STYLE, CONTEXT AND TRANSLATED NARRATIVES: A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC PROFILE FOR STUDYING STYLE IN TRANSLATED NARRATIVES

Sawsan A. Aljahdali
King Abdul Aziz University, KSA; Macquarie University, Australia
saaljahdali@kau.edu.sa; sawsan-a-a-.aljahdali@students.mq.edu.au

Abstract
A translated narrative has both its structure and texture creatively reproduced in the decoding-reencoding processes. These processes of intersemiotic and interlingual transformations yield variable results influenced by language-in-context, as the broadest environment of translation, and prompted by the level of the *typological* and *semiotic distance* between texts. Translation is thus an *act of communication* that is *separate* (contextually and discursively) from, while it is still *dependent* (semantically) on, the original writing. Here, the translator's style is an "imprint" that is simultaneously compelled by the creativity of the literary translation act and the existence of the targeted reader in a new socio-semiotic context (Baker, 2000; Hasan, 1986/2011, 1989; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Malmkjær, 2004; Matthiessen, 2001). In response to Baker (2000), the present study aims to *theoretically* revisit the issue of style in narrative translation in a comparative view that takes into consideration the multiple contexts and meta-contexts of the acts of creation and translation. This comparative intersemiotic view ventures to address the complexity of narrative meaning recreation in these new acts of communication along the multi-stratal systems of language and narrative and in the light of the narrative, stylistic and socio-semiotic views of *discourse* and *meaning*.

Keywords: style; semiotic distance; narrative translation; meta-context; narrative system

Narratives, as texts, achieve textual and structural unity through their linguistic patterns. Translated narratives, however, have both their structure and texture creatively reproduced as they undergo the decoding-reencoding processes carried out by the other "writing hand". New stylistics is thus created. Literary translations, in fact, have kept translation scholars occupied with the notion of 'style' along two lines: the style of the creative writer, and the linguistic patterns and resources used against the socio-cultural backgrounds from/to which (s)he translates (Baker, 2000). And because writing can never be impersonal, the translator's style becomes an "imprint" determined by at least two competing forces—the creativity of the literary translation act and the existence of a targeted implied reader positioned in a new socio-semiotic context (Baker, 2000; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Hasan, 1989; Malmkjær, 2004; Matthiessen, 2001). For this act, an exploration of "the issue of style … *from the point of view of the translator rather than the author*" is fundamental for uncovering embedded ideologies. 'Style', as used here, is "a matter of patterning" which is explained as "preferred or recurring patterns of linguistic behaviour" (Baker, 2000, pp. 245, 262, Italics added).

Studying style in the light of the *contexts of creation* and *interpretation*–the terms are Hasan's—can thus be viewed as a response to Baker's call (2000) to adopt a comparative stylistic approach to literary translations as creative rather than reproductive acts. Reading the translator in context consequently implies a need to draw links on the contextual level, i.e. from above, in relation to the addressed text and reader, while attempting the linguistic, stylistic decipherment of meaning requires a bottom-up approach. Nonetheless, translation stylistics, Baker maintains, lacks methodology.

The present study partly aims to revisit the methodological issue of this comparative stylistic view. Delimiting its scope to style in translated narratives, the study more pertinently seeks to frame an operational profile orchestrated on an interface of structuralist-functional premises. The classical narrative composite of *story* and *discourse* (*content* and *form*) is approached here, in a functional sense, as an integration of *mutually influential* sides of the narrative coin. The study attempts to illuminate, in narrative translation terms, the "rather obscure" relationship between the "logical (meaning) structures and grammatical "surface" structures" in context. Narrative, with its different modes and styles, is a semiotic structure with a form and substance for both content and expression (Chatman, 1978; Toolan, 2001; van Dijk, 1975). These proposed constitutions might thus be better aligned in a more accessible manner to a stratified functional system treating both form and content semiotically. Along these lines, adopting an

integrative approach to translated narratives in the light of the spectrum of structuralist, functional, and socio-semiotic views may aid in illuminating the obscurity of the relationships that breed unique and distinctive narrative texts within each context.

Narrative: a stratified semiotic system
Structuralist grammar of the narrative

In structuralist narrative poetics, story is "a chronologically-ordered deep structure of all the primary and essential information concerning characters, events and setting, without which the narrative would not be well formed" (Toolan, 2001, p. 16). The abstractness and structuredness of the information of the story suggests that we are presented with semantic content that is gradually formed as the text evolves. The word 'story' here means an "autonomous structure" that can be reproduced and transposed in different modalities (Chatman, 1978; Pavel, 1973). Structuralists' attempts at uncovering the grammar governing narrative structure have followed the *syntagmatic* structural model proposed by Propp (1928/1968), which traces the chronological order of events and underscores the significance of 'function' as a generic unit to the totality of the plot. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance, undertook a decompositional analysis of myths adopting a *paradigmatic* structuralist approach to probing into the higher-order patterns of meaning beyond the mere semantics of any linguistic expression (Brooks, 1992; Toolan, 2001). In this vein, structuralists assign greater functionality to characters as *actants* in playing paradigmatically a vital integrative role assigning unity to the syntagmatic units and transcending their meaning (Pavel, 1973).

Barthes' model (1975) reveals the multi-levelled nature of the semantics of narrative, accentuates the interconnectedness of the three levels, viz., *functions*, *actions* and *narration*, and highlights the transcendental role of this hierarchy. Yet, up to the highest level of *narration* (*discourse*), the narrative, like language, is still a self-contained code—a code that 'receives' meaning from, and can be interpreted within, the 'external world' during the actual acts of reading and interpretation. The external world is retrieved, and thus "other semiotics" need to be called upon.

Such proposals suggest that the structuralist narrative is purely semantics, logic proper. Little or no explicit acknowledgement is given to a direct influence of the linguistic structure on the development of this narrative meaning, nor is there any acknowledgement of the role of context in shaping or configuring its elements. Meaning (story) takes precedence over its transforming modalities, and language, both as form and meaning, merely supplements the integration and distribution of the semantic units with no actual signification.

A functional view of the structuralist narrative strata

Opening the narrative code to external interpretations along the Barthesian language-narrative homology requires an understanding of how the narrative, with its hierarchical and interdependent nature, creates meaning within the higher semiotics of context. In functional words, this is a unique sort of meaning with a history created *logogenetically*, i.e., "progressively from the beginning," in *texts* that are "language … functional in some contexts" (Halliday, 1992, p. 360; Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 86).

Halliday (1992) delineates intrastratal and interstratal relationships in language, viz. *instantiation* and *realisation* respectively, and foregrounds the fundamental roles they play, both *syntagmatically* and *paradigmatically*, in creating meaning. Language is both an *instance* (in the form of a text) and a *system* (whose grammaticalised intrastratal relations collaborate as they interface *metaredundantly* (i.e., in a dynamic realisational relationship) to create meaning in text (Halliday, 1992). Language, as a semiotic system, connotes as it realises the semiotic patterns of the higher level of the context of culture. Correspondingly, meaning creation (semogenesis) in the narrative semiotic system may also connote within culture. Hasan includes this transcendent, metaredundant nature of narratives under the hierarchical interrelationships within the semiotic system of verbal art (Halliday, 1992; Hasan, 1989). Hasan (1989) maintains that narrative meaning is effectuated by resources along a tri-stratal semiotic system, and that it is at the level of *symbolic articulation* that the literariness of the text is attained and "the meanings of language are turned into signs having a deeper meaning" (p. 98). Metaredundantly, this level realises the higher-level of *theme*, and is realised by the lower-level, *verbalisation*.

THEME ↘☐ (SYMBOLIC ARTICULATION ↘☐ VERBALISATION)

In Hasan's system, there does not seem to be an acknowledgement of any precedent structured semantic content (story) independent of its discourse. Rather, Hasan contends, fable is a creation resultant of the way the "story is 'discoursed' … [and] the patterns of the language function" (1989, p. 91). A stratified meaningful narrative text thus connotes variably within different socio-cultural contexts at the level of theme, while it is being realised by the second-order meaning created by the patterning of patterns at the symbolic articulation stratum (Hasan, 1989). Hasan's view of the contextualised narrative meaning corresponds to her rejection of the structuralist sense of the text as an autonomous, self-motivated unity "divorced from the concerns of [its] community" (1989, p. 110).

Figure 1 demonstrates Hasan's view of the metaredundant stratified nature of verbal art (1989)

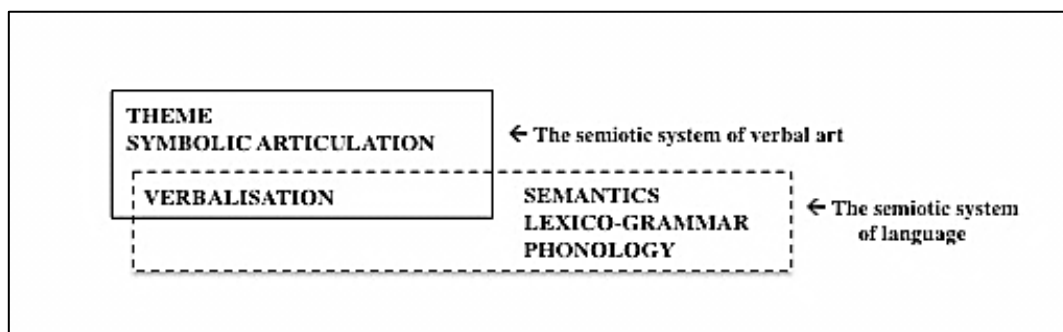which is seamlessly integrated with the semiotic system of language.

THEME
SYMBOLIC ARTICULATION   ← The semiotic system of verbal art

VERBALISATION

SEMANTICS
LEXICO-GRAMMAR   ← The semiotic system
PHONOLOGY   of language

Figure 1 Verbal art and language (Hasan, 1989, p. 99)

Yaktine's text: Structuralist morphemes within the semiotics of the functional theme

As a way of reconciling the structural-functional views, the Moroccan narratologist, Yaktine (1989/2005, 1989/2006), perspicaciously bases his views on the story-discourse interrelationships within the socio-cultural contexts. Yaktine proposes three levels of narrative construction and synchronises the structuralist autonomy of the narrative with functionalist views. Therefore, each narrative comprises a *story*, *discourse* and the high-order level of *text*, with 'story' referring to the structural minimal morphological components, the raw material that takes up different discourses, and 'discourse' (parallel to Barthes' narration) referring to the manner of narration, a higher-order level giving a structural unity to these discrete units. Nonetheless, Yaktine (1989/2005), aligned with Hasan (1989), proposes that it is the integrative, structuring power of discourse (in its narratological and stylistic senses) that unifies the morphemes of the story.

Discoursing thus entails giving the narrative meaning a particular representation, and mediating the interaction between the narrative deep structure and the external, contextual entities. Communicating the narrative does not end with the narration interaction, though; intertextual and sociological interactions still occur within, not beyond, the narrative system, thereby promoting a communication between the living agents—the writer and reader(s)—at the *text* level. The text, therefore, becomes "a currency" (the term is Hasan's) with a dynamic nature allowing multiple readings, and, hence, multiple *external narrative structures*, subsequent to the singular *internal structure* produced by a completed writing task. Yaktine's text presumably occupies an area starting at Hasan's symbolic articulation and extending inclusively to the theme. This consequently allows for locating these productive agents (the writer and reader) within Hasan's 'context of creation' and 'context of interpretation'. Table 1 may thus pave the way to carefully accommodating the proposed processes of narrative reading and re-writing. The relative distribution of the strata in the table is guided by their original definitions.

Table 1 Different perspectives of language-narrative homology

	(Barthes, 1975)	**(Yaktine, 1989/2005, 1989/2006)**	**(Hasan, 1989)**
Language system		Narrative System	
Phonemes	Functions	Story	---
			Verbalisation
Lexicogrammar	Actions	Discourse	Symbolic articulation
Semantics	Narration	Text	
	---		Theme

Translating the narrative and intersemiotic mapping of meaning

It thus becomes imperative to be enlightened by a semiotic approach to translation in order to take our visualisation of the narrative meaning reproduction further. Translation is a process taking place within and between semiotic systems of all kinds, and a transition from one system to another involves two stages of intersemiotic translation. Narrative is unequivocally an organic semiotic system, notwithstanding the variant modalities to which it is transformed. Language is another semiotic system, and narrative discoursing (transforming or mapping) consists of creating the narrative meaning (Barthes, 1975; Chatman, 1978; Hasan, 1989; Matthiessen, 2001). We may thus assume that the narrative text undergoes two interactive processes of translation: 1) intersemiotic, transforming the narrative content into linguistic means and vice versa, in writing and in reading respectively; and 2) interlingual,

transposing/recreating the transcendence of meaning of first-order and second-order levels between languages. And as long as languages diversify and the level of their typological and semiotic distances fluctuates, these processes and their results vary correspondingly. Language-in-context forms the broadest environment of translation, and translation takes place within different meta-contexts, where acts of translating and reading/listening to the

translation occur (Hasan, 1986/2011; Matthiessen, 2001). Hatim and Mason's (1997) conception of the act of translation elucidates the issue further: translation is an act of communication that is separate (contextually and discursively) from, while it is still dependent (semantically) on, the original writing.
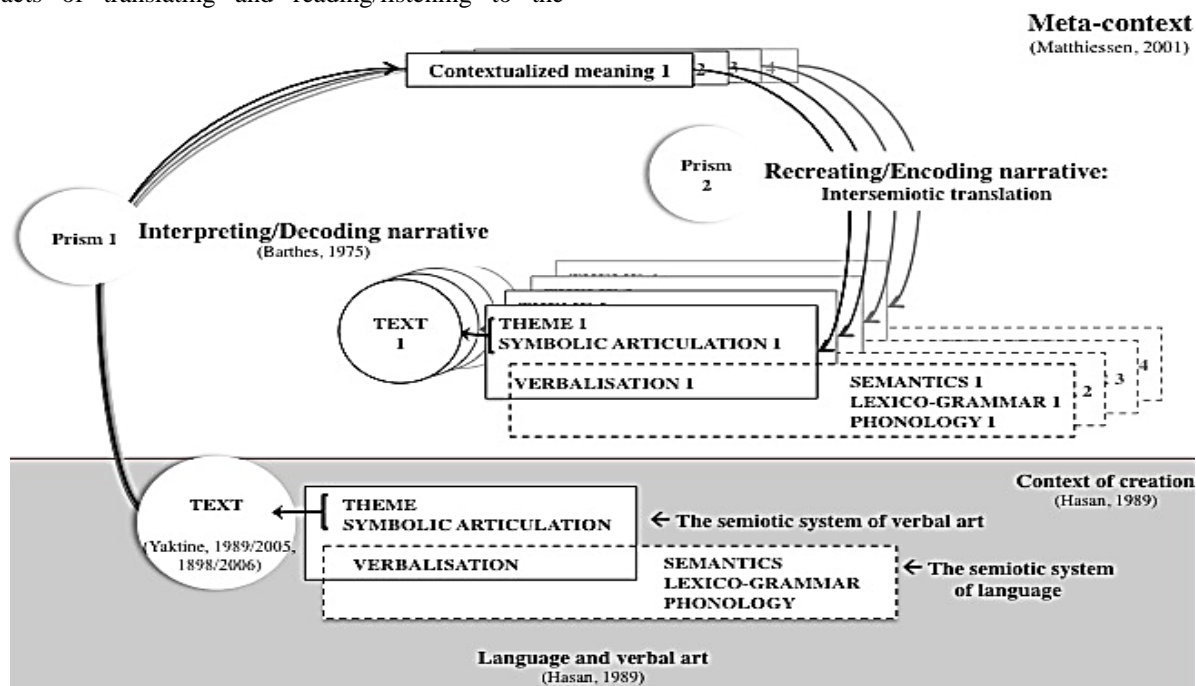

Figure 2. Stratification, refraction and multiple contextualisations in narrative translation

The amalgamation of three factors, namely, *stratification* of both language and narrative, *refractions* at the decoding and encoding levels, and *multiple contextualisations*, entitles each translated narrative to be conceived of as *a unique, separate narrative text*. Each translation of a given narrative thus converges with the other versions only at the lower-level semantics of the content (story), while simultaneously diverging at the higher levels generated by the discourse. Building on Hasan's visualisation of the relationship (Figure 1), Figure 2 provides a tentative sketch of the proposed convergence and divergence caused by the synthesis of these three factors. It also envisages the proposed dipartite nature of narrative translation.

new external narrative structure), and a *context of re-creation* (with the created external narrative structure being internalised within the new narrative in writing). Each translator practises specific refractions of the original through his/her sociosemiotic prisms, both as a deep reader (refraction act 1) and then as a selective co-author (refraction act 2). Therefore, viewing the texts in the light of the notions of *semiotic distance* and *typological distance* may shed more light on the realisational mechanisms of creating higher-order meanings. Each translated narrative therefore undergoes the two acts of translation—intersemiotic and interlingual—with a *de-automatised* recreation of the patterns, and hence variably connoting narratives.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion opportunely accommodates the proposed profile within an intersection of areas among poetics, narratology, stylistics, and translation studies. With each translation act, a new narrative text is produced, sharing the same basic semantics of the story and entertaining the language-verbal art relationship. This occurs within a meta-context in which it is read and re-written. This meta-context incorporates both a *context of interpretation* (with a

REFERENCES

Baker, M. (2000). Toward a methodology for investigating the style of a literary translator. *Target, 12*(2), 241- 266.

Barthes, R. (1975). An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative (Lionel Duisit, Trans.). *New Literary History, 6*(2), 237-272.

Brooks, P. (1992). *Reading for the plot: Design and intention in narrative*. New York: Harvard University Press.

Chatman, S. (1978). *Story and discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1992). How do we mean? In M. Davies & L. Ravelli (Eds.), *Advances in systemic linguistics: Recent theory and practice* (pp. 20-35). London: Pinter Pub. Ltd.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* Victoria: Deakin University.

Hasan, R. (1986/2011). The implications of semantic distance for language in education. In J. J. Webster (Ed.). *The collected works of Ruqaiya Hasan, Volume 3: Language and education: Leaning and teaching in society* (Vol. 3, pp. 73-98). Sheffield: Equinox.

Hasan, R. (1989). *Linguistics, language and verbal art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1997). *The translator as communicator*. London & New York: Routledge

Malmkjær, K. (2004). Translational stylistics: Dulcken's translations of Hans Christian Andersen. *Language and Literature, 13*(1), 13–24.

Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2001). The environments of translation. In E. Steiner & C. Yallop (Eds.), *Exploring translation and multilingual text production: Beyond content* (pp. 41-124). Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Pavel, T. G. (1973). Some remarks on narrative grammar. *Poetics, 2*(4), 5-30.

Propp, V. (1928/1968). *Morphology of the folk tale*. The American Folklore Society and Indiana University. Accessed July 2016 from: http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/propp.pdf

Toolan, M. (2001). *Narrative: A critical linguistic introduction*. London & New York: Routledge.

van Dijk, T. A. (1975). Action, action description, and narrative. *New Literary History, 6*(2), 273-294.

Yaktine, S. (1989/2005). *Taḥlīlu Al-Khiṭābi Al-Riwāʹī: Al-Zaman, Al-Sard, Al-Tabʾīr*. Casablanca & Beirut: Al-Markaz Al-Thaqāfī Al-ʿarabī.

Yaktine, S. (1989/2006). *Infitāḥu al-Naṣṣi al-Riwāʹī*. Casablanca & Beirut: Al-Markaz Al-Thaqāfī Al-ʿarabī.