

Style and Complementarity in Literary Translation

Prof Charles Briffa
University of Malta

102, Karmenu Vassallo Street, I-Iklin, IKL 1311, MALTA
charles.briffa@um.edu.mt

1 Introduction

In the light of Malta's present preoccupation in exporting local literature, the following paper maintains that translating literary¹ style is essential for the production of an adequate translation and that one of the translator's main targets should be to reproduce as much as possible the cognitive processes in the target audience as the author did in the source audience.

Linguistic structures, pragmatics, and style in literary prose are closely related and the translator must be conscious of their relationship. Syntactic differences between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) must be kept to a minimum so as to produce a translated text that is very close stylistically to the original. In addition to this, it seems very clear that style and culture are often interdependent² and that literary style reflects the mind style of the author/ character.³ Understanding style can help the translator to reconstruct the underlying cognitive aspect of the author which is influenced by an array of factors that include culture. So when one speaks of cultural elements in literature one must consider how they are reflected in the ST style and then in the TT style. And to help the translator in this matter I propose a framework of prose forms that gives him/her some descriptors to think about.

But before discussing this framework, I have to explain what I mean by complementarity.⁴

2 Complementarity in Literary Prose

The concept of complementarity,⁵ resulting from Maltese bilingual situations, depends on the bilingual intuition of the Maltese for its interpretation. A complementary translation occurs when a text in one language is accompanied by a text in another language so that both referents complement each other because both give different pieces of information in that particular context. For instance, a University of Malta official sign next to a building says: "Information Office/ Messaggiera". This can be explained as follows:

Fig.1

<i>Information office</i>	<i>Messaggiera</i> (i.e. messengers)	Grammatical correspondence – both are nominal phrases
The building contains the place where you can ask for information	The building houses the messengers	Semantic complementation – each language says something different about the building in question

Complementarity, considered to be a form of semantic shift for enhancement or completion, occurs also in the translation of literary titles. For instance, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*

has been translated into Maltese by *Il-Milied ta' Scrooge* (Dionysius Mintoff – Scrooge's Christmas) which shifts semantically from the form to the character.

In literary prose, complementarity is sometimes evident in code-switching contexts. As an example let us take Francis Ebejer's *Il-Ġaħan ta' Bingemma*⁶ (1985 – Bingemma's Ġaħan) in which the playwright mimicks several realistic dialogues in contemporary Maltese as he juxtaposes old and modern dialogue forms. He makes frequent use of code-switching (CS) woven within the conversations of the modern characters. In the following two instances, one of the characters looking at prehistoric tombs from a high place utters the first speech; and in the second instance, the character tries to convince the others that there's nothing to be afraid of in the caves full of tombs.

Fig.2

<i>Source Text</i>	<i>Target Text</i>
1 (a) Taf x'qed nistħajjilhom minn hawn fuq? Xi <i>farm tal-battery hens</i> . (<i>iqaqi</i>). Jew kaxex tal-bajd. Xi tnejn jew tlieta lesti biex ifaqqsu żgur.	You know what they're reminding me of from up here? Some <i>razzett tal-battery hens</i> (<u>clucks</u>). Or egg boxes. Some two or three of them ready to hatch for sure.
1 (b) X'fihom x'tibża'? Qabda sodod tal-mewt. L-aħħar raqda. <i>Goodnight all</i> (<i>jonħor</i>). Ġhandek tibża' minn xi hadd ħaj bhalek.	What have they got to be scared of? A bunch of sepulchres. The last sleep. <i>Il-lejl it-tajjeb lil kulhadd</i> (<u>snores</u>). You ought to be scared of the living, someone like you.

ST code-switching is a case of complementarity, and since it is part of Maltese culture the translator opted to reflect this feature in the TT.⁷ The use of code-switching for complementarity in contemporary Maltese literature is a frequent feature – especially that produced by Generation X and Y. In CS we have the base or matrix language (which is the dominant language in use) and the embedded or inserted language. The following are some other examples where Maltese is the base language and English the embedded one. In them CS gives us some of the speakers' insight because here code-switchers are Maltese literary characters that reflect social reality. CS helps us to understand the identity of these bilingual characters. It is important to have some insider knowledge of the community to translate CS.

Fig.3

<i>Source Text</i>	<i>Target Text</i>
2 “U l-mamà baqghet ma qaltlek qatt xejn lilek? Dwar min hu l-veru missierek?” “Qatt. Qaltli biss nhar il-Ġimgħa. <i>Only last Friday</i> . Wara das-snin kollha qaltli biss nhar il-Ġimgħa. Lili kienet tgħidli li kienet inqabdet <i>pregnant</i> minn xi hadd meta kienet żgħira u belha, u kellha lili, imma	“And mum never told you anything? About your real father?” “Never. She only told me last Friday. <i>Biss nhar il-Ġimgħa</i> . After all these years she only told me last Friday. She used to tell me that she <i>inqabdet tqila</i> by somebody when she was very young and foolish, and she had me, but she never wanted to tell me

<p>qatt ma riedet tgħidli min hu l-veru missieri. Staqsejtha kemm-il darba, <i>but she always said it's not important any more. I said it's important for me</i>, imma baqgħet ma tridx tgħidli min hu.”</p> <p>“U l-papà...<i>I mean</i>, ir-raġel li żżewġet ommok?”</p> <p>“<i>Good man, Renald. Really good man. They got married</i> meta l-mamà diġà kellha lili...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mario Azzopardi, “Sarah Tgħid l-Istorja Tagħha” f’ <i>Vampir u Rakkonti Oħra</i> (Horizons Publications, Malta, 2010) 	<p>who my real father was. I asked her several times, <i>imma dejjem qalet li issa mhux important min. Kont ngħidilha li huwa importanti għalija</i>, but she persisted.”</p> <p>“And dad... <i>jigifieri</i>, the man she married?”</p> <p>“<i>Raġel tajjeb</i>, Renald. <i>Veru raġel tajjeb. Iżżewġu</i> when mum already had me...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mario Azzopardi, “Sarah Tells her Story” in <i>Vampire and Other Stories</i>
<p>3</p> <p>SUR MASTRU: (<u>Jitkellem fil-mowbajl</u>)</p> <p>Amilcare, <i>caro, long time no see... Is-soltu... Żewġ units</i> biss, u mhux aktar... Wiehed għalik u l-iehor għal martek u, <i>by the way</i>, sellili għaliha u għidilha li dalwaqt tirċievu s-soltu stedina tal-Milied u fost il-mistednin se jkolli l-Eċċellenza u n-<i>Number One...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joseph Vella Bondin, “Is-Sur Mastru, Bella, il-Professur, u Proġetti Oħra” f’ <i>Għasir il-Bniedem</i> (Bronk Productions, Malta, 2011) 	<p>SUR MASTRU: (<u>Talking into his mobile</u>)</p> <p>Amilcare, dear, <i>kemm ili ma narak...</i> The usual... Two units only, not more... One for you and one for your wife, and, <i>bilhaqq</i>, give her my regards and tell her you’ll soon receive the usual invitation for Christmas and that among the guests I’ll be having his Excellency and <i>il-Kap...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joseph Vella Bondin, “Sur Mastru, Bella, the Professor, and Other Projects” in <i>Pressing People</i>
<p>4 (a)</p> <p>“<i>I give three hundred bucks</i> li s’għada <i>by this time</i> it-tifel ikun id-dar <i>safe and sound.</i>” (p.93)</p> <p>4 (b)</p> <p>U Melanie marret m’ommha u ma’ missierha fit-tarf tat-triq u mill-ewwel bagħtet <i>sms</i> lil Jason. <i>I think they found Jonathan in the fields close to our house.</i> U wara dak li kien qalilha Jason kienet ċerta li lil Jonathan kienu sabuh mejjet, kif kien qal Vitor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pierre J. Mejlak, <i>Riħ Isfel</i> (Merlin, Malta, 2007) 	<p>“<i>Nilgħab tliet mitt dollaru</i> that by tomorrow <i>sa dal-hin</i> the boy would be at home <i>qawwi u shiħ.</i>”</p> <p>And Melanie went with her mother and father to the end of the street and immediately sent an sms to Jason. <i>Naħseb li sabu lil Jonathan fl-għelieqi ta’ hdejna.</i> And knowing what Jason had told her she felt sure that Jonathan was found dead, as Victor has predicted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pierre J. Mejlak, <i>A Southeast Wind</i>
<p>5</p>	<p>Near the hotel, Laila invited Rose to go</p>

<p>Ħdejn il-lukanda, Laila stiednet lil Rose tidhol tieġu drink magħhom. “<i>How do you say it? One for the road,</i>” qaltilha.</p> <p>- Lino Spiteri, “Fiumicino” f’ <i>Fejn Jixrob il-Qasab fis-Sajf</i> (PEG, Malta, 1996)</p>	<p>with them for a drink. “<i>Kif tgħiduha? Wieħed għal mat-triq,</i>” she told her.</p> <p>- Lino Spiteri, “Fiumicino” in <i>Where Reeds Absorb Water</i></p>
<p>6</p> <p>“Bil-mod, bil-mod...” kien lehen is-soru. Kien il-lehen stramb li lili kien isawwatni. Hi qagħdet għassa mad-daħla tat-taraġ. “<i>Slowly, children, slowly... God bless you all... Goodbye...</i>”</p> <p>U kliem impressjonanti iehor li t-tifel jgħid bla ma jaf xi jfisser hu u jilgħab waħdu bil-karozzi.</p> <p>Jien ersaqt eqreb ħalli nkellimha. “<i>God bless Ivan,</i>” qaltli malli ratni. U lit-tifel gerfxitlu xagħru. “Kemm huma sbieħ dawn in-nokkli, Ivan!” qaltlu. “Ara kemm għandu nokkli sbieħ Ivan, <i>children,</i>” qalet lit-tfal li kien għad baqa’ fil-prajvit. “<i>Say good-bye to Ivan come on...</i>”</p> <p>“<i>Good-bye, Ivan,</i>” kienu pronti għajtu t-tfal.</p> <p>- Paul P. Borg, <i>Għeluq</i> (SKS, Malta, 1991)</p>	<p>“Slowly, slowly...” it was the nun’s voice. It was the strange voice that used to distress me. She guarded the entrance to the stairway. “<i>Bil-mod, tfal, bil-mod...Kunum berkin kollha...Saħħa...</i>”</p> <p>And other impressive words that my son used to repeat without knowing what they meant when he was playing alone with his cars.</p> <p>I approached her to talk to her. “<i>Alla jbierku Ivan,</i>” she told me as soon as she saw me. She ruffled the boy’s hair. “What beautiful curls you have, Ivan!” she told him. “Look what beautiful curls Ivan has, <i>tfal,</i>” she told the children who were still on the bus. “<i>Għidulu ċaw lil Ivan isa...</i>”</p> <p>“<i>Ċaw, Ivan,</i>” the children promptly shouted.</p> <p>- Paul P. Borg, <i>End</i></p>

Insertional CS is part of the bilingual competence but literary CS is generally used for a purpose:

Example 1 (a) & (b) = CS reflects informal situation + the language of the young

Example 2 = CS is a common feature in the language of the young

Example 3 = CS shows linguistic laziness (sometimes CS is easier than monolingual speech)

Example 4 (a) = CS creates bilingual idiomatic stretches (so it reflects social reality) – so we have to refer to CS as a language (not as a mixture of two languages)

Example 4 (b) = CS depicts the behaviour of the young with a mobile (so it reflects social reality)

Example 5 = CS animates the situation

Example 6 = CS is a smart/ posh marker – sometimes showing superiority

Complementarity may be explained as parallel texts in different languages that are semantic extensions of each other, aimed at the bilingual person.

Three options present themselves to the translator:⁸

1. TT uses one language only – in a monolingual TT code-switching is lost;
2. TT translates all items (EN – MT / MT – EN) – code-switching is preserved;

3. TT reverses the font types according to the base language – code-switching is preserved, but it is not very practical.

Most translators go for option (2), a few go for option (1), and no one goes for option (3). It is important to have some insider knowledge of the community to translate CS.

Furthermore, literary code-switching (which is part of an author's creativity) is assigned particular rhythmic patterns for a purpose: this is termed "directed rhythm"⁹ which very often reflects a character's mind style. The directed rhythm in literature is often used as an instrument of perception capable of revealing the progress of thought of a character. It is based on a series of ever-changing thought processes that make the readers aware of a character's perception and which accumulate through the continual evolution of rhythmic patterning. And this, therefore, justifies the translation of code-switching texts.

So, translating CS

- keeps author visible
- helps to understand identity of character
- reveals an aspect of social reality

3 Translating Style

Literary translation is a subjective activity that depends on the imaginative, intellectual, and intuitive skills of the translator as an interpreter (or reader) of the source text (ST) and a writer¹⁰ of the target text (TT). The translator relies on the language and the manner it is projected for an effective product – which means that the literary style of the translation is an essential feature in interpretation. Literary complementarity is a stylistic feature that requires proper interpretation for translation.

Style must here be taken both as a feature of the individual writer and as a quality of language use in a context. Translation must tackle both aspects and translating CS takes care of both aspects as it reveals mind style and reflects contextual reality.

There are two possibilities of translating style as a feature of the individual author:

- a. A translator can try to be faithful to the ST style, imitating the original writer's way of writing as much as possible to give the target audience a taste of the author – this implies an invisible translator and a visible author.
- b. A translator can present his/her own personal style in the TT, even applying an element of creativity – this implies a visible translator and a rather invisible author.

Taking style as a quality of language use, the translator must translate style because context is crucial. For this process, the present paper is offering a model for the translator to follow.

Microscopically the translator focuses on the linguistic aspect of the ST – on finding TT equivalence for the lexical, syntactical, and semantic elements of the ST. But then s/he must look at his/her translation macroscopically: that is, s/he looks at the ST as a whole and compares it with his/her TT as a whole.

It is an acknowledged fact that interlingual communication is possible because of a common core of human experience, and we may add also that translation is also possible because there are fundamental stylistic similarities between languages especially when these languages are in close cultural contact with each other. Capturing the essence of the ST (which includes literary complementarity) involves understanding the stylistic effects of the author. If translators are to understand the mind style of a Maltese author, they have to understand the cultural and cognitive implications of code-switching which in a Maltese bilingual situation is part of the bilingual intuition of the individual and an aspect of social reality.

4 Prose Forms – The Translator as Stylistician

The translator is very often a researcher whose duties involve that of a stylistician. This means that the translator must play the part of a stylistician if s/he wants to produce a fair TT. Style creates particular cognitive effects and reveals some of the author's intentions and attitudes which the translator must explore.

The concept of style adopted in the present study is primarily descriptive in nature as the investigation attempts to describe the distinctive quality of prose varieties in literature. The stylistic identity of literary prose results from conscious and/or unconscious selections of linguistic features. Selections are conscious when the author chooses a linguistic guise with functional suitability (as, for instance, adopting a narrative persona of an introvert to depict the mind style of a potential suicide), and they are unconscious when they show an authorial tendency that reflects the author's character (for example, the use of ratiocination in one's narrative in contrast with another's linguistic humour). Thus rhythm aided design (RAD) may be the product of both conscious and unconscious measures which are stylistically relevant and interesting in one's perception of language. And literary complementarity influences the directed rhythm of the ST which should be reflected in the TT.

Literature contains a lot of variety mixing because it makes use of all language varieties as it tries to represent versions of reality. It taps the resources of a language's stylistic range from the colloquial to the formal and from the common to the esoteric. And the translator must match the ST register.

The representational aspect of literature necessitates an examination of the nature of prose and a stylistic investigation of prose forms could start by examining the several ways language is used to identify the dimensions of mimesis and exploration in literature. Concentrating on the mimetic dimension one would be studying character, plot, setting, and anything that contributes to the illusion of reality; whereas focusing on the exploratory dimension one would be led to study theme, symbol, viewpoint, tension, and any technique or means of presentation that probes into human psychology. Both dimensions are, of course, interrelated but each dimension may receive more individual attention or particular emphasis. However, both may become areas of identifying character by investigating the ways in which a character's consciousness is being portrayed, the devices which represent speech, and the strategies of plot movement and direction.

For the effective existence of stylistic investigation the present study assumes that every literary work is a self-contained world, distinct and complete in itself with its own logic and linguistic organisation for which the author's selective perception is largely responsible. Although it is an

independent unit a work's prose is still expressive of a perceived reality. It has its own outlook, prospects, tendencies, and expectations that constitute the wholeness and identity of this self-sufficient world whose structural tenacity makes itself manifest in

- thematic continuity – through relationships (for social coherence) and plot (for coherence of action)
- and stylistic cohesion – through language (for rhetorical coherence) and technique (for perceptual and tonal coherence).

Authors make thematic and stylistic choices which have to be recognised to see the logic of the work. The work's logic appears then as a complete system that must control the reader's perception. However, as part of the stylistician's task is to be selective, in stylistic investigations certain choices may appear more dominant and relevant than others, so that concentration will vary from one study to another. And so will terminology. But the main point being made here is that a stylistic description of the ST can assist interpretation and may even, if properly managed, lead to a better understanding of the cultural context in which it was created.

The translator-as-stylistician's sensitivity will therefore seek the best interpretation combined with evaluation, a task that will reveal the complexity of the study. To examine the nature of prose in literary texts one needs to be selective but the following questions are fundamental:

Fig.4

What is the broad thematic area of the prose?	- FIELD CATEGORY
What is the aim of the prose?	- PROSE FUNCTION
How is prose presented?	- PRESENTATIONAL MODE
What method of expression is used in the prose?	- FICTIONAL TECHNIQUE
What level of meaning is given to the prose?	- SEMANTIC SPECTRUM

The resultant descriptors might not be enough to explain a text. One may add, discard, or adapt the list as one pleases in attending to the inevitable plurality of literary forms. It is, however, another aid in understanding the style of the literary text which conveys textual attitude and cultural aspects.

These are questions that may be asked (perhaps together with others) about any prose text to be scrutinised, but here attention is given mainly to the different types of prose used in literature as ST and TT. The answers to these questions provide a wide range of prose forms each with its own distinctive structure and rhythmic patterns. They provide a set of descriptors that help the literary and linguistic investigation of the ST and when applied to the TT they provide another set of descriptors. The more the TT descriptive terms match the ST ones, the more successful the translation of style would be.

Fig.5

DESIGNATION	OPERATIVE QUESTION	EXAMPLES OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS
Field Category	What is the broad thematic area of the prose?	<i>historical, political, philosophical, sociological, psychological, socio-historical, psycho-philosophical, socio-psychological...</i>
Prose Function	What is the aim of the prose?	<i>ideational, expressive, performative, recording, sonic, thought-revealing, identifying, social...</i>
Presentational Mode	How is prose presented?	<i>subjective, objective, evocative, persuasive, reflective...</i>
Fictional Technique	What method of expression is used in the prose?	<i>narrative techniques (account, description, exposition, argumentation), speech-thought rendition (free direct speech, direct speech, free indirect speech, indirect speech, narrative speech report, direct thought, free direct thought, indirect thought, free indirect thought, narrative thought report), code-switching, RAD...</i>
Semantic Spectrum	What level of meaning is given to the prose?	<i>hypersuggestive, ambisuggestive, suggestive, semisuggestive, desuggestive...</i>

There should be a high level of compatibility between ST and TT in the field category, prose function, and presentational mode – i.e. if the ST is political, expressive, and subjective, the TT is expected to be the same. But the TT may vary in the fictional technique and semantic spectrum: for instance, there may be CS in the ST but the TT may be monolingual; and we may have an ST figurative language but a non-figurative TT.

This framework was successfully applied by several post-graduate students of translation to test for equivalence.¹¹

5 Conclusion

Analysing Maltese literature in translation needs to consider complementarity and CS (considered here as an interesting natural phenomenon), and at the same time literary translation must consider the ST style which allows translators

- to understand some of the affective state associated with the ST and
- to assess ST linguistic and cultural choices.

Translators will then become stylistically sensitive and they would be in a good position to produce the necessary equivalent stylistic effects in the TT. Style creates effects and translators must attempt to reconstruct the author's state of mind according to their interpretation as first readers. But we should add that translators are also writers and very frequently they inject their own mind style in the TT through the choices they make and the strategies they apply and this justifies further the need for applying the framework to test for stylistic equivalence.

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Notes

¹ In this paper the focus is on literary prose forms not on poetry.

² One should see Boase-Beier's work (2011) on this subject.

³ The concept of mind style came from Fowler (1977) and was applied to English literature by Leech & Short (1981, 1989); I applied it to Maltese literature in various works: e.g. Briffa (2001) and Briffa (2008).

⁴ The concept of complementarity was introduced in the Middleburg PALA Conference: Briffa & Caruana (2009). Then the concept was explained fully in a Leipzig Conference: Briffa (2011). What follows is a brief exposition of the term.

⁵ For a better explanation of this concept (and apart from the works mentioned in the previous footnote) please see Briffa (2008: 120-125) and Briffa (2009: 6-7, 32).

⁶ Galea (2011) treats this subject fuller. Francis Ebejer (1925-1993) is Malta's foremost playwright of the second half of the 20th century. Bingemma is a small rural place in Malta and Ġaħan is a legendary figure considered by some to be a simpleton and by others a wise fool in Maltese folk narrative. Galea translates the title of the play as "Ġaħan: Bingemma's Fool". See also my comments in Ebejer (2002). "Ġaħan" is to be read "Jahan" in English.

⁷ Briffa (2009: 49).

⁸ Briffa (2009: 49-50).

⁹ Briffa (2001: 25-30).

¹⁰ The term "writer" refers both to the original author (i.e. the writer of the ST) and to the translator (i.e. the writer of the TT). So the term "translator" is reserved to the producer of the target text and "author" refers to the producer of the source text.

¹¹ See, for example, Debrincat (2012: Ch.5).