



Stylistics is the linguistic study of style. It refers to motivated choice made by language users to communicate a message in a certain way. Stylistic choice is therefore limited to those aspects of language which concern alternative ways of rendering content. Each and every linguistic feature (grammar, lexis, phonology, graphology) and how they are put together (coherence and cohesion, paragraphing, sentence structure) contribute to style and to the overall message of the text.

This means that translators need to pay particular attention to the stylistic effects of the ST since they are the direct result of the intentions of the text producer. Unlike register, where choice is restricted by appropriateness to the situation, and dialect, where language varies according to a language user's personality and socio-geographic background, style entails a conscious choice among a number of possible and appropriate alternatives.

The following sections offer guidelines on translating both individual and conventional aspects of style and stress the fundamental way in which stylistic choices affect the message to be conveyed from ST to TT.

#### 4.1. Stylistics and Discourse Genres

Stylistic choice is a major component of literary texts where writers exploit the options made available by language to create a highly personalised text. Form and content are closely intertwined in the production of meaning, and writers can play with language to create original texts. We have seen that the form a message takes can vary according to the situation or the participants in a speech event. In stylistic variation form is an intrinsic part of the message since form itself is used to enhance the content. Translating the meaning of stylistically-marked texts therefore entails paying attention to form just as much as to content. This is why the translator needs to be sensitive to stylistic nuances in the ST. The translator's task is to interpret the purpose of the SL message correctly, to identify the stylistic constituents activated by the writer in fusing form and content, and then to recre-

ate not only the message but also the stylistic effect appropriately for a readership in the target language and culture at various levels – lexical, syntactic, graphological, phonological.

The fusion of form and content is not an exclusively literary phenomenon. Creative use of language is to be found in a host of other discourse genres, notable among them are, of course, advertisements. Phonological features such as rhyme, rhythm and sound-symbolism play a prominent role in the persuasive message of advertising, as do metaphors, puns and word associations.

*Le portatili Olivetti danno i numeri.*

The cleanest sweep of all. Now you only need one broom to cope with every cleaning chore.

The discourse of economics and journalism also abounds in such devices as alliteration, simile, metaphor and metonymy.

*E quando l'onda lunga del crollo di Wall Street dell'ottobre '87 è penetrata sul mercato italiano, le ripercussioni ci sono state. E gravi. I Fondi sono apparsi come uno strumento repentinamente invecchiato, chiuso in se stesso, senza domani.*

(*Essei*, n. 5, luglio 1989)

For the venturesome, the place to be within the bond market has been junk bonds, which last year were among the market's poorest performers. After staging an explosive rally, these high-yield, high-risk corporate bonds are likely to end the year as the market stars.

(*The Wall Street Journal*,  
October 22, 1991)

*Alle chiare, ordinate sale del museo accedono sempre più numerosi i visitatori, soprattutto i ragazzi della zona; toccano con mano fatti e cose che sembrano perduti per sempre, sepolti dal consumismo, dall'appiattimento della cultura televisiva e dal superficiale accavalarsi della nostra vita moderna.*

(*L'Espresso*, 7 luglio 1991)

As Secretary of State James Baker took off last weekend for what he called his final swing to nail down arrangements for the gathering that will at last bring Arabs and Israelis face to face, those two sides were anxiously bumping and jostling each other.

(*Time*, October 21, 1991)

Let us now look more closely at these and other stylistic features and the problems they pose translators. Grammatical and lexical features and their stylistic effects will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

## 4.2. Figurative Language

Among the stylistic options writers have at their disposal to express their message is that of choosing to use either literal or figurative language. Figurative language refers to that large part of language whose meaning is not literal but based on images of things seen and actions experienced. It is important for translators to recognise the difference between literal and figurative speech and to discover what effect figurative language has on the text. Translators also need to evaluate how consistently, how much and what type of figurative language is used as well as what function it is fulfilling. All these factors interact with the function and genre of the ST to determine how the ST is to be translated into the TL: whether, that is, a translator will maintain the same degree of imagery or will opt for literal alternatives.

Metaphor and simile are the most widely recognised figurative expressions encountered in translations as they are commonly used in a wide range of discourse genres: advertising, newspaper reports, economics, as well as in literary contexts.

Simile demonstrates an explicit resemblance between two more or less similar things and is introduced by a word such as *like*, *as*, or *such*.

*Il bosco muore e la sua fine, soprattutto nella Selva Nera, è avvolta da un alone tragico e eroico, come quella di un re in un poema epico.*

(*"Al capezzale del Grande Bosco che muore"* di Claudio Magris,  
*Il Corriere della Sera*, 15 marzo 1986)

The wood is dying, and its death, especially in the Black Forest is enveloped by a tragic and heroic aura, like the death of a king in an epic poem.

In the case of metaphor, unlike objects are identified with each other for the purpose of emphasizing one or more aspects of resemblance between them *without* the use of the explicit markers.

*Al capezzale del Grande Bosco che muore.*  
At the dying bedside of the Great Forest.

Writers generally have a twofold purpose in choosing to make use of metaphor: a referential and a pragmatic one. Referential, because metaphor can describe a concept, person, object, state, action, and so on, more succinctly and comprehensively; pragmatic, because it enhances communication by arousing readers' interests and appealing to their emotions above the literal level.

*Con quattro chilometri si può unire l'aeroporto di Linate, che oggi ha una utenza di venticinque-trenta mila passeggeri al giorno, al resto della città, mettendo fine ai disagi della gente e alle lotte campanilistiche che hanno sempre visto affrontarsi i tassisti di Milano e quelli di Peschiera Borromeo per la spartizione del mercato.*

(*Follow Me*, 20 giugno 1991)

With four more kilometers Linate airport, which today serves 25-30,000 passengers a day, can be linked up with the city, thus putting an end to travellers' inconvenience and to conflicts of interests such as those that have pitted Milanese taxi drivers against those from Peschiera Borromeo for a share of the passenger market.

The metaphor in this example gives a clearer idea of what issues are actually at stake in extending the underground from the city centre to Linate Airport; its function is thus referential. The following metaphor does not stop at describing vividly and concisely what impact and significance the discovery of DNA, the "secret of life", was to have on mankind, but also creates interest and involvement in the reader.

*A cogliere la mela del biblico albero della conoscenza furono, il 25 aprile 1953, le mani di un bizzarro fisico inglese convertito alla ricerca biologica, Francis Crick, e di un giovane indisciplinato americano, zoologo pentito, James Watson: entrambi estrosi outsiders della biologia molecolare e invadenti ospiti di quell'austero tempio della scienza che erano (e sono) i laboratori dell'Università di Cambridge.*

*Il frutto proibito lo scodellarono sulle pagine di Nature, la più prestigiosa rivista scientifica del mondo...*

("Non diciamo sciocchezze"  
di Franco Pratico,  
*La Repubblica*,  
26 maggio 1987).

The hands which, on the 25th April 1953, picked the apple from the Biblical tree of knowledge, belonged to a rather eccentric English physicist, a convert to biological research, Francis Crick, and to a young undisciplined American, a repentant biologist, James Watson, both brilliant outsiders in molecular biology and undesired guests in that austere temple of science which the laboratories of the University of Cambridge were and still are.

The forbidden fruit was dished up in the pages of *Nature*, the most prestigious scientific journal in the world ...

The type of discourse genre that the ST belongs to influences the way metaphor is translated in the TT. The referential purpose is generally the dominant feature in informative texts such as textbooks, leaflets, research reports, news articles, while the pragmatic purpose is dominant in expressive and vocative texts such as literature, advertisements. Thus, it would be less important for the translator to try to maintain the figures of speech in the former discourse genres than in the latter.

The function that the metaphor is carrying out in a particular text is not the only factor to influence the way it is translated. Translation also depends on the type and structure of the metaphor. Although there are various typologies of metaphor, the distinction they all have in common is that of the *original metaphor* at one extreme and the *dead metaphor* at the other. In between is a fuzzy area of what Bolinger has called "*faded*" metaphors. Dead metaphors may be treated more or less as idiomatic expressions as the image they evoke has become so familiar and fossilized that they are no longer thought of as figurative.

*Il Governo fu costretto a prendere dei provvedimenti per contenere l'inflazione.*  
The Government was obliged to take steps to curb inflation.

Original metaphors contribute prominently to the meaning and effect of the ST and therefore constitute more of a problem for translator. The translatability of original metaphors depends very much on the degree to which they are bound to the SL culture and alien to the TL culture. Compare the following examples: the metaphors used in the first are not culture-specific and therefore do not raise problems in translation, while the second one needs to be translated with some kind of pragmatic equivalent:

Charles ... was like a city struck out of a quiet sky by an atom bomb. All lay razed; all principle, all future, all honourable intent. Yet he survived, he lay in the sweetest possession of his life, the last man alive, infinitely isolated ... but already the radio-activity of guilt crept, crept through his nerves and veins.

(John Fowles,  
*The French Lieutenant's Woman*)

*Charles ... era come una città colpita a ciel sereno da una bomba atomica. Ogni cosa era rasa al suolo: ogni principio, ogni futuro, ogni fede, ogni intenzione onorevole. Tuttavia egli sopravviveva, era padrone della cosa più dolce della sua vita, l'ultimo superstite, infinitamente isolato ... e già la radioattività del rimorso s'insinuava tra nervi e vene.*

(John Fowles,  
*La donna del tenente francese*,  
traduzione di Ettore Capriolo)

... la signora Capitano che parlava sempre in punta di forchetta ...

(Giovanni Verga,  
*Mastro don Gesualdo*)

... the Captain's lady who always talked in such a mincing fashion ...

(translation by D.H. Lawrence)

... the captain's wife, who always used the finest expressions...

(translation by Mary A. Craig)

Difficulty in translating metaphor therefore arises when there is no one-to-one equivalence between SL and TL in the structural elements of a figure of speech. Metaphors and similes are made up of three elements: the tenor, the object or idea being described, the ground, the common element, and the vehicle, what the tenor is compared to. A simile expresses all three elements explicitly:

He's as strong as an ox.  
*È forte come un toro.*

metaphor generally omits the ground, which the reader or hearer is called upon to supply.

He's a mole.  
*È una talpa.*

If the elements of the metaphor or simile are culture-specific, they cannot always be translated figuratively.

We have put aside a tidy little sum for a rainy day.  
*Abbiamo risparmiato una bella sommetta per i tempi difficili.*

Translators are thus faced with the choice of rendering the ST simile or metaphor by means of a pragmatic equivalent in the TL, which can at times also be similar at a formal level in the two languages. Alternatively, they may resort to paraphrase and provide the literal meaning alone. Whichever the strategy selected, the translator's major concern is to preserve the meaning intended by the SL author.

It is, of course, important for translators to identify what feature is being foregrounded by a particular metaphor, since it is this that has to be conveyed in the TT. The following are obviously not satisfactory translation equivalents since they foreground different features.

She looked like a drowned rat.  
*Aveva l'aspetto di un pulcino bagnato.*

A literal rendering in Italian would be a more appropriate translation of the English:

*Era bagnata fradicia.*



Whether metaphors can, or indeed should, be translated rather than rendered literally also depends, as we said earlier, on discourse genre and the function the figurative language is performing (referential or pragmatic). The consistency with which they are used in a particular text should also be a factor to take into account. Metaphors tend to have a cumulative effect within the text, and it is this that has to be translated. In the following example the resemblance between movie-going and religion is conjured up and sustained by a series of metaphors over several lines of text.

Gradually movie-going altered from relaxation to ritual. In the big cities, you went to massive picture palaces, floating through incense-laden air to the strains of organ music, to worship at the Cathedral of Light. You paid homage to your favourite star; you dutifully communed with the fan magazines. You wore the clothes they wore in the movies; you bought the furniture you saw on the screen. You joined a congregation composed of every strata of society. And you shared your adulation with Shanghai, Sydney and Santiago. For your favourite pastime had become the most powerful cultural influence in the world – exceeding even that of the Press. The silent film was not only a vigorous popular art; it was a universal language – Esperanto for the eyes.

(Kevin Brownlow,  
*Hollywood, The Pioneers*)

It would be extremely difficult for translators to maintain the pragmatic equivalence in the TT without recreating this stylistic effect. Consider how the translator has dealt with extended metaphor in the following example:

*Una galleria si annunciò con un lungo avvertimento della macchina, il treno vi si immerse scandendo il suo ritmo, suscitando il tanfo d'un vecchio fumo di vecchie vaporiere. Pareva che il treno corresse con una scarpa rotta, con un battito alterno più forte; l'immagine che venne in mente all'uomo tarchiato fu quella delle scarpe rotte. Lo doveva pensare anche lei, ed egli si sentì avvolto in quei pensieri elementari, in quella ignoranza elementare, in quella eterna infanzia. Il vagone era piombato nel buio, non si accese nessuna luce, un buio fragoroso...*

(Corrado Alvaro,  
*I giocattoli rotti*)

The approach of a tunnel was announced by a long blast from the engine, and the train dived into it beating its rhythm, giving off the musty smell of old smoke from old locomotives. It seemed as if the train were running with one shoe broken, with one beat stronger than the other; the image that came to the stocky man's mind was that of the broken shoes. She must think so too, and he felt himself enveloped in those elemental thoughts, in that elemental ignorance, in that eternal childhood. The car was plunged in darkness, no light was lit, and the darkness was filled with noise...

(Corrado Alvaro,  
*The Broken Toys*,  
translated by Robert A. Hall)

A pitfall translators need to look out for when translating extended metaphor is that of mixing metaphors since the result is an unintentionally humorous effect. A classic example in English is: I smell a rat, I see it floating in the air, but I will nip it in the bud (i.e. I suspect evil, and I can already see the beginnings of it but I will take action to suppress it).

4.2.2. Another kind of metaphor which tends to crop up in a number of discourse genres is *personification*, a figure of speech by which an abstraction or inanimate object is endowed with personality.

American architecture has spent the past few years in the dumps, fretful and feckless.

4.2.3. A figure of speech which is particularly difficult to translate is *syllipsis*. Since syllipsis entails using a word in a metaphorical and literal sense at one and the same time, it poses the problem of finding equivalent collocational forms that can function in both these ways simultaneously. Collocation, as we shall see more fully in Chapter 7, refers to the possibility of words occurring together: a close relationship is a possible collocation while \*a tight relationship is not; Italian has *un rapporto stretto* and not \**un rapporto vicino*. There are therefore restrictions in any language on which combinations are possible and which are not. In rendering You have broken my heart and my best china vase, translators will have to select a verb in Italian that means break and that can collocate with both heart and vase. *Infrangere* can co-occur with *cuore* but not with *vaso di porcellana*. A possible translation which preserves pragmatic equivalence might be to replace *vaso di porcellana*

with something which conveys similar connotations ('delicate' and 'precious') to those embodied in my best china vase:

*Mi hai infranto il cuore e la vetrata di cristallo.*

The translator's main concern, of course, is to maintain the humorous effect that is intended by the use of syllepsis.

4.2.4. *Metonymy*, that is the naming of a person, institution or human characteristic by some object or quality which is clearly associated with it, occurs fairly frequently in both English and Italian. Nonetheless it is not always possible to translate metonyms as such because they may either be unknown in the TL or have different connotations. The connotative meaning of *The City* and *Carnaby Street* would be understood by Italians and that of *Il Vaticano* by the English. But the connotations of *Sandringham* are rather less transparent and more culture-specific. Similarly, *Il Quirinale* used to denote the President of the Italian Republic or *La Farnesina* to refer to the Italian Foreign Ministry would be fairly meaningless to an English target audience. Literal rendering of such metonyms would be the most effective solution in informative and vocative texts. In expressive texts, however, more attention should be paid to preserving stylistic effects and the "flavour" of the ST, which might mean using an appositive phrase like: *La Farnesina, the Italian Foreign Ministry*.

*Si fa troppa politica tra i magistrati  
è questa l'accusa di fondo del Quirinale.*

The veteran Christian Democrat swore in his five-party coalition before President Francesco Cossiga at the Quirinale Palace.

4.2.5. *Puns* are notoriously difficult to translate since they exploit the potentials of homophones and homographs for serious or humorous purposes. In other words, they simultaneously activate different meanings of a word that sounds or looks the same:

Baskin - Robbins didn't get to be America's favorite ice cream store overnight. We did it one 31-derful treat at a time.

*Le pagine gialle – un volume di affari.*

Homophones and homographs in one language rarely have equivalents in another, and therefore constitute major stumbling blocks for translators. Puns figure quite prominently in such widely differing discourse genres as novels, plays, poetry, advertisements, jokes, after-dinner speeches, and so on, which are major candidates for translation.

*Per un canarino il miglio non è un'unità di misura.  
Fiuggi, your thirst for health.*

A possible way to handle puns is to look for some kind of figurative language in the TL that can serve the same communicative purpose.

Two-thirds of the world is covered by water. The rest by Swissair.  
*I due terzi del mondo sono coperti da acqua. Il resto è coperto da Swissair.*



Vi aspettiamo nella nostra  
filiale di Milano  
Via Piolti de Bianchi, 8/10  
Tel. 02/7490944

Ma cosa ti sei  
messo in testa!



### 4.3. Phonology

For some types of discourse, like literature, journalism and advertising, phonological features also come into play. Phonology may often be an intrinsic part of the meaning of a text. This is true not only for interpreting but also for translating. Text-producers can exploit the sounds of language to reinforce their message and evoke a particular effect in their listeners or readers.

The term phonology refers to the encoding of meaning in sound. The sounds of language can be divided into two groups: segmental (or individual) sounds and suprasegmental sounds. The segmentals are comprised of consonants and vowels.

*Alliteration* refers to the close repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of accented syllables, as in many idiomatic phrases:

safe and sound; *sano e salvo*

Pay a little now,  
Live a lot later.

often it is used for emphasis:

**Sugar Free**, Low, Lite 'n Luscious is 97% fat free.

*Assonance* refers to the close repetition of vowel sounds, usually as the stressed syllables, without the rhyming of consonants:

hard and fast

Nothing is so beautiful as spring -  
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush.

*Onomatopoeia* is the mutual reinforcement of sense by sound and sound by sense; it tends to be culture-specific.

cock-a-doodle-doo  
*chicchirichi*

Sometimes one finds not simply a group of words with parallel sounds but a whole text pervaded by a particular sound or sounds, which build up the atmosphere.

The crowd grew thicker. On the free benches people sat huddled together like dark grapes clustered on a stalk. There was a lively hum of conversation. The big black buzzards flew screeching overhead, swooping down when they saw something to pick up, or scurrying away from the passers-by. As twilight descended they swarmed, it seemed from all parts of the town, towards the church tower; they circled heavily about it and hoarsely crying, squabbling, and jangling, settled themselves to roost. And again bootblacks begged me to have my shoes cleaned, newsboys pressed dank papers upon me, beggars whined their plaintive demand for alms.

(W. Somerset Maugham, *The Bum*)

These or similar sound effects need to be conveyed in the TT if the text is to be as effective in the TL as it was in the SL, or some kind of compensatory strategy needs to be found.

*Rhythm* and *stress*, the suprasegmentals, are features of the entire utterance rather than of any individual sound. All language is rhythmical and almost everyone responds to rhythm. Some rhythms soothe, some excite while others arouse emotional responses. When analysing the rhythm of a text, the most important factor to be considered is how effective it is in heightening or adding to the overall meaning: it is this that will condition the translation process.

Below she saw the villages and the woods of the weald, and the train running bravely, a gallant little thing, running with all the importance of the world over the water meadows and into the gap in the downs, waving its white steam, yet all the while so little.

(D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*)

Although phonology is a significant feature in a range of discourse genres it is principally to be encountered in literary language. It has been said that poetry is the most difficult genre to translate and that full equivalence at all language levels is an impossibility. Consider the strategies the Italian translator, Enzo Giachino, has used in rendering the full effect of the poem *Give me the splendid silent sun* by Walt Whitman:



Give me the splendid silent sun  
 Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling.  
 Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,  
 Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,  
 Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,  
 Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving animals teaching content,  
 Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I looking up  
 at the stars,  
 Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers where I can walk undisturb'd,  
 Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I should never tire,  
 Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise of the world a rural domestic life,  
 Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for my own ears only,  
 Give me solitude, give me nature, give me again O Nature your primal sanities!  
 These demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife.)  
 These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries from my heart,  
 While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my city,  
 Day upon day, and year upon year O city, walking your streets,  
 Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing to give me up.  
 Yet giving to make me gluttied, enrich'd of soul, you give me forever faces;  
 (O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my cries,  
 I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

*Datemi il fulgido sole silente*  
*Datemi il fulgido sole silente, con tutti i suoi raggi in pieno splendore,*  
*Datemi il frutto maturo d'autunno, così succoso e rosso nel pomario,*  
*Datemi il prato ove cresce l'erba che non fu falciata,*  
*Datemi il pergolato, datemi il grappolo pendulo dal graticcio,*  
*Datemi il mais e grano novello, e animali che muovono sereni e insegnano contento,*  
*Datemi notti pienamente tranquille, come sugli alti pianori a Ovest del Mississippi, donde*  
*possa guardare le stelle,*  
*Datemi un giardino all'aurora balsamico, ricco di splendidi fiori, dove aggirarmi non disturbato,*  
*Datemi in sposa una donna dal fiato soave, di cui non debba stancarmi mai,*  
*Datemi un bimbo perfetto e, lungi dal rumore del mondo, una domestica vita rurale,*  
*Datemi di gorgheggiare solingo liberi canti, soltanto per i miei orecchi,*  
*Datemi la solitudine, datemi la Natura, e tu ridammi, Natura, la tua sanità primitiva.*

*Queste cose per averle chiedendo (stanco dell'eccitamento che non ha tregua, torturato dalle battaglie della guerra),*  
*Senza posa chiedendo per ottenerle, con gridi che dal cuore mi sgorgano,*  
*Mentre continuo a chiederle, resto tuttavia attaccato alla mia città,*  
*Un giorno dopo l'altro, un anno dopo l'altro, o città, camminando per le tue strade,*  
*Dove tu incatenato mi tieni per un certo tempo, rifiutando di rilasciarmi,*  
*Mentre tuttavia mi dai da saziarmi, arricchire l'anima mia, mi dai sempre facce.*  
*(Oh, vedo che cosa cercavo fuggire, e allora affronto, rinnego i miei gridi,*  
*E vedo l'anima mia calpestare tutto ciò che prima chiedeva.)*

Poets and writers can use or manipulate the sounds of language to reinforce their theme, evoke a certain impression or convey a certain message more effectively. If translators wish to specialise in literary translating then familiarity with stylistic features, including phonology, is a must.

#### 4.4. Graphology

Meaning can also be encoded in visual symbols as writers can exploit the written medium to enhance their message. They can, for instance, alter the conventional patterns made by the words on a printed page: paragraph division in prose, line division in poetry, punctuation, italicization, spelling, capitalization, type size and type style.

At times, the visual element is actually fundamental to understanding and interpreting meaning, as the following poem illustrates.

she loves me  
 she loves me not  
 she loves  
 she loves me  
 she  
 she loves

she

Emmett Williams

The theme of this poem can only be understood once the visual pattern has been deciphered. If we fill in the missing words from the daisy-stripping game "she loves me/she loves me not" some kind of picture begins to emerge. Since there are an even number of lines (eight) we learn that the answer the poet received was "she loves me not". An analysis of the principle by which the poet has chosen to delete words gives us a further clue to the theme. Each subsequent repetition of the base lines of the poem is diminished by one word – like the plucking of the daisy leaves.