

## Toward a Genre-Sensitive Model of Stylistic Variation in Translation: Patterns, Challenges, and Theoretical Insights

Hishomudin Ahmad<sup>1</sup> | Iman Mohamadamin Khader Alkielani<sup>2</sup> | Norfarhana Ahmad Ghafar<sup>3,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>The Hashemite University, Jordan

<sup>3</sup>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author

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### Abstract:

This article develops a genre-sensitive conceptual model for understanding stylistic variation in translation, aiming to address the complex interplay between genre-specific norms and translational choices. Synthesizing insights from translational stylistics, systems theory, and discourse-oriented approaches, the study examines how multiple forces such as genre conventions, ideological constraints, audience expectations, and translator agency interact to shape the stylistic profile of translated texts. By conducting a comparative analysis across five major genres, namely poetry, fiction, drama, religious texts, and public discourse; it identifies recurrent patterns of stylistic vulnerability. These include phenomena such as metaphor loss, deictic flattening, tonal shifts, and narratorial dislocation, all of which challenge the preservation of nuanced stylistic effects during the translation process. In response to these challenges, the article proposes two heuristic tools designed to aid both analysis and practice: (1) a taxonomy of genre-based stylistic variation that maps typical stylistic pressures within each genre, and (2) a translator decision-making model grounded in norm-based and functionalist translation theories, which conceptualizes stylistic choices as contextually driven and often negotiated. Together, these frameworks reconceptualize style not as an aesthetic afterthought but as a core, contextually contingent dimension of meaning-making. By advancing an integrated theoretical approach to stylistic transformation, the study contributes both descriptive precision and pedagogical value to ongoing research, practice, and training in translation studies.

**Keywords:** Translational stylistics, genre-based translation, translator agency, contextual constraints, decision-making model, rhetorical adaptation.

## 1. Introduction:

Stylistic variation is increasingly recognized as a critical dimension of translation, shaping not only the linguistic form of the target text but also its functional resonance within a new cultural and communicative context. Style, in this regard, is not an aesthetic overlay but an intrinsic component of meaning-making—one that reflects the translator's negotiation of textual norms, ideological positioning, and intended function. From a functionalist perspective, Nord (1991) offers a structured account of how translators engage with both extratextual and intratextual features in order to fulfil a specific communicative purpose. As Pym (1993) observes, Nord's framework positions the translator within a pedagogically defined system of roles and procedures, emphasizing text analysis as a prerequisite for informed stylistic decision-making. Munday (2021), building on this orientation, highlights how textual conventions and institutional expectations condition the translator's scope of agency.

Genre is a critical variable in translation, functioning not as a neutral label but as a system of expectations shaped by rhetorical, stylistic, and pragmatic norms. Each genre—poetic, narrative, religious, dramatic, or public—requires distinct stylistic resources and interpretive strategies. These genre-specific affordances and constraints influence how style is preserved, adapted, or reframed in translation. Prior studies highlight this variation: Dorst (2019) examines metaphor reduction in literary fiction, while Osborneva and Savel'eva (2022) explore how rhetorical shifts reconfigure theological meaning in religious texts. Collectively, such work points to the need for models that go beyond isolated features to explain systemic, genre-sensitive patterns of stylistic transfer.

Despite growing interest in style, translational stylistics remains theoretically fragmented, often focusing on isolated linguistic features or single-genre examples with limited attention to broader structural dynamics. In response, scholars such as

Baker (1992), Hermans (1999), Chesterman (2000), Nord (1991), and Munday (2021) have proposed integrative models linking stylistic analysis with cultural, functional, and systemic variables. Baker emphasizes translation equivalence and the interpretive nature of textual shifts; Hermans frames style within sociocultural norms and literary systems; Chesterman adopts a causal model informed by memetic theory; Nord develops a procedural approach based on Skopos theory; and Munday highlights the role of ideology and institutional discourse. Collectively, these models point to the need for a more coherent framework, the one that captures the dynamic interplay between genre conventions, functional goals, and the translator's agency in shaping stylistic variation across texts and contexts.

This study proposes a genre-sensitive conceptual model of stylistic variation in translation, based on a comparative synthesis of theoretical insights and translation challenges across five domains: poetry, fiction, drama, religious discourse, and public communication. It aims to identify recurring patterns of stylistic vulnerability and contextual constraint, and to theorize translator decision-making as a socially, rhetorically, and institutionally embedded process. While emphasizing individual agency, the model also accounts for collaborative environments, especially under institutional or genre-specific pressures where stylistic choices are negotiated rather than made independently.

The discussion unfolds as follows: Section 2 outlines the theoretical foundations of stylistic variation in translation; Section 3 examines genre-specific stylistic configurations and translation challenges; Section 4 synthesizes shared and divergent patterns; Section 5 presents a genre-based taxonomy and a translator decision-making model; and Section 6 considers implications for theory, pedagogy, and future research. In developing this framework, the study seeks to offer a systematic account of how stylistic choices are shaped by genre norms and contextual pressures, and how translators negotiate these forces in the act of re-authoring meaning.

## 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations:

Any attempt to account for stylistic variation in translation must begin with a clear understanding of what is meant by style and how it is operationalized in translation studies. Style, in this context, is not an embellishment or an optional feature of the text; it is integral to meaning, embedded in linguistic choices at all levels and shaped by the communicative purpose of the text. It is also context-sensitive, reflecting the translator's strategic response to genre conventions, ideological framing, and institutional expectations. Drawing on Boase-Beier (2014), style may be viewed as the textual trace of the translator's interpretive stance, shaped not only by lexico-syntactic choices but by pragmatic and cognitive orientations toward the text's meaning potential.

This section outlines key theoretical concepts that inform the present study, beginning with definitions of style and stylistic variation and extending to a consideration of genre as a principal variable in shaping stylistic expectations. These contextual pressures encompass not only institutional policies and ideological framing but also genre-specific norms, audience expectations, and, increasingly, cognitive and collaborative constraints.

The discussion then turns to the contribution of earlier models that have sought to describe or explain stylistic shifts in translation, with particular attention to frameworks developed by Baker (1992), Hermans (1999), and Chesterman (2000). These models are revisited not simply for their historical value but for the ways in which they foreground norms, systems, and translator agency as interrelated dimensions of stylistic behavior. The translator is not merely a linguistic executor but an active participant whose decisions are shaped by both textual structures and socio-cultural contingencies, including collaborative constraints in institutional settings.

The section concludes by identifying the limitations of existing approaches and by outlining the rationale for a genre-sensitive model

that accommodates both textual and contextual pressures in translation. While this study is conceptual in nature, it draws on principles that may inform future empirical investigations using corpus stylistics, contrastive discourse analysis, or reception-based stylistic evaluation.

### 2.1 Defining Style, Stylistic Variation, and Translation

Style, in the context of translation studies, refers to the patterned linguistic choices that contribute to a text's identity and communicative effect. It operates across multiple levels -lexical, grammatical, textual and encodes not only aesthetic values but also ideological stance and interpersonal meaning. In translation, style is subject to variation as texts are transferred from one linguistic and cultural system to another. These shifts may be deliberate or constrained by structural and contextual pressures. Baker (1992) has shown how translational shifts at the level of lexis, cohesion, and syntax affect the stylistic configuration of the target text. These are not neutral operations; rather, they constitute interpretive acts that reshape the communicative potential of the text.

Other studies reinforce the idea that stylistic variation reflects deeper processes of negotiation. Wright (2010), for example, draws attention to the translator's dilemma in exophonic prose -between preserving foreignness and facilitating accessibility. Klinger (2019) notes how features like repetition, which are integral to stylistic rhythm and emphasis, often disappear unless actively compensated for. These findings support the view that translation is not a transparent linguistic activity but one mediated by value judgments and audience positioning.

### 2.2 Genre as a Determinant of Stylistic Behaviour

Genre plays a key role in shaping stylistic expectations. Genre, in this context, is understood not merely as a textual category but as a socio-rhetorical framework that shapes communicative purpose and audience expectation (Swales, 1990; Hatim & Mason, 1997). Each genre comes with a

set of norms that guide how meaning is constructed and received. In poetry, ambiguity and metaphor may dominate; in public discourse, clarity and ideological alignment often prevail. In religious texts, doctrinal fidelity and intertextual resonance often govern stylistic retention; in dramatic works, performability and character voice take precedence. These conventions influence not only lexical and syntactic choices but also pragmatic tone, narrative perspective, and rhetorical strategies, all of which affect how stylistic variation manifests in translation.

Research has highlighted the risks involved in ignoring genre. Douthwaite (2018) argues that genre-based stylistic norms are not optional yet define what a text is and how it should be read. Tahiri and Çapriqi (2020) demonstrate how altering narrative voice in translated fiction distorts the interpretive texture of the original. Failure to account for genre may result in stylistic flattening, dissonance, or misalignment with reader expectations. Genre, therefore, functions as both a constraint and a resource for the translator. The translator's agency is thus exercised within genre-specific constraints, where stylistic deviations may signal interpretive intervention or institutional negotiation.

### 2.3 Review of Foundational Models

Various models have sought to explain how stylistic variation operates in translation. Baker's (1992) early work identifies key micro-level shifts, offering a linguistic account of stylistic reconfiguration. Malmkjær (2004) and Boase-Beier (2014) extend this analysis by emphasizing interpretation and cognition, showing that style is not only about form but also about the translator's perception of meaning and the reader's emotional response. Recent contributions by Risku (2023) and House (2023) further embed stylistic decision-making in a sociocognitive paradigm, where

agency is distributed across individual cognition, institutional norms, and collaborative context.

Theo Hermans (1999) introduces a different perspective by situating translation within systems theory. Drawing on Toury and Even-Zohar, he argues that translation is embedded in overlapping literary, cultural, and ideological systems. Norms are not static rules but socially negotiated patterns that influence how translations are produced and evaluated. Hermans' view shifts attention from isolated texts to the position of translations within larger networks of discourse and power.

Chesterman (2000) proposes a complementary approach through his concept of "memes" as an ideas or strategies that replicate and evolve. Translation, in his Popperian view, is a hypothesis about the source text. It is tested, refined, or rejected in specific contexts. His tripartite model - product norms, process norms, and professional norms- captures how stylistic choices are shaped by genre expectations, institutional constraints, and ethical considerations. Both Hermans and Chesterman agree that style in translation is not an individual preference but a systemic negotiation involving ideology, tradition, and disciplinary practice.

These models operate at different analytical levels: Baker engages the microtextual surface, Boase-Beier and Malmkjær illuminate cognitive and affective processing, while Hermans and Chesterman theorize style as embedded in discursive and institutional systems. This study builds on these foundational models. It argues for a genre-sensitive framework that captures both the microstructural shifts described by Baker and the macro-contextual dynamics outlined by Hermans and Chesterman. The aim is to bridge linguistic detail with systemic function. Table 1 summarizes key theoretical models of stylistic variation in translation studies. It highlights how earlier models emphasize different analytical levels such as microtextual, cognitive, and systemic also how the present study integrates these through a genre-sensitive framework.

**Table 1: Theoretical Models of Stylistic Variation in Translation: From Linguistic Detail to Systemic Function**

Scholar / Model	Analytical Level	Core Concepts	Contribution to Stylistic Theory
<b>Baker (1992)</b>	Microtextual	Shifts in cohesion, lexis, and register	Identifies systematic stylistic variation across linguistic levels
<b>Boase-Beier (2014)Malmkjær (2004)</b>	Interpretive/ Cognitive	Style as interpretation, affect, reader engagement	Highlights translator subjectivity and emotional resonance
<b>Hermans (1999)</b>	Systemic-Sociocultural	Norms, literary systems, ideology	Situates stylistic behavior within overlapping discursive systems
<b>Chesterman (2000)</b>	Normative / Ethical	Memes, process norms, hypothesis-testing	Frames translation as value-driven and ethically regulated stylistic negotiation
<b>This Study (Current Article)</b>	Genre-Systemic Integration	Genre constraints, translator agency, institutional context	Proposes an integrated framework bridging micro-level variation and macro-level context

#### 2.4 The Need for a Genre-Sensitive Theoretical Framework

Despite the insights offered by these models, a comprehensive account of stylistic variation across genres remains underdeveloped. Much of the literature focuses on individual genres or isolated stylistic features. What is lacking is a comparative model that recognizes how genre mediates both textual structure and extra-textual expectations. Genre, understood as a socially-situated and communicatively purposeful category (Swales, 1990; Biber & Conrad, 2009), structures not only the organization of texts but also the normative expectations governing style, tone, and intertextual alignment.

The translator of poetry must navigate ambiguity and musical form, while the translator of religious texts must uphold doctrinal precision. Public discourse may require stylistic simplification or ideological filtering. These genre-specific conditions shape stylistic decisions in ways that cannot be explained by universal models alone.

Unlike prior models that focus either on systemic positioning or micro-linguistic features, this framework emphasizes the interface between genre-specific stylistic norms and translator agency across diverse text types.

This study proposes a genre-sensitive framework to address this gap. By synthesizing findings across five genres, which are poetry, fiction, drama, religious texts, and public discourse, it offers a taxonomy of stylistic variation and a decision-making model for translators. The framework conceptualizes translation as a process of strategic negotiation shaped by genre norms, ideological pressures, and audience expectations. It aims to contribute to a more integrated understanding of how stylistic behaviour in translation is informed by both textual form and socio-cultural context. The framework also lays the groundwork for application in translator education and empirical corpus-based testing. Genre, in this sense, functions as the missing link that connects micro-level stylistic shifts with

macro-level institutional and ideological constraints in translation.

### 3. Cross-Genre Mapping of Stylistic Variation in Translation

Stylistic variation in translation, far from being a uniform or isolated phenomenon, is shaped by the specific communicative functions, rhetorical traditions, and linguistic norms associated with different genres. Translators working across genres do not operate within a stylistic vacuum; rather, they respond to genre-bound constraints and expectations that significantly influence their decisions at both the micro and macro levels of the text. The importance of this observation cannot be overstated: failing to account for genre-specific stylistic behavior risks oversimplifying the translator's task and underestimating the extent to which style is shaped by both internal textual dynamics and external sociocultural factors.

As noted by scholars such as Boase-Beier (2014), House (2023), and Munday (2021), genre significantly mediates the degree of stylistic freedom or constraint available to translators, with each genre foregrounding different stylistic stakes and interpretive pressures. "Stylistic vulnerabilities" here refer to features such as metaphor, deixis, rhythm, and narrative voice, that are especially prone to alteration or attenuation during translation due to genre-imposed constraints or cultural untranslatability.

This section offers a cross-genre overview of stylistic vulnerabilities in five key genres -poetry, fiction, drama, religious texts, and public discourse- drawing on recent studies to illustrate how translators adapt, reconfigure, or attenuate stylistic features in response to genre conventions and contextual pressures. The insights presented here underpin the taxonomy of stylistic variation and the decision-making model developed in Section 5, offering an evidence-based rationale for distinguishing genre-sensitive stylistic tendencies. While this discussion is conceptual, it lays the foundation for potential empirical extensions via

corpus stylistics, critical discourse analysis, or comparative stylistic annotation.

#### 3.1 Poetry: Metaphor and Rhythm under Pressure

Poetry, perhaps more than any other genre, foregrounds style as a vehicle of meaning. Its heavy reliance on metaphor, rhythm, and semantic indeterminacy poses formidable challenges for the translator. Metaphors are often culturally embedded and semantically dense, while rhythm is typically bound to the phonological structure of the source language. In poetry, stylistic loss often becomes unavoidable due to embedded metaphors and rhythmical form.

Dorst (2019), for instance, documents how metaphors in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* lose coherence in Dutch translation, disrupting the narrative's "mind style." Mohar and Onič (2021) note similar patterns in their study of Atwood's poetry, where translators frequently trade metaphorical precision for semantic clarity. Vlainić (2024) observes that the rhythmic intricacy of Anka Žagar's poetry is significantly flattened in translation. These studies point to the inherent instability of poetic style in translation, where aesthetic fidelity is often sacrificed to ensure accessibility and intelligibility. As one of the most stylistically fragile genres, poetry thus illustrates the limits of translatability and sets a high-contrast benchmark for assessing stylistic variation across other genres.

#### 3.2 Fiction: Narratorial Shifts and Lexical Flattening

Fictional texts are typically defined by distinctive narrative voices, character idiolects, and idiosyncratic lexical choices. The translator's challenge lies in maintaining the stylistic integrity of these elements without distorting their communicative intent. Narratorial shifts; especially shifts in focalization can obscure or alter the interpretive structure of the text, weakening character interiority and ideological framing. Lexical flattening, likewise, may erase stylistic nuances that serve to construct character, setting, or psychological perspective. In some

cases, these shifts may also reflect the translator's own positioning, resulting in increased or decreased translator visibility (Venuti, 1995).

In her analysis of exophonic prose, Wright (2010) finds that stylistic experimentation is routinely suppressed in translation, resulting in a more neutralized narrative tone. Tahiri and Çapriqi (2020) similarly observe how English translations of Kadare's fiction exhibit a noticeable shift in narrative perspective, weakening the psychological depth of the original. Zaki and Mohamed (2024), in their comparative analysis of *Awlad Haratina*, highlight how temporal distance and sociopolitical orientation affect lexical and syntactic choices. These findings collectively emphasize that fiction is particularly vulnerable to the erosion of stylistic specificity in translation. Such patterns may be further explored through corpus stylistics, which enables the mapping of translational effects on voice and lexical signature.

### 3.3 Drama: Deixis, Orality, and Performative Texture

Drama is rooted in performativity. It relies heavily on deixis, turn-taking structures, and oral immediacy to produce meaning on stage. Translating drama thus entails more than textual fidelity -it requires preserving the performative texture of the original. Performative texture refers to the combination of rhythm, deixis, turn-taking, and speech-act dynamics that reproduce the immediacy and affective energy of live interaction. Deictic expressions are particularly vulnerable, as their translation must maintain spatial and temporal coherence while aligning with target language norms and audience processing expectations.

Morini (2014) demonstrates how shifts in deixis alter narrative perspective in translations of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Similarly, Sotoca-Fernández (2023), in her analysis of gendered language in Beckett's *Happy Days*, illustrates how shifts in pronoun use and dialogic structure reshape the performative and thematic dimensions of the play. In theatre translation, considerations such as surtitling and stage direction further

constrain how much stylistic fidelity can be retained without impeding performability. These examples highlight the inseparability of stylistic and performative fidelity in drama translation, making genre sensitivity not just desirable but essential. Drama thus compels the translator to continually weigh linguistic nuance against performative viability, a dynamic well captured in the decision-making model proposed in this study.

### 3.4 Religious Texts: Rhetorical Reverence and Theological Constraints

Religious texts are embedded within a highly codified discursive tradition where style is inseparable from meaning. Unlike other genres, these texts demand not only fidelity to semantic content but also an unwavering adherence to the rhetorical and doctrinal tone that defines sacred discourse. This "rhetorical reverence" aligns with what Ferguson (1994) describes as the "sacred register": a linguistically marked form used to signal formality, awe, and doctrinal gravity. Translation in this context is rarely a neutral linguistic operation; it is an interpretive act shaped by theological authority, institutional norms, and audience sensitivity. The translator must not merely render meaning accurately but must also reproduce the reverential style and formal solemnity expected by the target religious community. Stylistic choices, therefore, carry significant ideological weight.

Scholarly work on Christian theological texts illustrates the complexity of this task. Osborneva and Savel'eva (2022) demonstrate how translations of Gregory the Theologian incorporate interpretive expansions that recalibrate both rhetorical form and theological nuance. In a related study, Nikolaeva et al. (2024) reveal that shifts in political and religious ideology across time are reflected in the evolving stylistic presentation of *Areopagitica*. These examples underscore the extent to which style in religious translation becomes a site of ideological inscription, revealing not only how the source text is interpreted but also how the translator aligns or distances themselves from specific doctrinal

stances. These challenges are further compounded by the intertextual density of sacred texts and the paratextual expectations imposed by exegetical or liturgical traditions.

Similar constraints emerge prominently in the translation of Islamic religious texts, particularly in relation to theological terms imbued with doctrinal gravity. Rahman et.al (2020) underscore that lexical precision and rhetorical restraint are not optional but fundamental when conveying divine concepts in another language. Vulnerable features often include divine epithets, structural parallelism, and formulaic openings that considered elements whose stylistic deviation may signal doctrinal infidelity. Furthermore, translation ideologies vary across religious traditions; ranging from literalist fidelity to contextual adaptation, further shaping stylistic norms and permissible variation.

In such contexts, the translator's remit surpasses mere linguistic fidelity; it encompasses ethical accountability and theological sensitivity. Even slight stylistic deviations risk distorting core meanings, potentially leading to interpretations that are doctrinally unsound or perceived as heretical. Religious translation thus foregrounds the argument that stylistic variation is never purely linguistic; rather, it constitutes a negotiated act shaped by belief systems, ideological frameworks, and institutional norms.

### 3.5 Public Discourse: Institutional Flattening and Ideological Filtering

Public discourse encompasses genres such as political speeches, policy documents, and media texts, where stylistic variation is shaped by institutional conventions and ideological imperatives. In this genre, translators often work within strict normative frameworks that constrain stylistic freedom, resulting in flattening or depersonalization of the source text. "Institutional flattening" refers to the systematic reduction of stylistic distinctiveness to meet bureaucratic, legal, or administrative norms; often resulting in impersonal or anonymized discourse. Ideological filtering, meanwhile, entails the selective omission

or rephrasing of politically charged or culturally specific elements, reflecting either overt censorship or the translator's anticipatory alignment with target system norms.

Xu (2023) identifies how translations in Singapore's public service discourse suppress interpersonal elements, reinforcing bureaucratic distance. Gandin (2015) shows how the lively and inviting tone of tourist brochures is neutralized in translation, prioritizing informational clarity over stylistic flair. Lugea (2015) highlights how intralingual subtitles in *The Wire* simplify dialectal features, thereby diluting sociolinguistic identity. These genres are typically governed by expectations of clarity, transparency, and neutrality, which often override stylistic individuality or cultural embeddedness (Hatim & Mason, 1997). These cases illustrate that in public discourse, translation is shaped as much by institutional ideology as by linguistic form. The genre exemplifies how translator agency is not merely interpretive but politically situated, reinforcing the need for a decision-making model that accounts for ideological accountability in stylistic choices.

## 4. Thematic Synthesis and Contextual Influences on Stylistic Variation

The analysis of stylistic variation across genres reveals both genre-specific vulnerabilities and recurring translational shifts that transcend individual text types. While each genre poses distinct challenges, several stylistic features such as metaphor, deixis, and narrative voice that consistently emerge as fragile across contexts. This section synthesizes genre-specific insights into a comparative framework, highlighting patterns of stylistic attenuation, reconfiguration, or ideological modulation that cut across genres.

These patterns reflect not only the internal stylistic architecture of each genre but also the contextual pressures that govern translational behavior—namely, genre norms, institutional ideology, and audience expectations. This synthesis lays the conceptual groundwork for the taxonomy of stylistic variation and the decision-making model

proposed in the next section, offering a cross-genre view of how translators navigate the complex interplay between fidelity, function, and ideological alignment.

#### 4.1 Shared Patterns of Stylistic Shift

Across genres, translators frequently contend with the attenuation of metaphor, flattening of deictic expressions, and reconfiguration of narrative voice. The following recurrent patterns have emerged across genre case studies, revealing how core stylistic dimensions tend to shift in response to contextual constraints. These shifts are rarely accidental but reflect the translator's strategic response to genre norms, ideological positioning, and audience expectations:

- Metaphors, integral to conceptual framing and aesthetic depth, are often simplified or omitted, leading to reduced cognitive and emotive resonance (Dorst, 2019; Vlainić, 2024).
- Deictic expressions, which anchor discourse in space and time, are flattened or generalized in translation, particularly in drama and fiction, where such shifts can alter audience alignment (Morini, 2014; Lugea, 2015).
- Narrative voice frequently undergoes focalization shifts or tonal neutralization, affecting characterization and reader engagement (Tahiri & Çapriqi, 2020; Zaki & Mohamed, 2024).

To address these challenges, translators apply strategies such as re-stylization or recasting stylistic intent through alternative linguistic forms and selective preservation, which maintains high-impact stylistic markers to sustain textual coherence. These strategies correspond to pragmatic shifts (e.g., modulation, adaptation) and stylistic recalibration, often reflecting the translator's prioritization of communicative impact over formal equivalence. These recurring shifts underscore the need for a translator decision-making model that accounts for genre-conditioned constraints while enabling strategic negotiation of stylistic fidelity.

#### 4.2 Genre-Specific Fragilities

While certain stylistic features are consistently fragile across genres, others display genre-exclusive sensitivities that require translators to tailor their strategies accordingly:

- Poetry resists translation through its dense metaphoric structures and rhythmical form, which are often lost or diluted (Mohar & Onič, 2021). Loss or alteration can diminish symbolic resonance and poetic tone.
- Fiction is prone to narratorial shifts and lexical neutralization that compromise stylistic nuance and character differentiation (Wright, 2010).
- Drama relies on deictic immediacy and performative rhythm, which risk erosion when divorced from their oral and spatial context, affecting stage viability and interpersonal dynamics (Sotoca-Fernández, 2023).
- Religious texts demand theological precision and rhetorical solemnity, leaving little room for stylistic deviation without interpretive consequences (Oborneva & Savel'eva, 2022).
- Public discourse is shaped by institutional ideology, leading to stylistic flattening and depersonalization to meet bureaucratic norms (Xu, 2023).

These fragilities reflect genre-specific constraints that shape the translator's scope of agency, stylistic decisions, and interpretive responsibility. They further support the view that translation must be understood as a genre-sensitive practice, where stylistic fidelity is always negotiated against communicative purpose, audience expectation, and institutional norms.

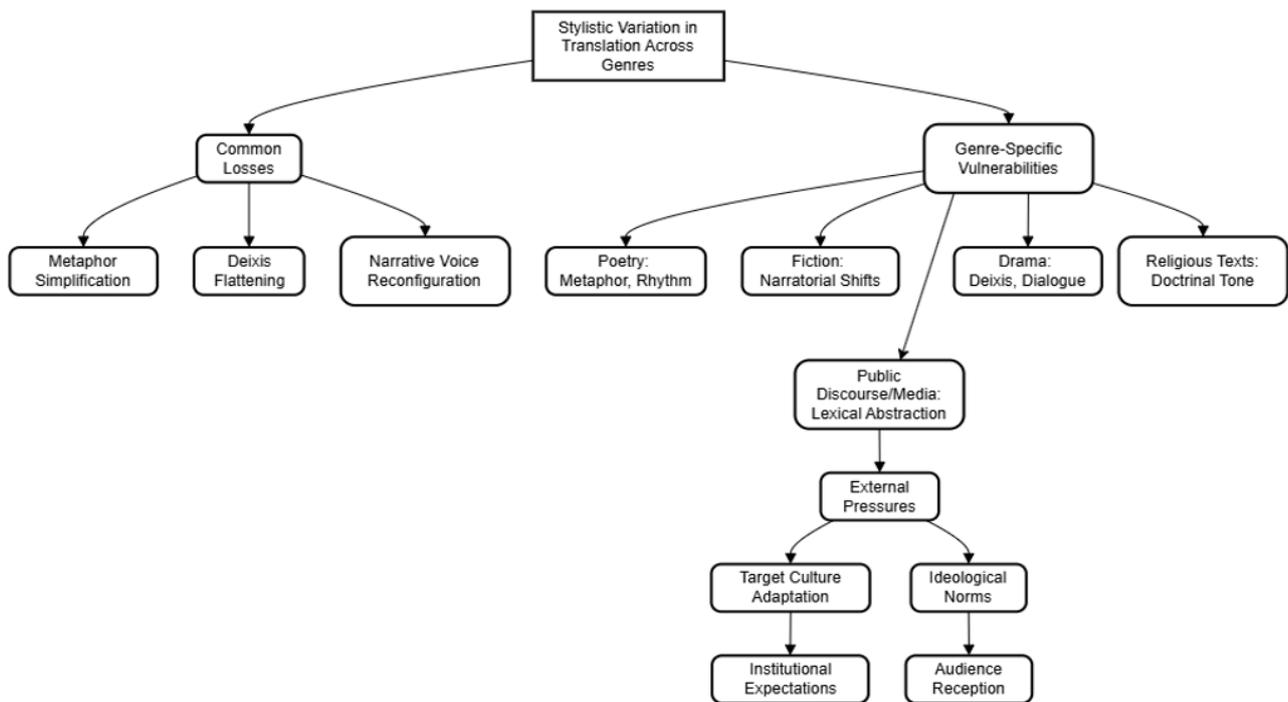
#### 4.3 Contextual Pressures and Ideological Mediation

Stylistic variation is not solely text-internal but mediated by broader socio-cultural and institutional contexts:

- Cultural norms may prompt simplification or localization to enhance target text accessibility (Sala-Sanahuja, 2021).

- Ideological frameworks, religious, political, or institutional—can steer translators toward reframing or formalization aligned with dominant discourse (Xu, 2023).
- Institutional mandates, such as editorial policies, further restrict stylistic freedom and encourage standardization (Kraif & Roux, 2022).
- Audience expectations influence translators’ stylistic strategies, often pushing toward clarity, familiarity, or affective resonance (Dorst, 2019).

Together, these pressures underscore the argument that translation is a culturally situated act in which stylistic form emerges from the dynamic interaction of textual, ideological, and audience-related constraints.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Map of Stylistic Variation in Translation across Genres**

Figure 1 illustrates how stylistic features such as metaphor, deixis, and narrative voice are prone to loss or modulation across different textual genres. It emphasizes genre-specific vulnerabilities - ranging from rhythm in poetry to doctrinal tone in religious texts and situates these within broader systems of external pressure, including ideological norms, institutional expectations, and target culture demands. The mapping underscores the systemic nature of stylistic transformation and the translator’s role as a negotiator of textual form within intersecting cultural and ideological frameworks.

## 5. Toward a Genre-Sensitive Model: Taxonomy and Translator Decision-Making

Translational stylistics must grapple not only with the formal properties of texts but also with the

dynamic interplay of genre conventions, cultural ideology, and translator agency. The argument developed thus far points toward the need for a diagnostic framework capable of capturing these forces in a coherent model. This section introduces two such tools: a genre-based taxonomy of stylistic variation and a translator decision-making model grounded in the systemic-functional traditions of translation theory. The taxonomy offers a classification of genre-specific stylistic tendencies, while the decision-making model traces the translator’s strategic responses to those tendencies under contextual constraints. Both tools extend earlier work by Baker (1992), Hermans (1999), and Chesterman (2000), translating their insights into an operational framework sensitive to genre-specific pressures. Together, they serve as analytical scaffolds for

research and practical heuristics for training translators to identify, evaluate, and justify stylistic choices across genres.

### 5.1 A Taxonomy of Stylistic Variation Across Genres

The taxonomy proposed here identifies recurrent stylistic priorities associated with five major genres and aligns them with typical patterns of

variation observed in translation. It is not merely classificatory; rather, it is diagnostic in nature, designed to anticipate the kinds of stylistic pressure points that translators are likely to encounter in different discursive environments as display in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Genre-Based Taxonomy of Stylistic Variation in Translation**

Genre	Dominant Stylistic Features	Common Types of Variation	Key Studies
Poetry	Metaphor, Rhythm, Ambiguity	Metaphor loss, Rhythm flattening	Dorst (2019); Mohar & Onič (2021); Vlainić (2024)
Fiction	Narrative Voice, Mind Style, Lexical Innovation	Narratorial shifts, Lexical standardization	Wright (2010); Tahiri & Çapriqi (2020); Zaki & Mohamed (2024)
Drama	Deixis, Dialogue, Orality	Deictic flattening, Performance loss	Morini (2014); Sotoca-Fernández (2023)
Religious Texts	Doctrinal Tone, Rhetorical Parallelism	Doctrinal reframing, Formalization	Oborneva & Savel'eva (2022); Nikolaeva et al. (2024)
Public Discourse & Media	Institutional Tone, Ideological Positioning, Lexical Abstraction	Stylistic flattening, Depersonalization	Xu (2023); Gandin (2015); Lugea (2015)

These patterns, while empirically grounded, are not deterministic. As Mona Baker has emphasized, translation is a site of meaning negotiation, where decisions are shaped by genre-based expectations and the translator's socio-cognitive positioning within a broader interpretive community.

#### Hypothetical Illustration: Poetry Translation

Consider a translator working with the Malay line "*awan hitam menelan mentari*" ("a black cloud swallowing the sun") a vivid image of grief. A literal English rendition might appear

melodramatic or semantically awkward. To achieve poetic resonance, the translator might choose "a dark veil dimming the light." This choice retains conceptual density (obscuration, sorrow) while adjusting the metaphorical register to meet the stylistic norms of English lyricism. This re-stylization exemplifies not only textual sensitivity but also a responsiveness to audience reception and poetic convention hallmarks of what Baker (1992) terms "strategic choices" in translation.

## 5.2 Translator Decision-Making Model

Translation, particularly at the stylistic level, is rarely a matter of direct correspondence. It unfolds within a dynamic system of constraints that shape the translator's strategic decisions in relation to textual structure, ideological positioning, audience reception, and individual agency. Drawing on Hermans' (1999) conceptualization of translation as a socially embedded act, and Chesterman's (2000) model of translation as norm-regulated hypothesis testing, this section introduces a theoretical framework that identifies four co-constitutive domains governing stylistic choices in translation:

- **Genre Conventions:** The rhetorical, syntactic, and stylistic norms that define expectations within specific genres (e.g., rhythm in poetry, deixis in drama).
- **Ideological Constraints:** Institutional, political, or religious systems that condition what can be expressed stylistically, and how.
- **Audience Expectations:** Anticipated interpretive preferences and sociocultural values of the target readership, including norms around tone, clarity, or affective resonance.
- **Translator Agency:** The translator's professional habitus, ethical stance, and interpretive vision in negotiating stylistic equivalence.

These domains are not static but mutually influential, shaping the translator's decisions at multiple levels of the text. In Hermans' (1999) systemic view, the translator operates within overlapping discursive formations that constrain and enable meaning-making. For Chesterman (2000), each translation is a hypothesis -an informed approximation- subject to approval or rejection by target system norms.

This model is conceptual and provisional in nature. It has not yet been empirically validated through corpus analysis or reception studies. Its

primary contribution is to offer a structured lens through which stylistic variation may be diagnosed, compared, and eventually tested across genres and translation contexts. By foregrounding the intersection of genre, ideology, audience, and agency, it invites further inquiry into how translators modulate style as a form of context-sensitive negotiation.

### Illustrative Examples

#### 1. Fiction (Modern Arabic Novel)

**Original:** "أنا ابن هذا التراب، ولن أنحني لأحد"

**Literal:** "I am the son of this soil, and I shall bow to no one."

**Target:** "This land runs through my veins. I will never yield."

Here, the translator shifts a declarative nationalist tone into a more lyrical metaphor. This re-stylization balances the source's emotive intensity with genre expectations in English literary fiction, demonstrating how ideological framing, target aesthetics, and translator agency converge.

#### 2. Religious Text (Classical Tafsīr)

**Original:** "فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ" (Yūsuf 12:18)

**Literal:** "So patience is beautiful. And Allah is the one sought for help against what you describe."

**Target:** "I will bear this with dignified patience. God alone is my refuge from your claims."

The translation emphasizes theological solemnity and pedagogical clarity for a contemporary religious audience. It is shaped by doctrinal expectations and interpretive sensitivities, illustrating what Hermans might describe as a norm-governed intervention in a tightly codified genre.

These examples point to the translator as a situated agent operating within intersecting systems of expectation and accountability. Figure 2 below offers a conceptual model of this multi-dimensional negotiation.

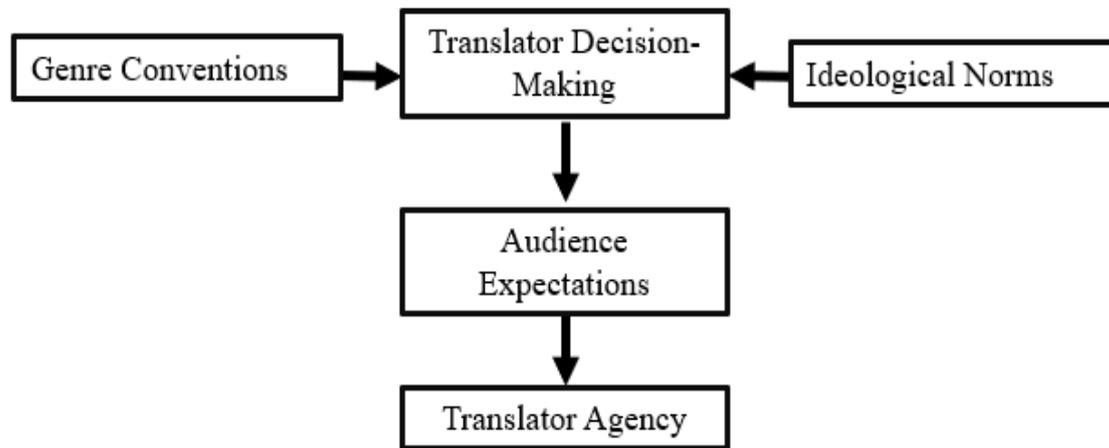


Figure 2: Translator Decision-Making in Genre-Sensitive Stylistic Variation

This diagram places the translator at the intersection of four systemic vectors:

- Genre Norms (textual structure and style),
- Ideological Pressures (external socio-political frameworks),
- Audience Reception (cultural intelligibility and resonance),
- Translator Subjectivity (strategic agency and ethical stance).

Style, in this view, is not a static property to be reproduced but a dynamic configuration negotiated through text, context, and interpreter.

### Framing the Contribution:

Rooted in Hermans' systemic view of translation and Chesterman's hypothesis-testing framework, the taxonomy and decision-making model presented here address a central lacuna in translation studies: the absence of a unified, cross-genre framework for analyzing stylistic transformation. They offer:

- A descriptive typology for identifying stylistic shifts across genres;
- An explanatory model for conceptualizing translator agency as norm-governed decision-making;
- A pedagogical scaffold for cultivating genre-sensitive stylistic awareness in translator training.

- A methodological foundation for future empirical research on cross-genre stylistic behavior in translation.

In line with Baker's (1992) insistence on the translator's active role in shaping meaning, this framework affirms that stylistic variation in translation is not incidental but constitutive as it is reflecting both the systems within which translators operate and the values they enact through their choices. It positions stylistic variation not as a peripheral concern but as a central mechanism through which translators mediate meaning, ideology, and genre-based expectation.

### Pedagogical Implications:

The conceptual tools introduced in this article - a taxonomy of stylistic variation and a genre-sensitive decision-making model have significant pedagogical potential in translator education. These tools offer value not only in academic pedagogy, through structured genre-based modules, but also in preparing students for professional translation workflows where stylistic accountability is essential. They can be embedded into translation curricula to foster analytical awareness, strategic flexibility, and genre-oriented competence. Rooted in experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and informed by the cognitive-functional tradition, these activities bridge conceptual frameworks and applied translation skills.

Pedagogical strategies may be grouped into three clusters. First, comparative analysis tasks invite students to examine parallel translations of texts from poetry, religious discourse, or fiction, focusing on how stylistic features such as deixis, metaphor, or focalization are handled differently. These exercises help students discern stylistic vulnerability and genre-driven adaptation. Second, simulated professional scenarios replicate real-world translation contexts. Students work with detailed briefs specifying audience, genre, institutional setting, and stylistic goals, documenting decisions through reflective logs or rationales. Third, collaborative and reflective activities such as back-translation, genre rewrites, and role-based group projects foster awareness of how stylistic decisions unfold in team-based settings.

Another effective method involves comparative genre simulations, in which students translate the same source text into multiple genres, e.g., literary fiction, religious prose, and public discourse then reflect on how genre norms shape style. These tasks encourage sensitivity to register, tone, and contextual constraint. Assessment strategies may include annotated portfolios, peer evaluation, and rubric-based measures of stylistic fidelity and genre awareness.

By embedding these genre-driven methods into translator training, students gain firsthand experience of how stylistic decisions are conditioned by communicative purpose, institutional norms, and cultural context. These practices help bridge the gap between abstract theoretical models and applied stylistic judgment. Ultimately, integrating the model into translator training supports the development of what Risku and Windhager (2013) describe as “sociocognitive competence,” and aligns with Munday’s (2013) emphasis on tracking translator decision-making. It transforms stylistic variation from a descriptive concept into a teachable and testable skill set, reinforcing the translator’s role as an interpretive and ethically accountable mediator of meaning.

## 6. Conclusion:

This article proposes a genre-sensitive model of stylistic variation in translation, viewing style as a negotiated outcome shaped by genre conventions, ideological pressures, audience expectations, and translator agency. Drawing on five key genres—poetry, fiction, drama, religious texts, and public discourse—it shows that features like metaphor, deixis, and narrative voice are especially prone to context-driven shifts. These variations reflect not arbitrary changes but patterned responses to the structural and sociocultural conditions of translation.

The proposed taxonomy of genre-based stylistic variation and translator decision-making model offer generative frameworks for empirical research, curriculum design, and reflective practice. Instead of prescribing fixed guidelines, they encourage critical inquiry into how genre-specific affordances and constraints shape stylistic choices. Future research could explore corpus validation, multimodal annotation, reception studies, and comparative analyses to further test and refine the model’s applicability.

In translator education, these tools provide diagnostic scaffolds for examining genre-conditioned stylistic shifts. Activities like parallel text analysis, genre rewrites, and reflective logs help students grasp how features such as metaphor, deixis, and voice vary across genres. Comparative studies, e.g., analyzing multiple translations of a poem or political speech enhance genre awareness and stylistic reflexivity. Such strategies foster sociocognitive competence and promote ethical, context-sensitive decision-making in translation.

Ultimately, this model positions the translator not merely as a conduit of meaning but as a genre-aware, ethically engaged stylistic negotiator. As a theoretical and pedagogical intervention, the model reframes stylistic variation as both a site of ethical decision-making and a trainable skill, thereby bridging abstract discourse with real-world professional translation practice.

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