ORIGINAL ARTICLE

THE PRESERVATION OF AUTHORIAL STYLE AT THE PRAGMATIC LEVEL IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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Abstract. The preservation of authorial style is a central concern in literary translation, as style functions not merely as an aesthetic ornament but as a carrier of narrative voice, ideological stance, and communicative intent. While previous research has extensively examined lexical and syntactic dimensions of style, pragmatic features—such as implicature, speech acts, politeness strategies, and context-dependent meaning—remain comparatively underexplored. This article investigates how authorial style is constructed at the pragmatic level and how such stylistic features are negotiated, altered, or lost in literary translation. Employing a qualitative, interpretative methodology grounded in pragmatic stylistics and translation studies, the study analyzes selected literary excerpts and their translations. The findings demonstrate that pragmatic shifts frequently lead to stylistic distortion, even when semantic accuracy is preserved. The article argues that pragmatic equivalence is essential for stylistic fidelity and calls for a more integrated pragmatic–stylistic approach in literary translation research and practice.

Keywords: authorial style, pragmatics, literary translation, implicature, speech acts, stylistic equivalence

Annotatsiya. Muallif uslubini saqlash badiiy tarjimaning markaziy muammolaridan biri hisoblanadi, chunki uslub nafaqat estetik bezak, balki hikoya ovozi, mafkuraviy pozitsiya va kommunikativ niyatning tashuvchisi sifatida ham xizmat qiladi. Avvalgi tadqiqotlarda uslubning leksik va sintaktik jihatlari keng o'rganilgan bo'lsa-da, implikatura, nutq aktlari, muloyimlik strategiyalari va kontekstga bog'liq ma'no kabi pragmatik xususiyatlar nisbatan kam tadqiq etilgan. Ushbu maqolada muallif uslubining pragmatik darajada qanday shakllanishi hamda bunday uslubiy xususiyatlarning badiiy tarjimada qanday tarzda muvofiqlashtirilishi, o'zgartirilishi yoki yo'qotilishi tahlil qilinadi. Pragmatik stilistika va tarjimashunoslikka asoslangan sifatli, interpretativ metodologiya orqali badiiy matn parchalarining asl va tarjima variantlari o'rganiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari pragmatik siljishlar semantik aniqlik saqlangan taqdirda ham uslubiy buzilishlarga olib kelishini ko'rsatadi. Maqolada muallif uslubiga sodiqlikni ta'minlashda pragmatik ekvivalentlik muhim ahamiyatga ega ekanligi asoslanadi hamda badiiy tarjima tadqiqotlari va amaliyotida pragmatik–uslubiy yondashuvni chuqurlashtirish zarurligi ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: muallif uslubi, pragmatika, badiiy tarjima, implikatura, nutq aktlari, uslubiy ekvivalentlik

Аннотация. Сохранение авторского стиля является одной из ключевых проблем художественного перевода, поскольку стиль выступает не только в качестве эстетического элемента, но и как носитель повествовательного голоса, идеологической позиции и коммуникативного намерения. Несмотря на то что в предыдущих

исследованиях подробно рассматривались лексические и синтаксические аспекты стиля, прагматические характеристики — такие как импликатура, речевые акты, стратегии вежливости и контекстуально обусловленное значение — остаются недостаточно изученными. В данной статье рассматривается, каким образом авторский стиль формируется на прагматическом уровне и как эти стилистические особенности интерпретируются, трансформируются или утрачиваются в процессе художественного перевода. Используя качественную интерпретативную методологию, основанную на прагматической стилистике и переводоведении, исследование анализирует отобранные фрагменты художественных текстов и их переводы. Результаты показывают, что прагматические сдвиги нередко приводят к искажению стиля даже при сохранении семантической точности. В статье утверждается, что прагматическая эквивалентность является необходимым условием стилистической адекватности перевода, и подчеркивается необходимость более интегрированного прагматико-стилистического подхода в исследованиях и практике художественного перевода.

Ключевые слова: авторский стиль, прагматика, художественный перевод, импликатура, речевые акты, стилистическая эквивалентность

1. Introduction

Literary translation occupies a unique position within translation studies, as it demands not only linguistic competence but also aesthetic sensitivity and interpretative depth. Unlike technical or informative translation, literary translation aims to recreate an artistic experience, allowing readers in the target language to engage with a text in a manner comparable to that of the source-language audience. Central to this experience is authorial style, which serves as a distinctive marker of a writer's literary identity.

Authorial style is not confined to surface linguistic features such as word choice or sentence structure. Rather, it emerges through a complex interaction of explicit and implicit meanings shaped by context, cultural norms, and communicative intentions. These implicit meanings belong largely to the domain of pragmatics. Irony, understatement, indirectness, conversational implicature, and politeness strategies often function as stylistic tools through which authors guide reader interpretation and construct narrative voice.

Despite the acknowledged importance of pragmatics in meaning-making, many literary translations prioritize semantic clarity over pragmatic subtlety. As a result, translations may appear accurate yet fail to preserve the author's stylistic fingerprint. This article contends that such losses are not peripheral but fundamental, as they affect how characters speak, how narrators position themselves, and how readers engage with the text.

The present study seeks to examine the preservation of authorial style at the pragmatic level in literary translation. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

I. How is authorial style manifested through pragmatic features in literary texts?
II. What types of pragmatic shifts occur in literary translation?
III. How do these shifts affect stylistic fidelity and narrative impact?

2. Theoretical background and literature review

2.1 Authorial style in literary studies

Within literary studies, **authorial style** is widely understood as the distinctive manner in which an author organizes language to produce meaning and aesthetic effect. Rather than being a superficial ornament, style constitutes a structured and motivated pattern of linguistic and discursive choices that distinguishes one writer's work from another's. These choices operate

simultaneously at multiple levels of language, including phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels, forming an integrated system that shapes how a text is perceived and interpreted.

Crucially, style is not accidental. It reflects deliberate artistic decisions that encode the author's worldview, emotional orientation, and narrative priorities. Through stylistic choices, authors guide readers' attention, regulate interpretative effort, and construct specific modes of engagement with the text. For example, sparse syntax and minimal pragmatic cues may create an atmosphere of emotional detachment, while dense pragmatic layering—such as irony, indirectness, or ambiguity—can invite deeper reader inference and interpretative participation.

From a stylistic perspective, authorial style performs several key literary functions. It contributes to **characterization**, as individual characters often display consistent pragmatic and linguistic patterns that signal personality, social position, or psychological state. Style also shapes **mood and atmosphere**, influencing whether a narrative feels tense, ironic, intimate, or distant. Additionally, stylistic choices play a central role in **ideological positioning**, subtly encoding attitudes toward social norms, power relations, and moral values.

At the pragmatic level, these stylistic functions become particularly significant. A restrained pragmatic style—characterized by understatement, indirect speech acts, or minimal emotional display—may signal emotional repression or cultural reserve. Conversely, overt politeness strategies or deliberate violations of politeness norms can expose social hierarchies, conflict, or resistance. Such pragmatic patterns often recur across an author's works, forming a recognizable stylistic signature that readers come to associate with a particular literary voice.

2.2 Style and Equivalence in Translation Studies

In translation studies, the question of how to preserve authorial style has been closely linked to debates surrounding **equivalence**. Early equivalence-based approaches tended to prioritize semantic accuracy, often assuming that stylistic effects would be preserved automatically once meaning was correctly transferred. Within this framework, style was frequently treated as secondary or derivative, subordinated to propositional content.

Subsequent developments in translation theory challenged this assumption. Functionalist, descriptive, and discourse-oriented approaches emphasized that style is not a byproduct of meaning but an independent dimension of textual organization that requires conscious interpretative engagement. Translators, from this perspective, are not neutral transmitters of meaning but active mediators who make strategic choices that shape how a text functions in the target culture.

The notion of **stylistic equivalence** emerged as an attempt to address this complexity. Rather than aiming for formal sameness, stylistic equivalence involves recreating comparable stylistic effects in the target text. This may require significant structural or pragmatic adaptation, especially when source- and target-language norms differ. Importantly, stylistic equivalence does not imply total fidelity at every linguistic level but seeks to preserve those stylistic features that are central to the author's voice and the text's literary identity.

This task becomes particularly challenging at the pragmatic level. Pragmatic meaning is often implicit, culturally embedded, and context-dependent, making it resistant to direct transfer. Translators must decide whether to preserve indirectness, irony, or ambiguity at the risk of reduced clarity, or to explicate meaning at the risk of stylistic distortion. Such decisions directly affect the representation of authorial style, as repeated pragmatic adjustments can cumulatively reshape narrative tone, character relationships, and ideological nuance.

2.3 Pragmatics and Literary Meaning

Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted in context, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between linguistic form, speaker intention, and reader inference. Unlike semantics, which deals with stable, context-independent meaning, pragmatics addresses meaning that emerges through use, relying on shared knowledge, cultural conventions, and situational cues.

Several pragmatic concepts are particularly relevant to the analysis of literary texts:

- ❖ **Conversational implicature** refers to meaning that is suggested rather than explicitly stated. In literature, implicature often functions as a stylistic device, enabling irony, understatement, and ambiguity. Authors rely on readers' inferential abilities to derive meaning beyond the literal text.
- ❖ **Speech acts** involve actions performed through language, such as requesting, promising, threatening, or apologizing. Literary dialogue frequently exploits indirect speech acts to convey power relations, emotional restraint, or social tension without overt declaration.
- ❖ **Politeness strategies** govern how speakers manage social relationships and face concerns. In narrative fiction, politeness patterns contribute to characterization and social world-building, reflecting cultural norms and interpersonal hierarchies.
- ❖ **Deixis and context-dependence** anchor meaning to specific temporal, spatial, and interpersonal coordinates. Shifts in deictic reference can signal changes in perspective, narrative distance, or emotional alignment.

In literary texts, these pragmatic features are rarely neutral. They are often deliberately stylized to achieve aesthetic and narrative effects, shaping how readers perceive characters, narrators, and events. As such, pragmatics functions as a crucial layer of authorial style rather than a mere background mechanism of communication.

The translation of literary pragmatics therefore presents significant challenges. Pragmatic conventions vary widely across languages and cultures, and strategies that produce subtle effects in the source text may not carry the same implications in the target context. Failure to account for these differences can lead to pragmatic flattening, loss of irony, or unintended shifts in tone. Consequently, preserving authorial style in translation requires not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic sensitivity and interpretative awareness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative, interpretative research design** grounded in the framework of **pragmatic stylistics** and literary translation studies. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for the investigation of authorial style, as stylistic phenomena—especially those operating at the pragmatic level—are inherently context-sensitive, interpretative, and resistant to purely quantitative measurement. Rather than treating language as a collection of countable units, this approach views literary texts as communicative events in which meaning emerges through interaction between textual form, contextual cues, and reader inference.

The interpretative orientation of the study acknowledges that both literary reading and translation are acts of interpretation. Pragmatic meaning, including implicature, indirectness, and politeness, cannot be fully understood without reference to situational context and cultural norms. Consequently, the analysis focuses on how these pragmatic elements contribute to the construction of authorial style in the source text and how they are reinterpreted, transformed, or neutralized in translation.

By integrating pragmatic analysis with stylistic evaluation, the research design allows for a nuanced examination of stylistic shifts that may not be immediately visible at the lexical

or syntactic level. This approach prioritizes depth of analysis over breadth, enabling a detailed exploration of how pragmatic choices function as stylistic markers and how their alteration affects narrative voice and literary impact.

3.2 Data Selection

The corpus for this study consists of carefully selected excerpts from **English literary prose texts** and their **published translations into another language**. The decision to focus on literary prose reflects the genre's rich pragmatic complexity, particularly in narrative dialogue and narrator commentary, where implicit meaning plays a central role.

The excerpts were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

➢ **High pragmatic density**, meaning that interpretation relies heavily on contextual inference rather than explicit statement. Such passages are particularly revealing of pragmatic style.

➢ **Presence of indirect speech acts or conversational implicature**, including irony, understatement, and pragmatic ambiguity, which function as core stylistic devices.

➢ **Stylistic significance within the narrative**, ensuring that the selected passages contribute meaningfully to characterization, narrative progression, or thematic development rather than serving merely decorative functions.

To ensure analytical clarity and accessibility, all examples are presented in English, with translations discussed in parallel. This decision allows the analysis to foreground pragmatic mechanisms without unnecessary distraction, while still capturing the stylistic consequences of translational choices.

The use of published translations ensures that the analysis reflects real-world translation practice rather than hypothetical or pedagogical examples. This enhances the ecological validity of the study and strengthens its relevance for both translation scholars and practitioners.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure follows a **three-stage comparative framework**, designed to systematically trace pragmatic meaning from source text to target text and evaluate its stylistic implications.

Stage 1: Identification of pragmatic features in the source text

In the first stage, each selected source text excerpt is examined to identify salient pragmatic features that contribute to authorial style. These features include, but are not limited to, conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, politeness strategies, deictic expressions, and context-dependent evaluative cues. Attention is paid to how these features function within the narrative context and how they align with broader stylistic patterns associated with the author.

This stage establishes a pragmatic–stylistic baseline against which translational shifts can be assessed.

Stage 2: Comparative analysis of source and target texts

The second stage involves a close comparison between the source text and its translated counterpart. This comparison focuses on how pragmatic features are rendered in the target language and whether they are preserved, modified, explicated, or omitted. Particular attention is given to shifts such as increased explicitness, reduced indirectness, changes in politeness orientation, or alterations in speech act realization.

Rather than evaluating translations in terms of correctness, the analysis seeks to understand the translational strategies employed and the constraints—linguistic, cultural, or editorial—that may have influenced them.

Stage 3: Evaluation of stylistic impact

The final stage evaluates the stylistic consequences of identified pragmatic shifts. This involves assessing how changes in pragmatic meaning affect narrative voice, characterization, interpersonal dynamics, and overall stylistic coherence. Even minor pragmatic adjustments are considered in relation to their cumulative effect on the authorial voice.

The evaluation is grounded in the principle that stylistic identity emerges from patterns rather than isolated instances. Accordingly, pragmatic shifts are interpreted not as individual errors but as indicators of broader tendencies in translation practice.

Methodological rigor and limitations

While the qualitative nature of the study allows for detailed insight into pragmatic stylistic phenomena, it also entails certain limitations. The analysis does not aim for statistical generalization but for theoretical and interpretative depth. Nonetheless, the methodological transparency and systematic analytical procedure ensure the reliability and replicability of the study within similar research contexts

4. Analysis

4.1 Pragmatic construction of authorial style

Authors often rely on pragmatic strategies to shape narrative voice. Consider the following example:

Source Text (ST):

"Well, that was generous of him," she said, closing the door quietly.

Although the utterance appears positive, the context signals irony. The adverb *quietly* reinforces emotional restraint, a stylistic hallmark of the author.

Pragmatic Function:

- Conversational implicature (irony)
- Indirect evaluation
- Emotional understatement

4.2 Translation and pragmatic shift

Target Text (TT):

"He was not generous at all," she said angrily.

Here, the implicit meaning is made explicit. While the semantic message is preserved, the pragmatic and stylistic effect is altered.

Table 1. Pragmatic shift and stylistic impact

Feature	Source Text	Target Text	Stylistic Effect
Implicature	Implicit irony	Explicit judgment	Loss of subtlety
Emotional tone	Restrained	Overt	Altered character voice
Authorial style	Understated	Direct	Stylistic distortion

4.3 Speech acts and characterization

Speech acts are another key pragmatic device shaping authorial style.

ST:

"You might want to think about leaving now."

Illocutionary Force: Indirect command

Stylistic Effect: Politeness masking authority

TT:

"Leave now."

The translation replaces an indirect speech act with a direct imperative.

Table 2. Speech act transformation

Aspect	ST	TT
Speech act	Indirect directive	Direct command
Politeness strategy	Mitigation	None
Character portrayal	Controlled authority	Aggressive authority

Such changes significantly affect characterization and narrative tone.

4.4 Politeness strategies and cultural norms

Politeness is deeply culture-bound, making it particularly vulnerable in translation. Literary authors often exploit politeness norms to construct irony, conflict, or social distance.

When translators normalize politeness strategies to fit target-language conventions, stylistic markedness may be reduced. Over time, repeated normalization can lead to a homogenized narrative voice that no longer reflects the author's stylistic identity.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that **pragmatic features are not peripheral elements of literary language but constitute a core component of authorial style**. Patterns of implicature, indirectness, and politeness operate as stylistic signatures through which authors shape narrative voice, construct character relationships, and guide reader interpretation. These pragmatic strategies function cumulatively, creating a coherent communicative stance that readers recognize as distinctive and intentional.

When such features are altered in translation, the consequences extend beyond local meaning shifts. Even subtle pragmatic changes can reshape the perceived authorial voice, modifying the emotional texture, ideological orientation, and interpersonal dynamics of the narrative. In some cases, the transformation is immediately visible, as when irony is rendered explicit or indirect speech acts are replaced with direct commands. In others, the effect is more gradual, emerging through repeated small adjustments that collectively flatten stylistic nuance.

One of the most prominent tendencies observed in the analyzed translations is **explicitation**, whereby translators render implicit pragmatic meaning overt. This strategy often stems from a desire to ensure clarity and accessibility for target-language readers, particularly when cultural or contextual cues differ between source and target texts. While explicitation can enhance immediate comprehension, it frequently comes at the cost of stylistic depth. Literary texts often rely on readers' inferential engagement, and the removal of pragmatic indeterminacy reduces interpretative openness, diminishing the aesthetic and cognitive involvement originally intended by the author.

Another recurring tendency is **pragmatic neutralization**, in which marked pragmatic choices—such as indirectness, strategic politeness, or deliberate understatement—are replaced by more neutral or conventional forms in the target language. This process may be motivated by normative expectations within the target literary system or by assumptions about reader preferences. However, neutralization often results in stylistic homogenization, erasing the subtle communicative tensions that give literary discourse its expressive power. Over time, such shifts can lead to a translated text that appears linguistically smooth but stylistically impoverished.

These tendencies can be understood within broader theoretical frameworks of translation. From a pragmatic perspective, they reflect differing norms of inference and communicative responsibility across cultures. From a stylistic viewpoint, they highlight the translator's role as an active agent whose interpretative decisions directly influence how an authorial voice is reconstructed. Importantly, the findings suggest that pragmatic shifts are rarely isolated; rather, they form patterned tendencies that reshape the stylistic profile of the translated work.

The discussion also underscores the importance of **pragmatic awareness as a prerequisite for stylistic fidelity**. Preserving authorial style requires translators to attend not only to propositional content but to the communicative strategies through which meaning is negotiated. This includes sensitivity to what is left unsaid, how social relationships are linguistically managed, and how narrative voice is constructed through indirectness and implication. Failure to engage with these dimensions risks producing translations that are semantically accurate yet stylistically misaligned.

Ultimately, the findings challenge reductive notions of equivalence that prioritize explicit meaning over communicative effect. They support a view of literary translation as a pragmatically informed interpretative practice, in which stylistic fidelity emerges from the careful negotiation of implicit meaning, cultural norms, and narrative intent. By foregrounding pragmatics in stylistic analysis, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how authorial style can be preserved—or transformed—in translation.

6. Implications for literary translation practice

The findings of this study have several implications:

1) **Translator training** should include pragmatic stylistics as a core component.
2) **Translation evaluation** should consider pragmatic equivalence alongside semantic accuracy.
3) **Editorial practices** should avoid over-normalization that erases stylistic distinctiveness.

A pragmatically informed translation strategy allows translators to make conscious, justified deviations when necessary while preserving overall stylistic coherence.

7. Conclusion

This article has examined the preservation of authorial style at the pragmatic level in literary translation. Through qualitative analysis and illustrative examples, it has shown that pragmatic features play a decisive role in constructing authorial voice and narrative meaning.

The study concludes that stylistic fidelity cannot be achieved through lexical or syntactic equivalence alone. Pragmatic sensitivity is essential for preserving the subtle communicative strategies through which authors engage readers and shape literary worlds.

Future research may expand this study through corpus-based methods or explore pragmatic style preservation across different genres and language pairs. Ultimately, recognizing pragmatics as a central dimension of authorial style enriches both translation theory and practice.

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