties to cope with are those related to the cultural difference related to the literary creativity, which can lead to stylistic difficulties. Thus, literary translation is considered the most difficult type of translation. In this context, Wilss states:

To get the sense of the difficulties involved in literary translation and the assessment of literary translation, one must keep in mind that literature, more than “ordinary” discourse, bears the imprint of different authors, different life histories, dialects, registers, and last but not least, paradigmatic and syntagmatic variants. (1996: 26)

Studying a literary text indicates that both form and meaning should be carefully analysed. Similarly, when it comes to translating a literary text, both form and meaning have a bearing on the process of translation. For this reason, the translator of a literary text should pay attention to the stylistic features of the

source text because the use of these stylistic features is driven by a deliberate and conscious selection made by the original writer.

Moreover, being open to multiple interpretations, is one of the difficulties the translator encounters during the process of translating a literary text. Therefore, the translator should be familiar with the style of the writer of the source text, his cultural background, and political positions. In this context, Boase-Beier (2006: 1) comments: “From the earliest writings about translation, such as those of Cicero or Horace, style has often been mentioned but [...] its role has rarely been systematically explored. Yet style is central to the way we construct and interpret texts”.

In fact, stylistic features play a significant role in the interpretation process since they provide the translator with useful clues to the intended meaning of the source text. In addition, Gutt (2010: 130) stresses the importance of preserving the stylistic features of the source text: “This wider, stylistic dimension of communication is, of course, of special interest to literary studies, and so it is not surprising that theorists concerned with literary translation have paid considerable attention to the preservation of the stylistic properties of texts.” Indeed, in a novel, the writer opts for specific stylistic features for the sake of achieving the aesthetic value, and conveying specific meanings. Therefore, attention should be given to the way the writer used the language to create his piece of writing because it has a bearing on the interpretation process.

Furthermore, the translator of literary texts not only should explain the meaning of the source text, but he should also endeavour to recreate the aesthetic value of the source text in the target language by preserving the stylistic features of the source text. Thus, the form of the target text is of a paramount importance in the translation of literary texts. In this regard, the translator Kazem Lotfi PourSaedi (1992: 198) says: “ ... what is important for the translator in his attempts to establish equivalence is not only what the original author wants to say but also the way he says what he wants to say ... ”.

4. Analysis of Extracts Translated from English into Arabic:

Through the following extracts translated from English into Arabic, we look at the significance of stylistic features in the source texts and explore the possibility of preserving them in the target texts.

The first extract is an excerpt from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of two Cities*:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of time, it was the age of

wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of the hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going the other way. (2005: 05)

In this excerpt, Dickens informs his readers that people have held conflicting opinions about the late 18th century. To make the contradictions in opinions manifest to the readers and to lend this passage an ironic quality, Dickens relied on the repetition of parallel structures. He uses pairs of independent sentences (it was the best, it was the worst / we had everything before us, we had nothing before us/ we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going the other way). Thus, Dickens provides the readers with a clue to the intended interpretation, which lies in the fact that the use of independent sentences represent, in fact, two independent statements.

According to Gutt (2010: 146), the repetition of the parallel structures shows that the passage might be echoing the opinions of different groups of people. However, if Dickens had joined the two independent clauses (it was the best, it was the worst ...) in one clause (it was the best and the worst of times), the reader would not arrive at the idea that “it was the best of times” and “it was the worst of time” represents two conflicting opinions and thoughts about the late 18th century.

Thus, this excerpt is a perfect example on the significance of stylistic features in the interpretation of a literary text. In fact, a writer of a literary text opts for some linguistic devices and syntactic patterns in a way that enables him to provide the readers with clues to the intended interpretation.

When it comes to the translation of Dickens's excerpt into Arabic, an accurate translation should inevitably preserve the repetition of parallel structures. This is due to the fact that Dickens relied on this stylistic feature in order to help his readers to arrive at the intended interpretation. Hence, translating the above excerpt without taking into account this stylistic feature may not enable the Arab reader to infer the same intended meaning the reader understands when reading the excerpt in the source language.

Now, we look at the translation of the same excerpt into Arabic by Munir Al Baalabaki (2013:7):

كان أحسن الأزمان، وكان أسوأ الأزمان. كان عصر الحكمة، وكان عصر الحماسة. كان عهد الإيمان، وكان عهد الجحود. كان زمن النور، وكان زمن الظلمة. كان ربيع الأمل، وكان شتاء القنوط. كان أمامنا كل شيء، ولم يكن أمامنا شيء. كنا جميعاً ماضين إلى الجنة مباشرة، وكنا جميعاً ماضين إلى جهنم.

The translator managed to preserve the same stylistic feature (repetition of parallel structures) used by Dickens. The reflection of this stylistic feature is possible since it does not distort the linguistic and stylistic norms of Arabic since parallel structures are common in all languages.

However, if the translator had opted for joining the independent sentences:

كان أحسن الأزمان وأسوأها. كان عصر الحكمة والحماسة. كان عهد الإيمان والجحود. كان زمن النور والظلمة. كان ربيع الأمل وشتاء القنوط...

The target reader will not be able to arrive at the intended meaning i.e. conflicting opinions and irony. As we mentioned before style is a matter of a deliberate and a conscious choice made by the author who, in order to express his feelings and ideas, chooses certain linguistic forms in preference to others. Therefore, preserving the stylistic features of the source text will enable the target reader to become familiar with the style of the author of the source text and provide him with clues to the intended meaning. However, it is not always possible to preserve the stylistic features of the source text this is due to the norms of the target language.

The following example is from Hemingway's short story After the Storm:

I said, "Who killed him?" and he said "I don't know who killed him but he is dead all right," and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat where I had her inside of the Mango Key and she was all right only she was full of water. So I bailed her out and pumped her out and there was a moon but plenty of clouds and still plenty rough and I took it down along; and when it was daylight I was off Eastern Harbor. (1987: 227)

Hemingway's short story was translated by Musa Al Halul (2010: 146-147):

سألته: "من قتله؟"، قال "لا أعرف. لكن الرجل مات بلا شك."، كان الظلام يخيم، وكان الماء راكداً في الشارع، والعنمة ضاربة، والنوافذ مكسورة، وكانت القوارب متناثرة هنا وهناك في المدينة، والأشجار وكل شيء

مفتلح، ركبت زورقا واتجهت به إلى قاربي الذي تركته داخل جزيرة المانغو، كان قاربي سليما، لكنه مملوء بالماء. أفرغته من الماء، وكان القمر يشع من بين السحب الكثيفة، وكان الطقس لا يزال عاصفا. مضيت في قاربي، وعند الفجر بلغت مشارف الميناء الشرقي.

It is worth noting that Hemingway opted for the use of the conjunction 'and' which is a rhetorical device known as polysyndeton. For instance, Hallen (2003: 93-95) defines polysyndeton as the repetition of conjunctions between every item in a series. It is very common in prose and poetry. In addition, polysyndeton has an overwhelming effect in a sentence. For example: "this term, I am taking biology **and** English **and** history **and** math **and** music **and** physics **and** sociology." All these 'ands' make the student sound like he is completely overwhelmed. The repetitive use of "and" gives each item in the series emphasis as well as keeping an equal beat in the rhythm of the sentence. In fact, Hemingway uses polysyndeton to convey to his readers the anxiety the character had been experiencing.

Looking at the translation, we notice that the translator succeeded in rendering the polysyndetic conjunction 'and' into the conjunction 'Alwa:w' in Arabic except for '**and** I got a skiff **and** went out **and** found my boat ' where he used 'wa' in one occurrence. However, if he had used the conjunction 'wa':
... **and** I got a skiff **and** went out **and** found my boat.

وركبت زورقا وغادرت ووجدت قاربي.

He would have kept conveying the sense of anxiety and worry the character had been experiencing.

Thus, polysyndeton is the stylistic feature Hemingway opted for to convey anxiety and worry in this excerpt. Arabic uses a rhetorical device "Alwa:w" as polysyndetic device. Therefore, it is possible to render the polysyndetic conjunction 'and' by its equivalent polysyndetic conjunction in Arabic, which is 'Alwa:w'. This rendition does not distort the norms of Arabic.

In the same excerpt, we identify the use of personification, a figure of speech, which consist in attributing human qualities to non-human and things such as animals, plants, elements of nature, and abstract ideas. Personification is the act in speech and writing of giving inanimate objects, abstract concepts or actions, human or near human characteristics (Cuddon, 1982: 529). In the above excerpt, Hemingway uses the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to the boat.

Unlike Arabic, English does not employ grammatical gender where each noun is assigned masculine, feminine or neuter gender regardless of whether the

noun has a biological sex. For example, the word نافذة is feminine in Arabic because it ends with the grammatical "ة". For instance, most words ending in "ة" in Arabic are feminine. However, English employs natural gender i.e. animate entities with a biological sex take the masculine (he, him, his, himself) or feminine (she, her, hers, herself) gender, and inanimate nouns take the neuter (it, its, itself) gender.

Furthermore, metaphorical gender in English consists in using the pronouns 'he' and 'she' illogically by imposing masculinity or femininity to sexless objects and abstract concepts. As a result, some things are personified as masculine (mountains, rivers, oak trees, etc.), and some things are personified as feminine (ships, boats, carriages, etc.). This use of metaphorical gender impart a poetic effect to a piece of writing and enables the author to highlight aesthetic feelings. (The New Fowler's Modern English Usage, p. 590)

Hemingway uses personification: and found my boat where I had her inside of the Mango Key and she was all right only she was full of water. So I bailed her out and pumped her out. However, the rendition of this part into Arabic does not preserve the stylistic feature used by Hemingway:

قاربي الذي تركته داخل جزيرة المانغو، كان قاربي سليماً، لكنه مملوء بالماء. أفرغته من الماء...

The word "boat" is "قارب" in Arabic and is masculine. This translation does not transfer the metaphorical gender to the target reader. Due to a linguistic discrepancy between Arabic and English, it is impossible to preserve the stylistic feature (metaphorical gender) used by Hemingway. Therefore, substituting "التي" for "الذي" will distort the grammatical rules of Arabic because "قارب" is masculine and hence should be followed by the pronoun "الذي" not "التي". Thus, the impossibility of preserving a stylistic feature can lead to a loss of important and subtle clues to the intended meaning.

4. CONCLUSION

Translating a style of an author may be the most challenging part in literary translation because he utilizes stylistic features not only to lend his piece of writing its aesthetic value, but also to provide his readers with some clues to the intended meaning. Hence, preserving the stylistic features of the source text in the target text will make the target reader familiar with the style of the author of the source text. The study concluded, through the analysis of translations, that the translator should preserve the stylistic features of the source text when dealing with features that do not distort the norms of the target language. Thus, such

translation preserves the original style, and enables the target readers to arrive at the intended interpretation of the original. However, in some cases, the translator encounters insurmountable difficulties in preserving an author's stylistic features due to linguistic discrepancies and cultural differences between source language and target language. In fact, each language is *sui generis* and it may not be possible for the translator to manage to preserve all the stylistic features of the source text in the target text.

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