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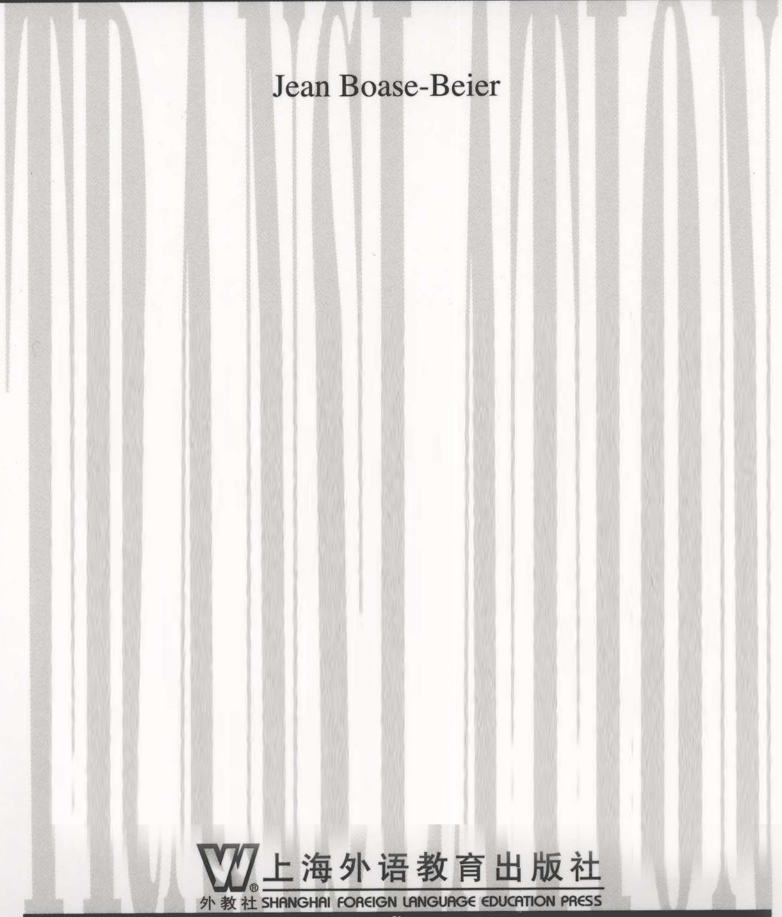
STYLISTIC APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION

翻译文体学研究

Jean Boase-Beier



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出版说明

近年来，国内翻译研究取得了很大进展，有关翻译研究的丛书也出了多套。不过，长期以来，国内引进的原版翻译著作匮乏，不少研究都是根据二手资料；另外，学习翻译专业的研究生人数越来越多，这种状况若继续存在，将十分不利于学科的发展和翻译人才的培养。鉴于此，上海外语教育出版社约请了多名国内翻译研究著名学者分别开列出最值得引进的国外翻译研究论著的书目，并对这些书目进行整理、排序，最终确定了准备引进的正式书单。该丛书涉及的论著时间跨度大，既有经典，也有新论；内容的覆盖面也相当广泛，既有翻译本体的研究，也有跨学科的研究。这套丛书的引进将会满足翻译专业研究生教学原版参考书和翻译理论研究的需要。

上海外语教育出版社谨以此丛书献给我国的翻译学界。

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（代序）

上海外语教育出版社从成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次（尤其本科与研究生层次）的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书，而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作，比如“现代语言学丛书”、“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“美国文学史论译丛”、“外国文学史丛书”、“剑桥文学指南丛书”、“当代英语语言学丛书”以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要，还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求，对比语言学和翻译学近些年来在我国有了较快的发展，最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多，而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系（当然还太少）。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象，因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和新学科建设的需要，不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集，最近又推出了原版“国外翻译研究丛书”，这套丛书时间跨度从古代到现代，所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著，堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版，以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难，真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼，为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究；二是对外国译学的借鉴性研究；三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这三者研究深入并结合好了，才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究，改革开放以来，在我国已取得了很显著的成就，这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于20世纪80年代末有了独立学科的初级形态，90年代又有了新的发展，对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探讨。依照学科建设的规律和研究现状，我们尚需在上述三个方面加大研究力度，而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个角度讲，这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之一。

在新的世纪，文化（包括各类科学技术）会多方面快速深入人类的日常生活，各国之间的交流会空前深广，因此翻译的功能会逐步扩大，实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外，还应十分重视实用性人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

杨自俭
青岛海洋大学六三居室
2001年3月28日

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Jean Boase-Beier
June 2006

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Introduction: Style in Translation

From the earliest writings about translation, such as those of Cicero or Horace, style has often been mentioned but, as Snell-Hornby (1995:119) notices, its role has rarely been systematically explored. Yet style is central to the way we construct and interpret texts. We can consider its effects upon translation and the study of translation in at least three ways. Firstly, in the actual process of translation, the way the style of the source text is viewed will affect the translator's reading of the text. Secondly, because the recreative process in the target text will also be influenced by the sorts of choices the translator makes, and style is the outcome of choice (as opposed to those aspects of language which are not open to option), the translator's own style will become part of the target text. And, thirdly, the sense of what style is will affect not only what the translator does but how the critic of translation interprets what the translator has done.

Besides being equated in a general sense with those aspects of language which are optional, and therefore reflect the writer's or translator's choices, style can also be seen as characteristic of a particular author (e.g. by Ohmann 1962), or translator (Malmkjær 2004) or of a particular register, a variety of language whose stylistic characteristics are determined by its situation of use. In particular, style is often seen, for example by Jakobson (1960), as defining the difference between literary and non-literary texts.

Those writers who have made some attempt to explore these issues as they relate to the translation of style, such as Koller (1979), Munday (2001) or Baker (2000) have not done so in much detail. Even Fawcett, in his book on *Translation and Language* (1997), does not deal to any great extent with style, and the recent guide by Williams & Chesterman (2002) to research in translation studies does not mention it at all, although studies of style and translation are extremely popular with PhD students[1]. Exceptions are Tabakowska (1993) and Parks (1998), and these and other writers on style and translation will be referred to throughout this book.

If we were to try and find a common denominator of the various views, anecdotal or more sustained, it would probably be that what a concern with style means for translation studies is paying attention to what is unique to the text and its choices, being aware of patterns in the text, and paying close attention to the essential nature and function of the text. Increasingly, style has ceased to be viewed only in terms of its linguistic features and has come to include such issues as voice, otherness, foreignization, contextualization and culturally-bound and universal ways of conceptualizing and expressing meaning. To pay attention to style in translation study means to consider how all these factors are reflected in the text and its translation. This is not to make the assumption that stylistic theory or translation theory will be available to practising translators. When we describe a system of knowledge – in the case of this book, stylistic knowledge – and how it affects translation practice, we are not necessarily describing how every translator translates; theoretical approaches to translation are theories of what we know, not just of what we do.

---

[1] Current PhD students at the University of East Anglia are working on topics such as the translation of heteroglossia, the impossibility of translating Russian poetry or the translation of poetic metaphor, all of which relate closely to concepts of style and its translation. I realise, of course, that these topics partly reflect my own interests, but there are many students at other universities working on similar topics.

And yet, though theories offer descriptions of existing situations, knowledge and practice, there is still a sense in which they can be used as tools to aid practice. Such statements might be seen as a failure to distinguish between description and prescription. But in fact theoretical studies can have very different effects on practice, not all of which are prescriptive. The descriptive-prescriptive distinction is at best an oversimplification of the relationship between theory and practice.

In terms of describing practice, we can list and name what we find, or we can offer explanations as to how the phenomena came about. For example, we can note that X uses a large number of similes in his translation of Y's metaphors, or we can explain this on the basis of norms in the target language or of cognitive differences or of different contexts of translation. In terms of affecting practice, we can simply prescribe, detailing how translation is to happen, as contracts sometimes do, or – and this is a relationship that is fundamental to this book – we can suggest that a practitioner might be aware of theoretical stances, and translate with this awareness. For example, a translator who is aware that language can be iconic – can do as it says – will be more likely to try to capture instances of iconicity in her translation. Knowledge of theory is simply part of the knowledge translators build up through an interest in their subject, and it affects what they do.

When considering theories and their descriptive relation to practice or their effects on practice, we can look at approaches historically, we can look at current approaches, or we can try to synthesize approaches into one that best suits our own concerns, and all of these methods have their place in this book. I focus in particular on a number of questions about style and translation which can be summarized as follows:

i) What exactly do we mean by style and how has this view changed over time?
ii) What is its place in translation theory?
iii) What is its place in the process of translation?

The first and second questions will form the basis of Chapter 1, where I will attempt to trace some early views on the importance of style and how it relates to translation, going on to look at later views and considering how they have directly or (more often) indirectly affected our views of translation. The second question is further pursued in the next three chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the style of the source text and how it is interpreted, especially in reader-orientated views such as reader-response theory and relevance theory. Some of these views were specifically formulated for translation, many were not, but all have something interesting to say about the role of style in understanding the source text. Chapter 3 focuses on the choices a translator makes in recreating the target text, always with reference to the choices seen to be embodied in the source text. Chapter 4 looks at some of the more recent developments in stylistics, especially in cognitive stylistics, and relates them to the issues discussed in the first three chapters. Cognitive views are often concerned with the relation between what is universal and what is culture-specific in language and for that reason alone are of great interest to translation theory. But they are also a natural development of earlier formalist and later contextualized stylistics. It is my aim in these first four chapters both to look at those ideas from stylistic approaches which translation studies has used and, especially in Chapter 4 where I consider the very latest developments, to look at those ideas which it could use. Chapter 5 then looks at the other side of the relationship between theory and practice, by asking how the knowledge of theory presented in the first four chapters might affect practice. Though I have aimed in the first three chapters to explore existing theories and approaches rather than developing my own, Chapter 4 and the first section of Chapter 5 do to some extent represent a synthesis of earlier views, including my own, and an integration of these into an overall approach. Chapter 5 thus starts by bringing together some of the ideas discussed in the first four chapters to see how they can inform what is termed a "stylistic approach" to translation. The rest of Chapter 5 is an attempt to answer more concretely the third question posed above: it consists of case studies of actual texts in translation. Many are taken from poetry, but other literary and non-literary genres are represented, too.

A note on words and meanings

Throughout the book, I have used brackets, or, if appropriate, single inverted commas for meanings. Double inverted commas indicate words or phrases quoted, and italics are for lexical items, actual or potential, which are not quoted.

1. The Role of Style in Translation

1.1 Reading and writing style in translation

The concept of style is a complex one, and there are many different views of its nature, several of which will be discussed in this chapter. But a prerequisite for any such discussion is a basic definition of the term. For this purpose, the "simplest" definition – "the perceived distinctive manner of expression" – given by Wales in her *Dictionary of Stylistics* (2001:371) will be perfectly adequate. As will become clear throughout the course of this book, this simple definition hides many complexities to do with what "perceived" means (whether by a reader, a critic, or a social group, for example) and what "distinctive" means, among other things. The role of style in translation is made even more complex by the fact that there are the styles of two texts, the source text and the target text, to take into account. And in each case, the style of the text can be seen in its relationship to the writer, as an expression of choice, or in its relationship to the reader, as something to be interpreted and thereby to achieve effects.

On the one hand, the translator is a reader of the source text, and so the effects of its style upon the translator need to be examined. Important issues to consider here are how style is read, how it achieves its effects upon the reader, and what its relationship to various factors in the creation of the source text is seen to be. For example, the style of the source text may be seen as "a set of choices driven by commitment to a particular point of view" and in this sense "it is style, rather than content, which embodies the meaning" (Boase-Beier 2004a:29) or provides "a direct link to the work's basic thematic concerns and the kind of experience it attempts to convey" (García & Marco 1998:65). If this is the view held by the translator of a literary text, on the grounds that the text is by definition fictional, then s/he is likely to focus on the style of the source text as a clue to its meaning. And yet many of the approaches to reading to be discussed in Chapter 2 emphasize how meaning is constructed by the reader, and therefore, in the case of translation, by the translator. So there is no straightforward relationship between the style of the source text and what the text means. And if we assume, as do many writers on stylistics and literary pragmatics such as Verdonk (2002) that to construct meaning in reading a text, just as in any other act of communication, is to attempt a reasonable reconstruction of authorial intention, it seems clear that the author to whom such intention is imputed is a figure inferred from the text. Different translators may hold different views on these arguments, or hold no view at all. But irrespective of whatever view the translator holds and whatever arguments s/he is aware of, the relationship of author to intention and intention to meaning in the text is no more straightforward than the relationship of style to meaning.

On the other hand, the translator writes a new text in translating, and so the style of the target text is an expression of the translator's choices. Some studies of translation consider how the style of the target text conforms to certain norms (of the genre, of the target language, or of the linguistic, literary or cultural system into which the target text fits). In the Descriptive Translation Studies of Holmes (1988) or Toury (1985, 1995), the focus is on the description of both process and product of translation, but especially upon actual translations and their relationship to the target culture. In the functionalist approach of Vermeer (1978), which sees translation as "purposeful activity" (Nord 1997), the focus is to a large extent on the target culture as a determinant in the process of translation, and so such studies have sometimes been seen as reducing the role of the translator to "a functionary of the target group" (Kohlmayer 1988:147; my translation). Other studies look for traces of the translator in the target text (e.g. Baker 2000; Millán-Varela 2004; Marco 2004; Malmkjær 2004); Hermans (1996:42) is insistent that the translator's presence must be posited in all translations.

Taking all this into account, we can thus consider style in translation from at least four potential viewpoints:

i) the style of the source text as an expression of its author's choices
ii) the style of the source text in its effects on the reader (and on the translator as reader)
iii) the style of the target text as an expression of choices made by its author (who is the translator)
iv) the style of the target text in its effects on the reader.

It is important that translation studies overall should not focus on either the style of the source text to the exclusion of the target text or vice versa, nor on the author of either text to the exclusion of its reader. But different types of study will focus on different aspects. The emphasis of the discussion in this book will be on points (ii) and (iii) above: the style of the source text as perceived by the translator and how it is conveyed or changed or to what extent it is or can be preserved in translation. This is because most discussion of style in translation has been concerned with the translation process, and the process necessarily most closely involves these two factors. Assumptions made about stylistic choices in the text, (i) above, are largely seen in the light of how their effects are experienced and understood by the translator. But there is a further reason for this focus, and it has to do with the relationship between theory and practice. Stylistics, and especially cognitive stylistics, the study of how the production and, especially, understanding of style are affected by the structure of the mind, has contributed a great deal to our understanding of how texts are read and interpreted (cf. Stockwell 2002a:15). If stylistic approaches to translation are to be examined in their possible relation to practice, then it is the issue of how translators understand their source texts which will be of most immediate concern. This is not to say that the reception of the target text – (iv) above – has no influence on the outcome; the studies by Toury and Vermeer mentioned above (and see also Hermans 1999) have shown clearly that it has. But, because of its focus on style as it affects the process of translation, the perspective taken in this book is that, though facts to do with the target language, culture and (in the case of literature) the target literary system do have an important influence on the process of translation, it is through the part they play in the translator's awareness of them, which forms part of the context of operation. Because stylistics includes, today, a broad understanding of context as what we know, there is no difficulty in potentially accommodating target text factors in a stylistic view. But it is not the main focus.

Most of the book's main concern, then, is with the translator and the translator's task, and encompasses the source-text author and the target-text reader to the extent that they impact upon this task.

A focus on the translator and the act of translation opens up the following question: is there a relationship between theory and practice which goes beyond a theoretical extrapolation from the description of practice? Though we can indeed use stylistic data from source text and target text to try and reconstruct the role of style in the translation process (cf. Toury 1985:18), and can consider statements from writers, readers, translators and scholars as data from which to construct an overall view of the role of style in translation, we can also argue that knowledge of theories and approaches can and should be part of a translator's toolkit, a position also argued for by de Beaugrande (1978:7). This is not to say that a translation will (or should) be undertaken in accordance with a theoretical view. And it is certainly not to say that theory is under any obligation to offer guidelines for practice. The most we can expect, as Toury (1985:34-35) says, is that a description of process might allow us to draw tentative conclusions for practice. But I wish to suggest something at once less rigid and more profound: knowledge of possible and actual theories and views, of language, literature, translation or style, is as helpful to the translator as any other knowledge about the world in which s/he lives and operates.

1.2 Before stylistics: the spirit of a text

Strictly speaking, it does not make sense to say that approaches to translation were based on or influenced by stylistics when we are talking about

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