

# Translator's Voice in Translated Texts\*

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Ever since Venuti put forward the concept of translator's invisibility in 1995, studies have been conducted on the discursive presence of translators in the translated texts. The translator, as the receiver of the source text and at the meantime the producer of the target text, is sure to leave his/her voice traceable in the translated texts throughout the whole translating process. This paper aims to present an overview of the conceptual development of the translator's voice in translation studies from different perspectives like narratology, stylistics, socio-narrative theory, speech-act theory etc.

*Keywords:* translator's voice, narratology, stylistics, socio-narrative theory, speech-act theory

## Introduction

In a literary work, voice is usually related to the author's voice or presence as perceived through the act of narration (Booth, 1961, p. 18). Chatman uses voice to refer to "the speech or other overt means through which events and existents are communicated to the audience" (1978, p. 153). Peden (1987) defines voice as the way something is communicated: The way the tale is told; the way the poem is sung. Voice is also regarded as an element to show the author's subjectivity. For instance, Greenall (2015) defines voice as the "dialogically constituted, but also unique, subjectivity". Taivalkoski-Shilov (2015) considers voice as the set of textual cues characterizing a subjective or collective identity in a text. The author's voice can take various forms. It can be overt if the author makes direct obtrusions, like commentary or summary in the narrative texts. It can be also obvious when he/she shifts his/her point of view by moving into or out of a character's mind (Booth, 1961, p. 17). Even if the author's voice is hidden at times, it is always in the text.

The concept of Translator's Voice is firstly discussed by Lawrence Venuti in presenting the translator's invisibility in a translated text. "The voice that the reader hears in any translation made on the basis of *simpatico* is always recognized as the author's, never as a translator's, nor even as some hybrid of the two" (Venuti, 1995, p. 238). Thus he calls for the use of nonfluent, nonstandard, and heterogeneous language by producing foreignized rather than domesticated texts so that translators could make themselves visible and their voice detectable. Hermans for the first time puts forward the notion of Translator's Voice. He points out "the translated narrative discourse always contains more than one voice ... as an index of the Translator's discursive presence" (Hermans, 1996, p. 27). He refers the "second voice" (Hermans, 1996, p. 27) to the Translator's Voice, which may remain entirely hidden, unable to be detected, and may be directly or forcefully present in paratexts, like prefaces, footnotes, translator's

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\* **Acknowledgements:** It is one of the research results of Project SM201411232007. This paper is also sponsored by CSC.

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notes etc. Hermans (2014) furthers his concept of “translator’s voice” by focusing less on formal translatorial intrusions and more on the translator’s role in mediating the values inscribed in the translation to its prospective readers. By viewing translation as “a reported discourse”, “echoic speech”, he holds that as the study of translation turns increasingly to the translator’s social and ethical roles, it becomes more urgent to trace the translator’s position, like voice, views, values, and attitudes etc. (Hermans, 2014). From this aspect, Hermans’ understanding of translator’s “voice” goes beyond the range of a translated text itself and puts more focus on its sociological implications.

Translator’s voice is always present in the translated text along with the author’s voice. In the whole translating process, the translator is both a receiver of the source text and at the meantime the producer of the translation whose target readers are in every sense temporally, geographically, and linguistically different from the source text readers. In talking about the relationship between the author’s voice and the translator’s voice, Schiavi points out the translator’s voice is “in part standing in for the author’s and in part autonomous” (1996, p. 2); Barnstone considers that there are two possibilities: The voice of the source language author is retained in the target text, and the translator’s is thus “suppressed (in deference to author)” or else the translator’s voice comes to dominate (1993, pp. 28-29). Munday contends that the translator’s voice generally mixes more subtly with that of the author and generally passing unnoticed unless the target is compared to its source (2008, p. 19). He also argues that translators filter, alter, or distort the voices of the ST (source text) author and narrator, “creating something new with a subtly distinct voice” (Munday, 2008, p. 14). The translator reworks the already sculpted material of the author’s words into new words in the target language which may bear the fingerprint of the translator’s idiolect or preferred translation strategies (Munday, 2008, p. 17). Scholars also put much highlight on the subjectivity of translators. Baker (2006) maintains the translator “may deliberately re-mould the target text to fit a pre-existing personal and public ideological framework or narrative”. Greenall (2015) argues it is up to the translator who decides whether or not to make his/her voice manifest.

### **Translator’s Voice in Narratology**

Narratology is the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that “tell a story” (Bal, 1997, p. 1). It helps to understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives, including their structures, functions, themes, conventions, and symbols. The theoretical integration of translation studies and narratology in recent decades helps provide a frame of reference for studying the “translator’s voice”. Schiavi (1996), Hermans (1996), O’Sullivan (2005), and Munday (2008) conceptualise the translator’s discursive presence by referring to a narratological model of narrative communication.

#### **Translator’s Voice in Terms of Narratological Process**

The widely accepted narrative diagram in narratology is put forth by Chatman (1978), which, apart from text, includes the three pair of counterpart items, author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader, and reader. The scheme is as follows:

real author ... ... implied author – narrator – narratee – implied reader ... ... real reader

(Chatman, 1978, p. 147)

“Author” refers to the biographical author who wrote the book, but he/she retires from the text as soon as the book is printed and sold. Implied author instructs the reader on how to read the text. Narrator is the teller of the

tale, sometimes addressed to a specific narratee in the text (Munday, 2008, p. 1). The counterpart of the implied author is the implied reader, “the audience presupposed by the narrative itself” (Chatman, 1978, pp. 149-150).

In a translated text, the narratological process is by no means the same with that of the original text. Schiavi (1996) considers that the “translator’s voice” represents the translator’s interpretation of the original. She, based on Chatman’s (1978) and Booth’s (1961) narratological theories, proposes a modified diagram to take into account the role of translator in the translated text and puts up the notion of “implied translator”, the counterpart of “implied author” to mean the target reader’s conceptualization of the translator’s discursive presence. Her model supports the idea of a separate discursive presence and shows the translator constantly co-producing the discourse as well as shadowing and counterfeiting the narrator’s words (Bosseaux, 2007, p. 19).

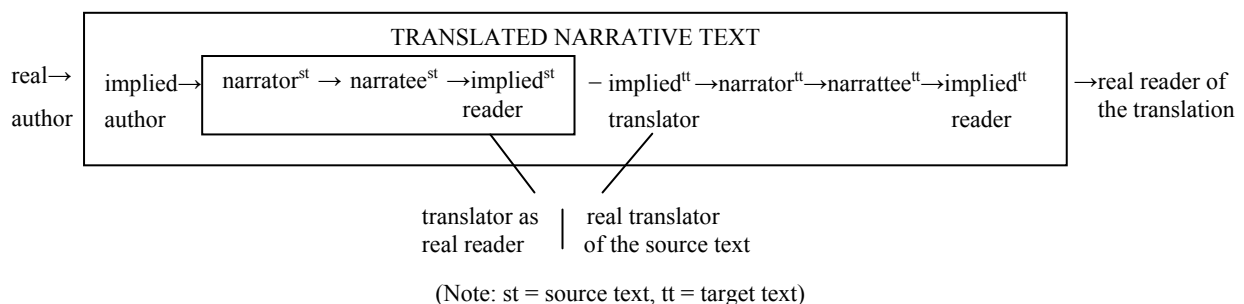
Narratological diagram of a translated narrative (Schiavi, 1996, p. 14) is as following:

R.A...|... I.A. - |-Nr-Ne-I.R./real translator- -implied translator-Nr-Ne-I.R. of translation...| R.R.  
 R.A. = real author            Ne = narratee  
 I.A. = implied author        I.R. = implied reader  
 Nr = narrator                R.R. = real reader

In this diagram, the translator first takes upon the role of the implied reader to detect what the implied author (or the text) wants its reader to be. At the same time, the translator negotiates with the text and then transmits it or re-processed to the new reader. While producing the translated text, the translator will put his/her understanding or viewpoint as the implied reader into his/her translation. Therefore, the translator on one hand becomes the receptor of the set of presuppositions assumed by the implied author and expressed through the “‘voice’ of narrative discourse”, i.e. the narrator (Schiavi, 1996, p. 15), and on the other hand needs to build a set of translational presuppositions, like the norms and standards in force in the target culture according to the book to be translated and the audience envisaged. Thus, a reader of translation will receive a sort of split message coming from two different addressers, both original although in two different senses: one originating from the author which is elaborated and mediated by the translator, and one (the language of the translation itself) originating directly from the translator” (Schiavi, 1996, p. 14). Schiavi’s diagram creates room for the translator’s discursive presence and represents a step forward towards the recognition of this voice.

O’Sullivan (2005), in amendment of Schiavi’s scheme, presents a communicative model of translation to explain the scheme of the translated narrative text. Different from Schiavi who situates the real translator within the framework of the narrative text itself, next to the immanent agencies of narrator, narratee, and implied reader, O’Sullivan claims the real translator does not belong on the level of the text but is an external agency within the two functions that he or she exercises—reception and production—clearly separated from each other (p. 107).

Scheme of the translated narrative text and all its agencies (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. 108) is as follows:



According to the scheme, the communication between the real author of the source text and the real reader of the translation is enabled by the real translator, who is outside the text. The real translator first acts as a receptive agent in an extratextual position, and transmits the source text via the intratextual agency of the implied translator. In translated texts, a discursive presence is to be found above and beyond that of the narrator of the source text, namely, that of the (implied) translator. Two voices are present in the narrative discourse of the translated text: the voice of the narrator of the source text and the voice of the translator (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 107). Different from Hermans (1996), O'Sullivan argues that the voice of Hermans' translator is almost exclusively metalinguistic, "wholly assimilated into the Narrator's voice" (2005, p. 109). She claims that the discursive presence of the translator can be identified on two levels in the narrative text. The first is that of the implied translator as the originator of such paratexts as forewords, afterwords, glossaries, and metalinguistic explanations like footnotes, as identified by Hermans. These are new messages to the reader of the target text and originate entirely with the translator or implied translator. The second is the voice dislocated from the voice of the narrator of the source text. She calls it "the voice of the narrator of the translation" which is present in all translated narrative texts on the level of the narrative itself (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 109). The relationship between the voice of the narrator of the translation and that of the narrator of the source text can vary widely, depending on the translation practices observed in a given context. The voice of the narrator of the translation can slip in behind that of the narrator of the source text to mimic it entirely. However, when the voice of the narrator of the translation dislocates from that of the narrator of the source text, the implied translator may try to control the source text with a voice which always remains dominant and organizing and always has the last word, ultimately changing the address (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 109). Besides, O'Sullivan firstly applies her model to the study of translated children's literature. She points out the particular voice of the narrator of the translation would seem to be more evident in children's literature than in other areas due to the specific, asymmetrical communication structure which characterizes texts written and published by adults for children (2005, p. 110). In the translated narrative text, the implied translator may adopt narrative strategies different from those of the narrator of the source text to construct a new implied reader, like amplifying narration, reductive narration, and entirely drowning out the voice of the narrator of the source text (O'Sullivan, 2005, pp. 114-118).

Munday (2008) in his book *Style and Ideology in Translation* proposes the parallel narratological lines of translation on the basis of Schiavi's.

**For ST**

Author – implied author – narrator – narratee – implied reader – ST reader

**For TT**

ST reader/

Real translator – implied translator – TT narrator – TT narratee – TT implied reader – TT reader<sup>1</sup>

Munday's two parallel narratological lines are linked by the identification of the real reader of the ST who interprets presuppositions concerning the implied reader of the ST as well as identifying the real translator with a real ST reader. This diagram emphasizes the links between the author of the ST and the translator of the TT (target text), and also between the implied author of the ST and implied translator of the TT. It shows that in the

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<sup>1</sup> Parallel narratological lines of translation (Munday, 2008, p. 12).

process of translation, the implied translator and translator to some extent take over the role of the ST implied author and ST author.

### **Translator's Voice in Terms of Point of View**

Some researchers borrow the narratological concepts, point of view, to account for observed shifts in literary translations as a proof of translator's voice, like Bosseaux (2007) and Munday (2008). Bosseaux seeks to explore further the nature of the translator's discursive presence by investigating certain narratological aspects of the relation between originals and translations with the aid of corpus-based tools. The book addresses the issue of translating a novel's point of view and investigates how far a translator's choices affect the novel's point of view. It shows that there are potential problems involved in the translation of linguistic features that constitute point of view (deixis, modality, transitivity, and free indirect discourse) and that this has an impact on the way works are translated. Bosseaux divides point of view into two categories: focalisation, which relates to the question of whose eyes and mind witness and report the world of the fiction, and mind-style, which concerns the individuality of the mind that does the focalising (2007, p. 15). Mind-style is a product of the way the characters' perceptions and thoughts, as well as their speech, are presented through language (Bosseaux, 2007, p. 15). In her book, Bosseaux treats the concept of the translator's voice in translated texts primarily as a channel for recognition of the transformations brought about by translation. Munday in his book explains voice as "the abstract narrative point of view" (2008, p. 6), and he lists the four planes of point of view, which are psychological, ideological, spatio-temporal, and phraseological.

### **Translator's Voice and Translator's Style**

In translation studies, issues of style are related to the voice of the narrative and of the author/translator (Munday, 2008, p. 6). In fact, translator's voice and translator's style are often conceptually slippery. Translator's style is a traditional topic in translation studies. However, the focus has long remained source-oriented, i.e., on the source text's style and its reproduction, and for a long time scholars see the style of translation as a reproduction of the source text. Just as Boase-Beier claims "... the style of the translation is defined by its relation to the source text" (2006, p. 66).

In 2000, Baker adopts a clearly target-oriented perspective in her paper "Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator", which investigates the question of style in literary translation with the aid of corpus in order to see if individual literary translators can be shown to use distinctive styles of his own. Her work complements earlier attempts at defining and positing the translator's voice. She defines style,

a kind of thumb-print that expressed in a range of linguistic—as well as non-linguistic—features [...] In terms of translation, rather than original writing, the notion of style must include the (literary) translator's choice of the type of material to translate, where applicable, and her or his consistent use of specific strategies, including the use of prefaces or afterwords, footnotes, glossing in the body of the text, etc. (Baker, 2000, p. 245)

Baker thinks it is more crucial to focus on the manner of expression that is typical of a translator, rather than simply instances of open intervention. Therefore, she contends that the translator's style can be analyzed through various explicit interventions or reorientations of the translators, and also through "forensic stylistics", which refers to the preferred, recurring patterns of linguistic behaviours/habits or consistent use of specific strategies, e.g., lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive devices, or even style of punctuation, where other options may be

equally available in the language (Baker, 2000, pp. 246-248). These two levels are related in the sense that they are both concerned with the translator's choices in terms of unconscious choices and conscious choices. Elements of forensic stylistics and linguistic choices in general offer information on the kind of world the translators have recreated in their translation, and inform researchers on the translator's view of the relationship between the source and target texts and cultures.

Munday (2008) combines the two concepts of voice and style together in his study. He points out, "in translation studies, issues of style are related to the voice of the narrative and of the author/translator" (2008, p. 6). He uses voice to refer to "the abstract concept of authorial, narratorial, or translatorial presence", and style to "the linguistic manifestation of that presence in the text" (Munday, 2008, p. 19). He argues "Style involves motivated and unmotivated patterns of selections in the TT that reveal the concealed or disguised discursive presence of the translator" (Munday, 2008, p. 35). Therefore, "voice is therefore to be approached through the analysis of style" (Munday, 2008, p. 19). Different from Baker, Munday draws the conclusion that style in translation is inherently non-systematic (2008, p. 227). Patterns do emerge, but none of the translators he has studied always translates in the same way in all cases. In translation, "there is always an element of choice and poetic taste". "The stylistic criteria that guide translators are themselves subjective and hazy..." (Munday, 2008, p. 227). But the translator's voice can always be traced between the lines.

#### **Translator's Voice in Speech Act Theory**

In a different manner, Robinson tries to discuss the translator's role in terms of speech act theory. He says, "In translation studies, it is the translator's job to do new (but more or less recognizable) things" (Robinson, 2003). These "new things" are composed of what the original author did, and what the translator intends to do through translating. However, no matter how hard the translator tries to report what the author said and to keep the target text as close as possible to the source text, the translator always ends up doing things at least "slightly new" (Robinson, 2003).

Jiang (2012) interprets the concept of "translator's voice" from the perspective of speech act theory. He thinks that as "voice" is, by definition, to be heard, the ideal type of the "translator's voice" might first exist as an illocutionary intention in the translator's mind, then either be spoken or implied in the translated text, and finally realized as a perlocutionary effect on the target-readers. He argues that only when both illocutionary and perlocutionary components of translated texts have been taken into consideration holistically might studies relevant to the translator's voice avoid mistaking either the translator's misfired illocutionary intentions or the target-reader's (personal) perlocutionary response(s) for the translator's voice. He thus applies the distinction between illocutionary intention and perlocutionary effect to the conceptual clarification, as well as the identification, of the translator's voice.

#### **Translator's Voice in Socio-narrative Theory**

The voice of translators and authors can be more easily detected from extra-textual elements, such as covers, prefaces, afterwords, glossaries, translation briefs, correspondence between authors, translators and publishers, interviews and essays and so forth. These kinds of studies deal with translation not so much as a textual product but as a sociological process (Alvstad, 2013). With the publication of the book *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* in 2006, Baker steps outside the domain of literary translation studies and looks into the way

translation can refashion narratives in the real world by adopting a socio-narrative or sociological narrative approach and helps make the translator's voice even louder. In her viewpoint, translation is understood as a form of (re)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it renarrates in another language (Baker, in press; original emphasis). Translators and interpreters are embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation and simultaneously contribute to the elaboration, mutation, transformation, and dissemination of these narratives through their translation choices. Translators and interpreters always "face a basic ethical choice" to "reproduce existing ideologies as encoded in the narratives elaborated in the text or utterance" or to "dissociate themselves from those ideologies, if necessary by refusing to translate the text or interpret in a particular context at all" (Baker, 2006).

The socio-narrative theory shows the high profile of translators and interpreters and emphasizes their decisive and highly complex role in social construction through narratives, and "provide insight not only into power relations between different agents in the field, but also into prevalent values, theories and ideals" (Alvstad 2013). Harding considers this theory as "a robust, intuitively satisfying conceptual framework, useful for describing and accounting for the complex, dynamic, constructed, reconstructed, and translated worlds in which we live and act, including our own place(s) in it as researchers" (Harding, 2012).

### **Translator's Voice in Retranslation**

Different translators surely deal with the same source text in different ways, so the best way to detect the translator's voice is perhaps by comparing translations or retranslations of the same source text. Recent years have witnessed more and more studies on translator's voice in retranslations. For instance, Greenall (2015) based on the case study of song translations explores the interaction between others' voices with the translator's voice in the production of a translation and the means different translator adopts to show his/her voice in paratexts and translated texts. Taivalkoski-Shilov (2015), based on a case study of the intra-textual voice (a character's voice) and extra-textual voice (translators' and publishers' voices) in six Finnish retranslations of *Robinson Crusoe*, argues that translators' voices may recirculate in retranslation and that a character's voice as a whole can reflect the retranslator's voice and the purpose of his/her translation. Koskinen and Paloposki (2015) put focus on the influence of the voice of the first translator on the following ones, and finally draw the conclusion that the figure of the first translator exerts an influence in the retranslation process, and all retranslators are forced to develop a stance towards the predecessor. The studies of Taivalkoski-Shilov, Koskinen and Paloposki both prove the direct influence of the first translator on the successors.

### **Conclusion**

In any literary work, "the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear" (Booth, 1961, p. 20). It is the same with the translator. Translator's voice can never disappear; instead, it can always be traceable in a translation. Translator's voice can be traced in a micro-dimension way by analyzing concrete narratological techniques and the individuality of language use through comparing the source texts with the target texts, or through comparing the different translations of the same source text. It can also be detected in a macro-dimension way by putting translators into the social context to explore their role in social construction through narratives. Tracing the "translator's voice" offers not only a way of perceiving the translator's subjectivity, but also provides a perspective from which the implication of the interrelations between the

subject-positions of the translator and the effect of the language used for the target-reader may be better observed and understood (Jiang, 2012).

So far studies on translator's discursive presence or translator's voice have been conducted from the perspectives of various disciplines, such as narratology, linguistics, stylistics, literature, anthropology, discourse analysis theory, and postcolonial studies etc. Yet discussions on translator's voice still need to be pushed forward in future. We can further the research by focusing on the following questions: How does the translator let his/her voice heard, actively or passively? How do the outside voices exert influence on the translator's voice? What difference may exist between the translator's voice in paratexts and that in translated texts? How does the translator deal with different voices in the translation narrative? How does the voice of different translators interact with each other? What is the translator's voice like in different social contexts? How does the translator's voice confront, converge and interact with other voices in translation? What is the relationship between the translator's voice and the translator's subjectivity and creativity? etc.

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