

# **Styling Popular Fiction: A Comparison of Stylistic Shifts in Slovene Translations of Popular Fiction and Literary Prose**

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## **Abstract**

Literary texts and works of popular fiction are often translated differently into Slovene, especially where style is concerned. While literary translations follow their source texts stylistically, and shifts occur on other levels, such as the ideological or cultural, the style of popular fiction often changes considerably through translation. In my paper I will show how major shifts in the register - especially in the level of formality - occur when works of popular fiction are translated into Slovene. There is a shift towards an unmarked, formal standard language, which neutralizes the style of the books. This shift can have two consequences. In some cases, it tends to diminish the formality of the text. In other cases, it tends to make the text more formal. The level of formality is not the only feature that changes on the way from English into Slovene. Concomitantly, class and status distinctions are blurred or sharpened, as different fields of language shift towards the neutral standard variety. As a result, all the characters—king or commoner, the wise old wizard or the young school-boy—speak the same way. Moreover, they do not employ different registers and styles of speech regardless of whether they find themselves in a public, private or extremely intimate situation. The result of such strategies are often either texts that are merely stylistically neutral and hence less interesting, or texts that appear strange and outright clumsy. The paper will analyse examples from novels published in Slovenia over the last decade, in different subgenres of popular fiction, such as fiction for children, fantasy, thrillers, “chick lit,” and romance. They will be compared to examples from novels generally perceived as (canonical) literature, to show the differences in translation strategies in both cases.

## **1 Introduction**

In 2007 I presented the results of a study of register shifts in translation of popular fiction from English into Slovene (Zlatnar Moe 2010) at the meeting of Slovene Literary Translator Society. In the discussion, a question arose which seemed worth exploring further: Do the results of this study mean that translators translate literary texts differently from those belonging to the field of popular fiction? I therefore shifted my research from popular fiction to literary texts, and analyzed them using the same method as I did with popular fiction. The study revolved around seven contemporary novels from the field of popular fiction, and five novels by critically acclaimed literary authors. The focus of the analysis lay on the shifts in style and register, and especially on their impact on the target text. The results show that there are some differences in translators' approach to literary and popular texts at the stylistic level, specifically in the area of register, especially when dealing with levels of formality and different fields used by the authors of the source texts.

## 2 Translation of prose

Although translation of prose is probably the largest field of literary translation, those translations have been less studied than for example translations of poetry. As Bassnett says (Bassnett 2002: 109), “Although there is a large body of work debating the issues that surround the translation of poetry, far less time has been spent studying the specific problems of translating literary prose”. She offers a few possible explanations for this, such as the higher status of poetry, or greater eloquence of translators of poetry regarding their methods, but the most interesting one that seems to resonate in the Slovene prose translations (literary and popular alike) is “the widespread erroneous notion that a novel is somehow a simpler structure than a poem and is consequently easier to translate” (Bassnett 2002: 109). One of the symptoms of this assumption, which she mentions (Bassnett 2002: 110), and which I and my colleagues regularly observe in our own classes, is that translators, or would-be translators, often go straight on and start translating the text without reading it through first, an approach, as she rightly observes, that would be quite unimaginable in translation of a poem. Because of this approach, the translator often does not even notice the overall structure of the novel, or the role which individual stylistic, syntactical, lexical, and other choices of the source author play in the structure of the novel as a whole. Instead, they begin with the first phrase, and they work their way through the whole text, following sentence after sentence, aiming to produce a text that adheres to the target culture norms, that will please the receivers in the target culture.

To achieve this, the aim of the translator is a fluent text, as Venuti calls it (Venuti 1995),<sup>1</sup> as

A translated text [...] is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance, that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the original. (Venuti 1995:1)

Lefevere, too talks about the tendency to the neutralization of everything that is not familiar in the target culture, although his remarks deal with broader issues of ideology and discourse rather than style, syntax or register (Lefevere 1992).

This approach, however, produces a text that is rather different stylistically (and sometimes also in other respects) from the source text: It is more neutral, less diverse and

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<sup>1</sup> Although Venuti talks about the British and US literary translation scene, his observations also describe the conditions in Slovenia (cf. Zlatnar Moe 2010b).

consequently often less interesting. Therefore, translation theorists have devised a number of recommendations to translators, such as regarding the whole novel as a unit, rather than a cluster of sentences; paying attention not only to the contents of the novel, but equally to its style; and above all determining the function of the text, and the function of individual stylistic devices within the text (Bellocq 1931: 116; Bassnett 2002: 119) in order to choose the most appropriate strategy in each individual case.

As we can see, then, prose translation, whether it is of literature or popular fiction, tends to go in the direction of stylistic neutralization and domestication. But are there also any differences between translators' approach towards texts from the two different fields of writing?

### **3 Translating literature, translating popular fiction**

Literature and popular fiction are both huge fields, filled with different genres and (especially popular fiction) subgenres. They are also two very distinct fields, not to be confused even when we talk about literary texts that gain broader popularity. They operate in different ways, they are discussed differently, and the readers have different expectations towards them (cf. Gelder 2004: 14-20). The *skopos*, the aim of the texts, is also rather different between the two fields. All this is mirrored by what professional and general readers say about them. Literary novels are praised for their originality, for their beauty of expression, for their original style, for the new, fresh ways in which writers approach eternal questions of human experience. Popular novels are praised for telling a good story, for their power to tear the reader out of the real world and settling him in the universe of the book, for a clear ending, for their adherence to the particular genre. It also seems that the readers approach the two fields in a different way: they turn to popular fiction for fun and escape, and to literature for personal growth and enrichment of the soul. One Slovene professional reader even thought that literature is for autumn, winter and rain, while popular fiction is meant to be read in the summer, on the beach (cf. Zlatnar Moe 2010: 127). But what about translators? Translators are also readers, the first readers, as Bassnet points out: "The translator is after all, first a reader and then a writer, and in the process of reading he or she must take a position [towards the source text]" (Bassnet 2002: 78). Does that mean, then, that the translators approach the translation of a popular novel differently than the translation of a literary novel?

In some ways, this is unavoidable. For example, much more popular fiction gets translated than literature, at least in Slovenia. This means that translating popular fiction will enable the translator to get more work. Consequently, it will unavoidably feel more like a mundane activity, not a creative one. Sometimes translators of very famous books even become a little famous themselves, and can suddenly find themselves explaining their work in the popular media, or find themselves in a fierce discussion over translational issues with the die-hard fans of the text in questions. Some other working conditions also differ – the deadlines for popular fiction tend to be very short because the publisher wishes to join the trend, catch the release of a movie, etc. And, while sometimes translators of popular fiction get a taste the fame that is usually reserved for the stars of popular culture, it seems quite impossible for them to achieve the kind of recognition that is expressed through awards – either official, state awards, or the professional ones, awarded by translator or writer associations.

But external working conditions are not the only thing that changes. As Lefevere has pointed out more than once (Lefevere 1992: 121; Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 109), and as the publicly expressed opinions of some Slovene translators also suggest, translators do indeed have a different attitude to both fields, and also treat each group of texts in a different way. When talking about translation of sacred texts, for example, Lefevere notes: “Such faithful, even literal translation is reserved for books that are repositories of a culture's authority. Yet by analogy this kind of translation can be extended to works considered classics of world literature” (Lefevere 1992: 121). Classics of world literature, then, not classics of fiction, or even popular fiction. All this leads to the conclusion that there are indeed some differences between translating popular fiction and translating literary prose: that the translations of literary prose might be nearer the “faithful”, source-oriented end of the scale, while popular fiction tends to be more neutralized, or even domesticated, nearer the target-oriented end of the scale.

The study of popular translations from English into Slovene has certainly showed a certain degree of stylistic neutralization in popular fiction (Zlatnar Moe 2010a). But does literary prose really escape it? How classic must a classic be in order to avoid neutralization and domestication?

## 4 Research Material

### 4.1 Corpus

In order to determine what stylistic shifts happen in popular fiction and literary prose on the way from English into Slovene, I analyzed seven novels from the field of popular fiction, and five generally considered literary novels. The books included in the analysis are:

Popular fiction:

1. Nick Hornby: *About a Boy* (translated by Mojca Krevel), first published in 1998, Slovene version: 2002; genre: lad lit.
  2. Maeve Binchy: *Tara Road* (translated by Aleksandra Rekar), first published in 1998, Slovene version: 2005; genre: romance.
  3. J. K. Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (translated by Jakob Kenda); first published in 2003, Slovene version: 2003; genre: fantasy for children.
  4. Terry Pratchett: *The Colour of Magic* (translated by Maja Novak); first published in 1983, Slovene version: 2001; genre: satirical fantasy.
  5. Helen Fielding: *Bridget Jones's Diary* (translated by Maja Novak); first published in 1996, Slovene version: 2001; genre: chick lit.
  6. Dan Brown: *The Da Vinci Code* (translated by Nataša Müller); first published in 2003; Slovene version 2006; genre: thriller.
- J. R. R. Tolkien: *The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King* (translated by Branko Gradišnik); first published in 1958, Slovene version: 2003; genre: fantasy.

Literary fiction:

1. Paul Auster: *The Brooklyn Follies* (translated by Miha Avanzo); first published in 2006, Slovene version: 2009.
2. Mark Haddon: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (translated by Vasja Cerar); first published 2003, Slovene version: 2003.
3. Cormac McCarthy: *The Road* (translated by Lili Potpara); first published: 2006, Slovene version: 2009.
4. Ian McEwan: *On Chesil Beach* (translated by Suzana Tratnik); first published: 2007, Slovene version: 2008.

5. Zadie Smith: *On Beauty* (translated by Matej Juh); first published: 2005, Slovene version: 2008.

The genres in the popular fiction group are based on the categorisation at Amazon.com. This same site does not categorise the novels from the second group at all, while the readers' tags (genre, attributed to individual texts by readers) most often categorize them as “a novel”, “contemporary fiction” or “literary fiction”.

The popular fiction books and their authors all belong to the canon of their respective genres, in some cases they even started the genre in question or significantly shaped it. All the authors have had more or less successful films based on their books (though not necessarily the novels included here). They have generally acquired a faithful following of fans who are willing to buy whatever they write – in short, they represent well the field of popular fiction.

The literary fiction books and authors are generally considered to be among the most regarded authors of contemporary prose fiction, they have all been nominated and in some cases had won literary awards, and several of their books, too, have been seen movie adaptations (which have often also won awards). They are thus acceptable as representatives of the literary field.

## 4.2 Method

I concentrated on parts of the books which are most diverse in terms of style and register. Therefore I analyzed those parts of the text where the characters are in direct or indirect interaction (dialogues, letters); where characters differ in social position, status, age, role; or where the style is extreme (e.g. arguments). In sum, I have analyzed either an actual chapter if the chapter met all these criteria, or suitable excerpts from different chapters, totalling about a chapters length. If the chapters were very short (as in *The Curious Incident*), I analyzed several chapters.

I focused on the shifts that caused:

- increased formality
- decreased formality
- change of field
- stylistic changes that affected the contents of the text
- words and phrases that deviated markedly from the target-language norms.

Those strategies influence the stylistic level of the text directly. A text, for example, which deviates from the norms in the relevant language is considered badly written. The same goes for a text which becomes less coherent because of intentional or accidental shifts of meaning. While a badly written popular novel only confirms the wide-spread opinion among Slovenian professional readers and the general public that popular fiction is simply badly written literature, it also influences the reception of literary fiction in the target culture, leaving readers wondering why a certain book won a literary award and why its author seems to be so highly regarded abroad.

The occurrence of the shifts was determined on the basis of a certain word, phrase or expression in the source and target languages. In cases of archaisms, neologisms and the like, it was determined with the aid of dictionary definitions in both languages and/or the frequency and typical occurrences of an item in the Slovene corpora. When such aids were not available, as in cases of authors' or translators' personal neologisms, the register of an expression was determined on the basis of an analysis of morphemes, word-formation etc.

## **5 Findings**

### **5.1 Popular fiction**

#### **5.1.1 Increased formality**

Increased formality is the most common result of stylistical shift in the study. It was the most common result overall in the study as well as in each individual novel. These changes are most visible in dialogues, except for *The Bridget Jones's Diary*, where the overall formality of the translation is higher than the source text. Also *Tara Road* is slightly more formal in the target language, which is interesting since the source text itself is rather formal. The third partial exception is *About the Boy*, where the chapters, written from the point of view of the boy from the title, are generally more formal, while in the chapters written from the point of view of the grown-up, increased formality is found mainly in dialogues.

Apart from these three cases, the formality is increased in:

- informal conversations, for example conversations between hobbits, teenagers, friends in the pub, etc.
- speeches of low-status characters (servants, children etc.)

- dialogues between members of different social classes
- teenage and children's languages
- informal writing (letters in *Harry Potter*, the whole of *Bridget Jones*).

The most popular strategies to achieve this are as follows:

1. The use of a more formal synonym or near-synonym. Similarly, the use of archaisms and unusual words or phrases may increase the formality level in modern, not very formal texts. In this category is also deletion or neutralization of swear-words and vulgarisms, which is a common strategy in translation of popular fiction – although it must be said that vulgar language was used in only two of the analysed books, namely *Bridget Jones* and *About a Boy*.

2. More formal syntax – it shows especially in insertion of more clauses into sentences, avoiding polysyndeton in a sentence on the one hand, and using syntactical structures within the clause that are more complex than in the source text on the other.

3. Correcting ungrammatical elements from the source text – this strategy is most noticeable in *Bridget Jones* where the source text often leaves out pronouns or parts of the verb, which is in no way marked in the target text.

4. More formal morphemes, especially suffixes and endings.

5. Avoiding redundancy even though its use in the source text is motivated within the plot, or by characters. Thus in *Tara Road* one character describes his odious brother-in-law as “the man who is married to my sister” to further emphasize that the other man is totally different and negative, but in the translation this was shortened to the neutral “my brother-in-law”. Similarly, in *About a Boy* a man on a date says to the woman: “I have never been out with someone who was a mum”, thus expressing his doubts, embarrassment, attempt at politically correct expression, and a bit of guilt (since he went out with single mums specifically so that would not have to commit) which in the translation became a neutral “I was never out with a mum”.

6. Avoiding repetition at all costs, polysyndeton as well as repetition of individual words and expressions. Thus the same English expletive (used by the same character) is translated in Slovene in four different ways, and is left out another couple of times within the same argument in *About a Boy*, which leaves the character in question sounding much more composed, gentlemanly and far less angry than the original.

7. Other strategies include leaving out interjections or replacing them with more formal ones, a more formal word order within a phrase, clause and sentence, and a more formal use of punctuation, and deleting emphasis expressed through font and quotation marks.

The main result of those shifts is a neutralization of style in the target text, which causes the translations to be more reserved. The characters are less intense, the differences in the position and status of character is less marked, and sometime also nuances in the interpersonal relations, opinions, emotions etc. are less pronounced than in the original.

### 5.1.2 Decreased formality

Decreased formality is less common in the Slovene translations of popular fiction than increased formality. The majority of cases that came up in my study are from one text, namely, *The Lord of the Rings*. Those cases, however, are representative for the whole field as they appear in the same situations as (less numerous) cases of decreased formality in the other books analyzed. The situations which trigger a downward shift in formality are:

- when the source text is very solemn (for example the prophecy about the King's healing hands in *The Lord of the Rings*; the cosmological introduction to Discworld in *The Colour of Magic*);
- when the characters discuss deeper issues such as emotions, philosophy, ideology (for example, when the hobbits discuss their emotions towards the king, the high-elves, the wizard);
- when the source text is very formal for administrative reasons (for example formal letters in *Harry Potter*).

Strategies used to achieve this are often very similar to those used to increase the formality level, only operating in the opposite direction: a choice of less formal morphemes, synonyms or near synonyms, syntax and punctuation. But there are a few strategies that are specific to this type of shift, namely:

- A sudden fall in formality level: these are the cases where one isolated word or phrase stands out because it is far less formal than its immediate context. The words and phrases in question are not vulgarisms or swear-words, they are words from a general vocabulary, only a level or two lower than the rest of the immediate context. What is interesting is that the words and phrases that stand out that are usually closer to the source text than the rest of the translation, but they stand out as disturbing in the vicinity of the more formal style that the translator has chosen for the target text in general.
- Naming strategies: naming is an area that Slovene translators, especially of books for children and fantasy seem to care about strongly, and changes of names are very common. But naming can also decrease the overall formality of the text. One strategy that achieves this is

forming names that remind one of colloquial Slovene words, borrowed from German. This strategy was used in the nomenclature of the Rohan civilization in *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as in the name of the main villain in *Harry Potter*. The level of formality is further lowered if those names are written phonetically (*Ajzengart* for Isengard, *Rajterska* for Riddermark), as such borrowed words and expressions have been frowned upon for at least a century in Slovenia.<sup>2</sup> In *Harry Potter* names are also sometimes translated into deliberately funny Slovene names, also when in the source text they are not so, and also in instances where in the course of the plot it becomes clear that the characters are not funny at all, but rather tragic or heroic.<sup>3</sup> Another naming strategy that lowers formality is the use of possessive forms of women's family names, which are generally considered a sign of colloquial style and informal speech. The last naming strategy that may cause decreased formality is the lack of any strategy whatsoever, as demonstrated in *The Colour of Magic*: the same name is translated differently in different parts of the text; names formed according to the same model and denoting characters belonging to the same cultures are translated differently; some names are translated, and others not; etc.

- Specific terminology: this issue too arises mostly in fantasy, where whole universes are invented and have to be reinvented in the target language. Sometimes, however, it seems that the translator is not completely aware of his/her role in the creation of a new universe. In *The Colour of Magic*, for example, there is no discernible terminological strategy: some basic geographical terms of the Discworld are given in a descriptive way and do not function as terms at all. Death, which is feminine in Slovene but appears as “he” in the text, gets a gender change in the translation, which leads to a very awkward derivation of the Slovene word for “death”. In *The Lord of the Rings*, “rangers”, who are basically an army unit, are translated by a pejorative neologism for “wanderers”, while “dementors” in *Harry Potter* (together with many other evil and sinister creatures in the same series) in the target text receive a term which does not actually mean anything and is not scary, but possibly evokes connotations of “wet”, “nightmarish”.

- A similar strategy is the mixing of different universes in the translation of one text. The formality of the description of the ancient and noble civilization of Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings* falls immediately when the translator chooses to use a term that the readers know from

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2 Relevant sources including style manuals and school textbooks are cited in Zlatnar Moe 2010b.

3 The reason for this might be that the translator did not know at the beginning into which direction the plot would develop in the next instalments – in the first year Neville Longbottom *was* simply clumsy and had a big bottom, and Severus Snape *was* simply arrogant and altogether unpleasant, as their Slovene names suggest in a rather direct manner.

another book – a classic Slovene novel about a community of Neolithic lake-dwellers. A similar mixing of universes occurs in *Bridget Jones*, but it leads to a confusion about fields rather than formality, since the universes involved are those of the urban culture of London in the nineties and Slovene folk tales.

We can conclude, then, that again the shifts contribute especially to neutralization of the style, but in this case the neutralization of those elements that are more formal than the text in general. Another consequence of downward style shifts seems to be the banalization of the novels in question: the scary, tragic or heroic becomes funny, the noble becomes banal or even primitive, well organized universes and worlds become confused and not very well thought out.

### 5.1.3 Other stylistic shifts

#### *Shifts of Field*

Shifts of field, too, tend towards the neutralization of style. Thus biblical, legal, teenage, children's, military, journalistic or ritual English are all translated into the same neutral formal variety of Slovene. In a few cases teenage language mutates into children's language. This is the case in a few cases in *Tara Road* (where also the source text is itself stylistically conservative, and even teenager language is rather reserved and not in the least extreme). It is also found in one memorable instance in *Harry Potter* where Harry, aged 15, has an argument with his cousin, also aged 15, that lapses into children's language in the Slovene translation (whereas nothing similar happens in the source text). Generally, children's and teenage language seem to cause the most problems for the translators: They not only regularly neutralize the style of speech in the source text, but also frequently correct the style of the underage characters when they write (for example the “child” chapters in *About a Boy*). This urge to correct children (even invented ones) is not limited to popular fiction. As we shall see, the children and teenagers in literary novels often meet the same fate.

#### *Adherence to the Slovene norms of good writing and good manners*

These shifts most often occur when the translator is still a beginner, at least in my study.<sup>4</sup> The most common of those shifts is compression, where the translator uses less words to say something than the author; or the omission of repetition, even when repetition is used

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<sup>4</sup> But not only in the study. In the classroom, too, the fledgling literary translators are reluctant to break any rules or norms of the target language. This is curious because at the beginning of their studies (before they enter the literary translation course) they do not have any problems with non-adherence to the rules of good writing.

as a stylistic device, or is essential for the characterization and plot, as in the case of *The Curious Incident* that will be discussed below.

Next, there are some changes that prettify nastier parts of the text. As I have shown, in *Harry Potter* dangerous things appear less dangerous; In *Bridget Jones* many remarks become less acerbic than in the English version, and Sophie Neveau in *The Da Vinci Code* is softer than her American equivalent. Vulgarisms tend to be embellished or left out, sometimes probably to avoid repetition.

Lastly, there is a group of shifts that only vaguely belong here, since they are more about explicit non-adherence to the norms of good writing. They mostly occur in works of the more experienced translators, as a result of their inclination to creatively play with language in their translations, thus introducing non-normative versions of existing words, or neologisms. Sometimes this strategy is effective, but sometimes the neologisms or the non-normative solutions stand out in the text, or even (most often) decrease formality of the text instead of supporting the style of the original, by being too unusual, or unintentionally funny. In either case they contradict the expressed opinion of the translators that creativity lies only in translation of literature.

To sum up, the Slovene translations of English popular fiction are generally more neutral in style than their English originals. If the source text is felt to be too informal, formality is increased, but if it is very formal, it is decreased. The field-specific varieties of the language are rewritten in neutral formal variety of Slovene, and childrens' and teenage language specifically is often corrected according to the norms of good writing in the target language.

## 5.2 Literary prose

After this first analysis, the question arose whether the results would be the same if works considered literary fiction were included in the study. Would there be as many register shifts, and would they also contribute to the neutralization of style? Would there be shifts that did not even happen in translation of popular fiction?

After the analysis of five works of literary fiction, it seems that the shifts indeed differ, in type as well as in quantity. Firstly, far fewer shifts have been noted in literary translations, even after accounting for the fact that this second corpus is smaller. But this is not the only

difference. After excluding shifts in the meaning, which was the largest category in this study, and the second largest in the first one, the distribution of shifts was as follows:

1. stylistic shifts;
2. non-normative solutions in the target language which affected the stylistic aspect of the text;
3. formality shifts;
4. additions;
5. omissions;
6. shifts of field;
7. shifts of ideology.

### **5.2.1 Stylistic shifts**

Stylistic shifts that do not influence the register (either formality or field) are the largest group of changes in literary prose, unlike popular fiction, where the largest group was shifts of formality. Those shifts were further divided depending on whether their result was the perceived “better style”, or whether the shift resulted in a more stylistically neutral target text. Most changes occurred because the Slovene translators felt that the style of the source books has to be corrected. The reason for this appears to be that two of the books involve children/teenagers.

The first one is *The Road*, where much of the text is written as a dialogue between the father and the son; and the second one is *The Curious Incident*, which is written from the point of view of a fifteen-year-old autistic boy. It is in those two texts that the large majority of corrections occur. While the shifts in *The Road* simply confirm the findings from the study of popular fiction, namely, that (adult) translators apparently fall into a teacher-like mode when translating children and teenagers, *The Curious Incident* has an additional complication. Monotony, repetition and generally poor vocabulary apparently are symptoms of autism. Correcting this, then, not only changes the style of the book, but also affects characterization, and removes important clues to the plot. The boy in the target text is less obviously autistic than in the source text, which may influence the way the reader reads the story.

### **5.2.2 Non-normative solutions in the target language**

That this group of shifts is larger than in the popular novels was partly expected, based on the expressed opinions of the translators. Several of them have said in interviews or public

discussions something along the lines that translating popular fiction is just work, whereas real creativity lies in translating literature. The expected result of this attitude would be more creative solutions on all levels, but, surprisingly, this is not what happens.

The larger part of non-normative elements, namely, occur, because the translators opt for word-for-word translations of source-language elements, followed by linguistic shifts which signal lacking knowledge of some of the rules of the target language (such as use of the dual number, declination of nouns, use of possessive pronouns etc.). Those shifts are not motivated by the source text (where they could give information about the characters, for example), they are the translators' additions. Only the smallest group in this category are non-normative solutions that occur because of the creative approach of the translator towards the target language (for example neologisms, surprising word-formation and similar).

### 5.2.3 Register shifts

Shifts of formality are far less usual in translation of literary prose than in translation of popular fiction. Even though they are in the third position, this is so largely because of the shifts in *The Road*. *The Road* posed a very difficult task for the Slovene translator since its style is in contradiction with two very strong norms of good writing in Slovene: It is both rather informal and very monotonous. The translator retained a lot of the repetition, but on a slightly higher level. Another interesting example is *On Chesil Beach*, which is written in a rather neutral normative variation of English, but becomes very poetic in Slovene, whereas the examples from *Brooklyn Follies* are of the kind that appeared also in the popular translations, namely, higher formality in dialogues. *On Beauty*, too, has some upward shifts in formality. Those shifts are interesting because they do not happen to the extreme registers, but to the more mainstream ones. Thus the language of a 15-year old upper middle class boy who wants to be a *gangsta* is preserved, while the register of his sister, a very ambitious and newly grown-up 21-year old sister who wants to be an intellectual, is slightly raised.

Downward shifts of formality were far rarer. There are only 11 examples, mostly from the *Brooklyn Follies* and *On Beauty*. But those that occur are interesting. In *On Beauty* the formality is decreased when the university teachers talk among themselves in a rather pompous style full of quotations, fancy expressions and name dropping. The situation is therefore the opposite from the situation in *The Lord of the Rings*, where formality was decreased when characters of higher status talked – not among themselves, but with those of lower status. The examples in *Brooklyn Follies* also run counter to those in popular fiction in

that vulgarisms and swear words are not neutralized, but intensified. Another interesting shift is the adoption of informal singular forms of address between the characters in situations where one would expect greater formality, such as when they see each other for the first time.

There are, thankfully, only a few instances of sudden drop in formality relative to the immediate context, and most of these are, again, due to the intensified vulgarisms in *Brooklyn Follies*. The rest occur when the text in question was spoken or written by teenagers or young adults in *On Beauty* and *Curious Incident*.

Shifts of field were very few, but they shared many characteristics with the shifts of field in popular translation, as in the large majority of cases the field changed from extreme to neutral. Only in three cases was there a shift from one field-specific variety of language to another.

#### **5.2.4 Literature-specific shifts**

There are a few changes that occur in translation of literature, but not in the translation of popular fiction in my study. For example, translators tend to make more additions, most often to complete the sentence on the syntactical level. This does not happen in translations of popular fiction, at least not noticeably, but that could be the result of the source text style. As mentioned before, literary texts are praised for their original style and creative expression; in popular fiction other qualities are prized more highly. It may be, therefore, that the literary authors in my study took a more creative approach towards syntax, but unfortunately, Slovene translators (and possibly even more so the copy editors) would have none of it.

A special type of addition is explanation, which was not found in popular fiction. Translators often feel they have to explain culture-specific elements to their readers, or they write a whole dictionary definition of a word in their translation, or give two or more synonyms for an individual term. Sometimes, they even write footnotes to further explain certain points in the text as if the readers' extra-textual knowledge is not to be trusted.

The last and very interesting category is shifts in ideology. This category of shifts was not present in the popular novels, but it appeared in literary translations. These shifts fall into two groups. In the first, the shifts occur when the character does or says something that does not put him or her (or possibly the author) in the best light. Such an example is from *On Beauty*, where one character wrongly states that *Kyrie Eleison* is Latin. In the Slovene translation this information is corrected, and the character is left marvelling about the beauty of *Kyrie Eleison* in Greek. Similar are changes of "Negro" into "a black man" (in a dialogue),

“kissed her wetly” into “kissed her passionately”, or “they would have [...] *dumped* my body into an unmarked grave” into “they would have [...] *buried* my dead body in an unmarked grave”.

The other group of changes includes real shifts in ideology, such as are seen in *Brooklyn Follies* where one character speaks about her unpleasant experiences with an extreme Christian cult in the source language. In the target version, her comments are directed towards “the Church” in general, or a generic “god” etc. Other cases in this category is upgrading Mozart from “one of the greatest unappreciated composers” to “one of the greatest composers,” or changing “friends” into “female friends”.

To sum up, we could say that in literary translations the shifts of register do not play as important a role as in translation of popular fiction. More common are other stylistic shifts (either correcting or neutralizing the style) within the same formality level, clarifications, ideological shifts, and, ironically, the absence of shifts (word-for-word translations).

## 6 Conclusion

I find that shifts in register frequently occur in popular fiction translations from English into Slovene, but much less frequently in literary translations. These shifts are, as a rule, changes from the extremes towards neutrality and they alter the style of the text considerably. The most frequent type of change is a raised formality level, followed by lexical changes (some contributing to higher formality level and some to the opposite), a decreased formality level, and a change of field-specific language into a more general standard variety. This happens on the morphological, syntactical, lexical, and textual levels, as well as on the level of punctuation. The most frequently used strategies are: opting for more or less formal synonyms, syntax, or morphemes; different strategies in naming, and in the vocabulary of individual universes; use of punctuation; and use or omission of individual stylistic features. The elements that prove the most problematic in the translation of popular fiction into Slovene seem to be teenage and childrens’ language in particular, field-specific language in general, and some stylistic devices such as repetition, vulgar language and redundancy.

In literary translation the situation is somewhat different. Firstly, there are fewer shifts than in the translation of popular fiction, and they are partly of a different nature. Even if some of the same shifts occur, they happen with different frequency. Register shifts do not

stand out as the most numerous category. Instead translators change the style of the text more often. Lexical shifts, too, are more frequent in translation of literary prose than in popular fiction. There are a few categories of shifts that are specific to the translation of literary novels, especially additions to the text in order to make it more grammatical than is the original, and explanation of culture-specific or less common general knowledge items. Interesting is also the occurrence of “ideological shifts” which are not present in the translation of popular fiction at all, and which come in two forms: those that make the characters appear nicer or more knowledgeable, and the more straight-forwardly ideological shifts.

The difference between the target stylistic norms, rules and conventions on the one hand, and the source text with its violations of stylistic norms on the other, presents the biggest challenge for the literary translator. Very often the target norms win out, which leads to stylistically neutralized target texts. Another problem that is more present in literary translation than in translation of popular fiction is word-for-word translation. The reasons for this are unclear. It could be that literary texts are more difficult to understand and translate than popular fiction, or it could be that the translators approach the text differently, and are afraid to change too much lest they compromise the style of the author.

To conclude, we could say that based on the results of these two studies, translators indeed do translate literature differently from popular fiction, and this is another marker of difference between the two fields. Although there are some issues that are common to both fields, such as teenage and childrens’ language, and also other field-specific language varieties, as well as the general reluctance to repeat something or use more words than strictly necessary, there are even more differences.

Translators, especially more experienced ones, tend to play more in popular fiction, they feel free to change the style, change the register, overlook details, introduce neologisms and similar, even though they publicly express the opinion that translating popular fiction is not creative work.

Literary translation, they tend to claim, is where creativity lies, but the results of the study do not confirm that, since there is more adapting of the style to the existing mainstream norms and rules, more word-for-word translation, more explanations for the reader. It seems that the translators feel more attached to the source text than in popular fiction, since some shifts result in the characters and/or the author making a better impression on the reader stylistically, and sometimes even ideologically.

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