Ten Reasons why we need a theory of translator style

Gabriela Saldanha (University of Birmingham)

Discussions of style in relation to translation have traditionally been presented from the perspective of the source texts, focusing on the *translation of style* as opposed to the *style of translation*. Studies adopting this perspective have often assumed that literary style is restricted to the domain of ‘originals’ and has tended to focus on problems of reproducing stylistic features, thereby having a negative impact on the representation of translators. In the last twenty years or so translation scholars have begun to pay attention to styles of translation, attempting to reveal how translation is shaped by factors such as the translators’ own cultural and ideological positions, readers’ expectations and the context of production in general (see Baker 2000; Malmkjaer 2003, 2004; Winters 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Boase-Beier 2006; Munday 2008; Saldanha 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Pekkanen 2007). This research has paved the way for a new understanding and valorization of the work of translators as creative literary artists and of translations as artistic products. The work produced in this area is, however, often based on conflicting understandings of the concept of style and its relation to translation, and of the motivations behind stylistic preferences. As a result, a coherent theory of *translator style* has yet to be formulated (although see Saldanha 2011a). In this paper I discuss several reasons why research on translational stylistics should focus on – as the call for papers for this symposium suggests – translation as a form of literature in its own right and, in particular, on translators as literary artists in their own right. The arguments presented range from statistical evidence from stylometric studies to developments in performance theory and issues of ethics and politics.

References


