

# Translator's Style in Fiction Translation: A Ten-Year Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract**—This research aims to comprehensively analyze the Translator's Style in fiction translation to enhance the understanding of its influence on the quality and effectiveness of translated fiction. The systematic literature review was conducted by extracting relevant content from four databases: Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. The removed material was then analyzed and synthesized based on a predefined set of rules and criteria. The selected articles underwent a rigorous screening process that met specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The examination of the chosen studies revealed significant findings regarding the Translator's Style in the translation of fiction over the past decade. The study identified emerging trends, novel research methodologies, and theoretical frameworks within this field and acknowledged their significance. This study suggests that further research should be conducted on the Translator's Style in fiction translation within translation studies. One can improve their understanding of the Translator's Style by employing interdisciplinary methods, including incorporating literary theory, stylometry, and sociocultural perspectives. This study provides essential information for translators and scholars in the field of translation studies, highlighting the significance of the Translator's Style and promoting comparative studies of multiple translations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various choices and approaches translators employ.

**Index Terms**—translator's style, fiction translation, systematic literature review

## I. INTRODUCTION

Accurately conveying the essence, style, and voice of the original author is a sensitive task, and it must be taken into account in the process of Translation (Al-Khalafat & Haider, 2022). Without altering the source text's intended meaning, translators should be able to convey it in the target language (Napu, 2019). To determine how it influences the readability and accuracy of translated texts, researchers in Translation have spent much time and effort researching the Translator's Style (Gafurovna, 2021; Laviosa, 2021). Researchers have examined the extent to which the style of the source text is transmitted to the target text and how translators leave their thumbprints in the Translation (Baker, 2000; Meng & Pan, 2022). Existing research indicates that stylistic variations in translations can substantially affect the quality and precision of the result (Lee, 2020), especially in literary Translation, where artistic expression and cultural nuances are crucial, understanding and evaluating the Translator's Style become essential (Eshkuvatovna & Ilhomovna, 2022). Previous studies have looked at linguistic components, including lexical items, syntax, coherence, and punctuation, to determine various literary translators' styles (Baker, 2019). However, literary translation is still one of the most challenging. Therefore, a thorough literature analysis is still required, focusing on the Translator's Style in fiction translation (Holmes, 2021). Scholars in this field have investigated the factors that affect the translator's manner, with Huang (2015b) and Lee (2018) providing particularly insightful works.

In addition, the influence of the source text on the Translator's Style is an important research topic. The stylistic characteristics of the source text can substantially influence the choices made by the translator. For instance, when translating a literary text, the translator may retain the original author's style to effectively convey the intended meaning (Huang, 2021; Laviosa, 2021). The study of the translator's style considerably impacts both translation theory and practice. Understanding the translator's style can aid in creating translation theories and procedures, thus raising the standard of translations (Cipriani, 2022). O'Hagan (2019) and Richardson et al. (2021) have also highlighted the Translator's Style's importance in translation education and professional growth.

However, despite the growing interest in the research of the Translator's Style, no systematic literature review focuses on the theory of the Translator's Style in fiction translation, although the study of the Translator's Style is becoming increasingly popular. A complete understanding of the present application of the Translator's Style theory in the setting of literary novels may be obtained via a systematic review of the relevant body of literature. Previous literature reviews,

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such as the one by Li et al. (2022), had a wider reach but fewer sample sources, demonstrating the requirement for a more focused and in-depth examination.

This systematic review aims to analyze the literature on novel Translation published in the last decade to address the existing research gap. This study aims to identify research models, analyze translators' techniques in shaping stylistic choices, explore stylistic cues, and examine theoretical frameworks for analyzing translators' styles in novel Translation.

These objectives will be accomplished through the analysis of pertinent stylistic indicators. This study investigates the trends, research methods, and theoretical frameworks employed in analysing translator style in the context of novel Translation. The study examines 32 samples selected from four extensive databases: Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. The samples were meticulously chosen to guarantee the study's accuracy. The findings significantly contribute to enhancing our understanding of the current research landscape in the field of translated books.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a systematic review method, which involves determining the eligibility of articles for inclusion in the review based on research questions. In addition, there is a distinction to be made between a review of the literature and a systematic review. A systematic review is methodically well organized, and the studies included in the review are chosen methodically from the research available in particular databases (Hiebl, 2023). In the systematic review, precise research questions must be proposed, a thorough review methodology must be developed, the study must be conducted with a slight bias, and the outcomes must be discussed (Alexander, 2020). The PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021) was followed to perform the review.

The articles used for the study sample and which served as the foundation for the analysis originated from various bibliographical databases, which were queried to obtain the necessary information. The method is comprised of the following distinct stages:

1. Choose from among the available bibliographical databases
2. Carry out bibliographical searches to establish the definitive sample
  - a. Identification of search keywords—terms, synonyms, variants.
  - b. Creation of the search string—Boolean operators.
  - c. Filtering of results—document type, publication date, amongst others.
3. Compare the screened articles and write a review of the chosen documents.

### A. Research Questions

The conducted study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What trends have emerged in studying the Translator's Style in fiction translation?
- 2) What are the Translator's Style research methodologies for fiction translation?
- 3) What are the stylistic indicators in studying the Translator's Style in fiction translation?
- 4) What research theories have been applied to study Translator's Style in fiction translation?

### B. Database Selection

Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), EBSCO, and Google Scholar were selected as the databases to provide exhaustive coverage of the scholarly literature. Scopus was chosen as the database because it allows access to a broader range of journals and provides enhanced keyword search and citation analysis features. The WOS was selected since all the papers included here constitute significant contributions to the subject. EBSCO was chosen because of its extensive coverage of multidisciplinary academic literature, access to full-text articles, advanced search capabilities, inclusion of peer-reviewed content, comprehensive indexing and citation tracking, user-friendly interface, and widespread institutional subscriptions. Google Scholar was selected because it is a search engine that can be used by many people and indexes a significant amount of academic literature. Discovering publications from various sources, such as articles, theses, conference papers, and repositories, can be advantageous with this method. Because none of the databases are comprehensive, they mutually support one another (Cheng & Zhang, 2020).

### C. Bibliographical Searches

The terms, synonyms, and variants of the Translator's Style shall be selected to complete the search results. Thus, the Boolean Logic (Scells et al., 2020) will be used, and the OR operator will show: "Translator's Style" OR "style of translator" OR "translator's voice" OR "voice of translator" OR "translator's fingerprint" OR "fingerprint of translator" OR "translator's thumbprint" OR "thumbprint of translator" OR "translator's tone" OR "tone of translator" in subject terms, titles, abstracts. The search results show on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Table 1 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Based on the requirements, the exact samples were selected accurately.

TABLE 1  
THE INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Full text available online	Full text not available online
Topic-related fiction translation	Topic not related to fiction translation
Published Time in 2013-2023	Published Time set not in 2013-2023
Research Focus on Translator Style	Research Focus not on Translator Style
Peer-reviewed	No Peer-reviewed
Written in English	Written in non-English

When the inclusion and exclusion criteria were conducted, the sample selection process is shown in Table 2, which displays the number of documents retrieved from the various databases that were searched.

TABLE 2  
THE NUMBER OF THE DOCUMENTS

Database	Initial Number	2013-2023	English Text	Remove Duplicates and Incomplete items	Remove Unrelated Items
Scopus	116	76	65		
Web of Science (WOS)	56	49	34		
EBSCO	55	28	8		
Google Scholar	102	29	12		
In total	329	182	119	92	32

The search query yielded 329 in total outcomes and enabled the identification of Scopus as the database with the highest level of comprehensiveness regarding the topic under investigation. When the time gap was established, the total dropped to 182. When the text language was changed to English, the count dropped to 119. By importing all the results from the four databases above into Endnote, the researcher found some duplicate and incomplete items; after removing 25 duplicates and two incomplete items, the total number decreased to 92. The research went through the title and abstract one by one and deleted 60 articles whose research focuses not on translator style in fiction translation. A total of 32 results were screened. Below is a diagram of the PRISMA Workflow.

D. Prisma Workflow

The review included only papers and book sections published in the last ten years that focused on the translator's style and fiction Translation. The selection process is depicted in Figure 1.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and registers only

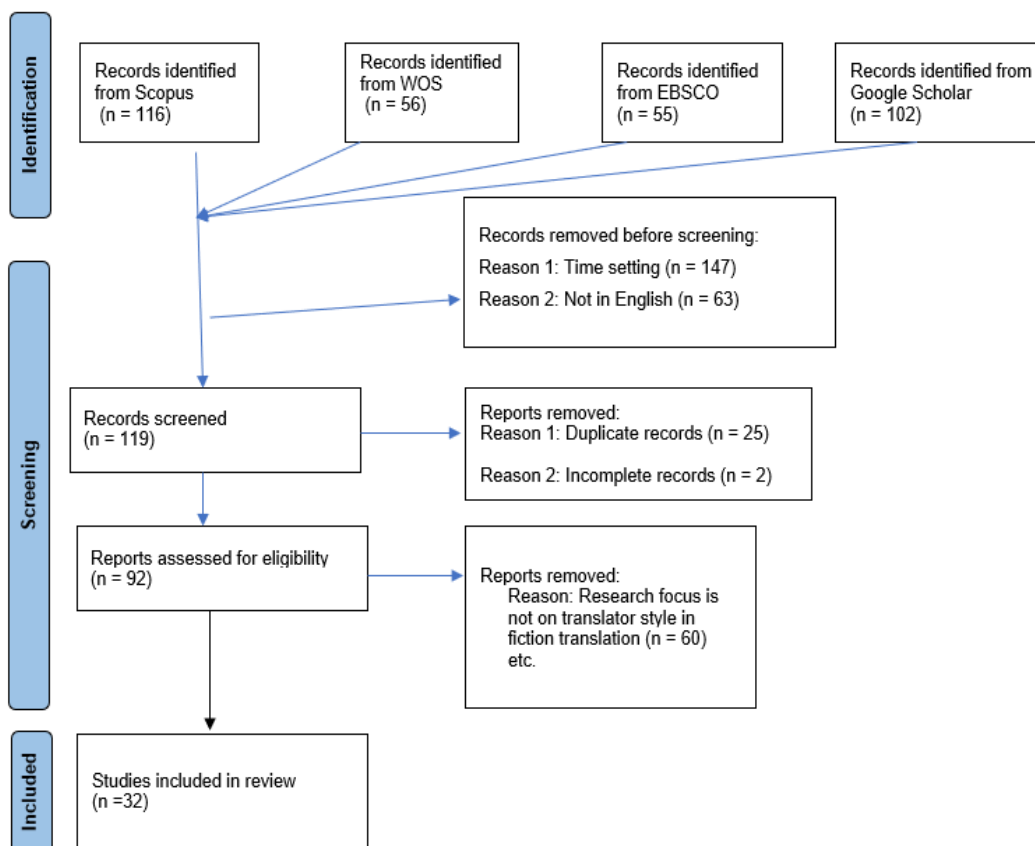


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Chart for Systematic Literature Review (Page et al., 2021)

During the identification phase, 182 samples were obtained from four sources: Scopus, WOS, EBSCO, and Google Scholar, out of 329 potential pieces. After excluding text that is not in the English language, the final count was 119. After eliminating duplicate entries and incomplete items, the last count decreased to 92. The researcher excludes conference proceedings lacking online full texts and samples that do not specifically address the topic of the Translator's Style in fiction translation, done by examining the title, abstract, and keywords. During the eligibility assessment phase, 297 out of the initial 329 samples were excluded based on the full-text evaluation. A total of 32 samples were included in the literature review.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The final Systematic Literature Review phase is to compile and summarize the findings from the literature reviews (Tóth et al., 2023). They are shown and analyzed as follows.

#### A. Trend of the Translator's Style in Fiction Translation

The number of each reference type is detailed in Table 3. The total number of qualified samples is 32. Compared to book sections and conference proceedings, more journal articles have been produced on Translator's Style in fiction over the past ten years.

TABLE 3  
THE NUMBER OF EACH REFERENCE TYPE

Reference Type	No.
Journal Articles	19
Book Sections	9
Conference Proceedings	4
In Total	32

The table indicates that journal articles are the predominant publication type for the current topic. Based on these, the trend of the number of published samples from the year 2013 to 2023 is shown in Figure 2.

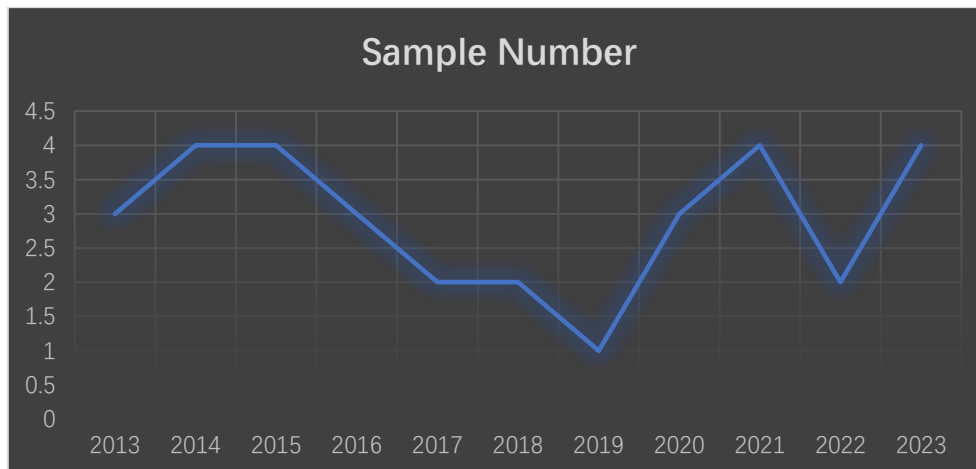


Figure 2. The Number of Samples Published Each Year

As the figure shows above, the number of samples published each year follows a quite erratic trend. There is no discernible pattern of growth or decline over the years regarding the total number of samples, ranging from one to four. It reached its lowest point in 2019 before rising quickly in 2020 and reaching 4 in 2021. However, it is essential to point out that there has been an overall increase in the number of samples taken in recent years, particularly in the years 2021 and 2023, when the number of samples taken consistently reaches 4. There is potential for 2023 to see even more development in the number of articles produced on this topic. Furthermore, many language pairs were selected to work as corpus or study objectives in the sample literature. They are shown in Table 4 below. Since the researcher only selected English samples, English is the predominant language.

TABLE 4  
THE LANGUAGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRANSLATOR’S STYLE IN FICTION STUDY

Languages (Translate from A to B)	Numbers
Chinese-English	18
Arabic-English	1
Spanish-English	1
French- English	2
Korean- English	1
Russian-English	1
German-English	1
English-Chinese	2
English -Nguni languages	1
English-Arabic	1
English-Italian	1
English-German	2
English-Dutch	1

The data in Table 4 indicates a notable disparity between the number of articles focused on Chinese-English Translation (18 pieces) and those focused on English-Chinese Translation (only two). This discrepancy suggests that the export of Chinese literature surpasses the import of Western literature. In contrast to other areas of language studies, the quantity of scholarly articles about Chinese-English Translation is notably greater, suggesting a heightened interest in translation studies as it pertains to Chinese fiction.

In conclusion, the prevailing direction of scholarly inquiry regarding the Translator's Style in fiction translation predominantly focuses on academic journal publications and the context of Chinese-English Translation. The quantity of published samples has grown in recent years, with the possibility of this pattern persisting in 2023.

*B. Research Methods of the Translator’s Style in Fiction Translation*

Examining the research methods employed for analyzing the translator's stylistic choices in fiction translation holds significant academic value because it allows researchers to evaluate existing knowledge and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of prior research. Moreover, it will enable researchers to identify gaps in the current study and propose directions for future research.

Following Figure 3 is a pie chart depicting the methodology utilized by researchers over the past decade to investigate translator style in fiction.

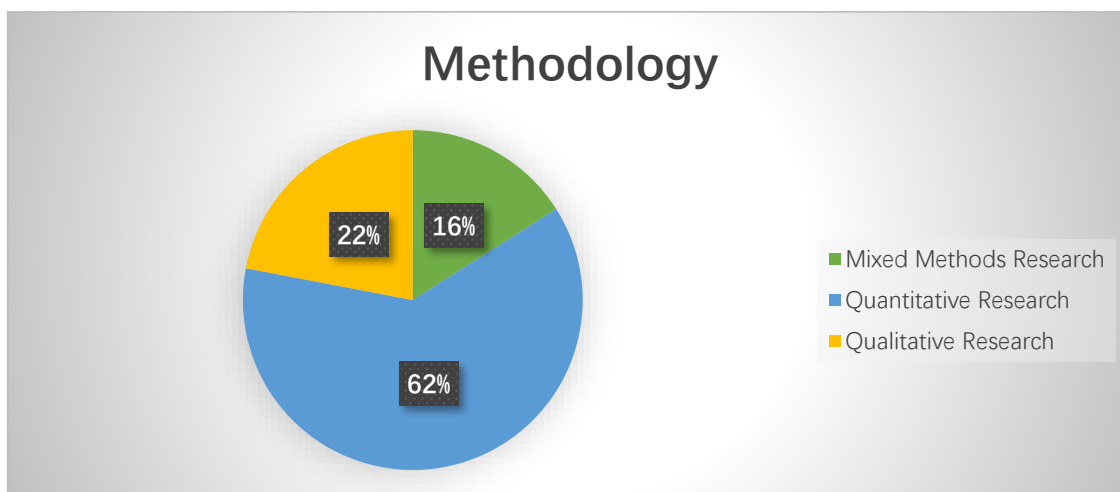


Figure 3. The Methodologies Utilized by Researchers in the Literature Samples

In all qualified samples, five instances of mixed methods research account for approximately 16%. Seven qualitative research studies account for about 22% of the total. Twenty quantitative research studies account for approximately 62% of the total. Quantitative research studies are more prevalent in studying the Translator’s Style. In 80% (16 out of 20) of quantitative research investigations, corpus-based, corpus-assisted, or corpus-driven research was the most common method, indicating that most researchers studied the translator's approach using corpus-based techniques. Corpus-based research analyses extensive textual data collections (corpora) to identify linguistic patterns and stylistic indicators.

Additionally, the researcher can find the delicate stylistic indicators for the study using their linguistic expertise and corpus familiarity (Li et al., 2022). The results show that the proper stylistic signals can be found with the help of corpus-based, corpus-driven, and corpus-assisted methodologies, which could be an advantage in discovering the sensitive stylistic indicators that are important to the study if the researcher is fluent in numerous languages and is familiar with the corpus.

This study of the translator's style in fiction translation uses mixed-methods, qualitative, and quantitative research. Corpus-assisted, corpus-based, and corpus-driven research has become more popular in the past decade than any other

quantitative approach. The strategy allows researchers to utilize their linguistic expertise and knowledge of corpora to identify pertinent stylistic cues.

### C. Stylistic Indicators for Analyzing the Translator's Style in Fiction

Stylistic indicators are employed to analyse and assess the stylistic decisions made by translators in their works of fiction. Table 5 presents the stylistic variables, associated vital elements, and indicators of importance or relevance in papers published in the past decade.

TABLE 5  
NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF STYLISTIC INDICATORS USED IN THE STUDIES

Indicator Types	Key items	Amount
Linguistic Indicators	Type/token ratio	5
	Word Frequency	3
	Lexical density	3
	Average word length	2
	Mean sentence length	2
	Number of sentences	2
	Average sentence length	2
	Key clusters	1
	Contracted negative verb forms and expressions	1
	Chinese tokenization	1
	Bilingual alignment	2
	Lexical divergences	1
	Keyword list	2
	Contractions	1
	Reporting verbs	1
	Neutral item	1
Morphologically segmented function words	1	
Distinctive POS (part of speech) unigrams and bigrams	1	
Statistic Indicators	Readability	3
	Complex network analysis	1
	Network motifs mining	1
	Document-level metrics	1
	N-gram features	1
Pragmatic Indicators	Character's name	1
	Paratexts	4
	Code switch	1
	Discourse presentation	2
	Nominalization	1
	Frequencies of reporting verb	2
	Distinctive strategies (S-Type)	2
	Habitual linguistic behavior (T-Type)	4
	subconscious features	1
	Situational factors	1
	Contextual factors	1
	Language combinations	1
Specific Language Items	BEI construction in Chinese	1
	Modal particles in German	1
	Loan words and expansions	1
	Emphatic Italics	1
	Lexical bundles	2

Note: Adapted from *A Systemic Literature Review of Translator's Style in Translation Studies* (Li et al., 2022)

Table 5 presents the primary linguistic and pragmatic indicators the researcher examined in investigating translators' style. The linguistic indicators analyzed encompass significant variables, such as type/token ratio, word frequency, lexical density, average word length, average sentence length, number of sentences, and average sentence length. These factors offer valuable insights into the translator's lexical and syntactic decisions and the text's overall structure and complexity. The analysis of the translator's style explores discourse indicators that reveal the translator's decision-making process in conveying meaning, structuring chapters, and adapting the text to the target language and culture. The factors considered in this study are paratext, discourse presentation, code-switching, frequency of reported verbs, and contextual elements. This study examines the decision-making process of translators and how contextual and situational factors, habitual linguistic behavior, subconscious traits, situational considerations, and language combinations influence their style.

Assessing stylistic elements in the source text is crucial for determining the Translator's Style. Publications on the Translator's Style in fiction take a comprehensive approach, examining various stylistic characteristics outlined in the table. These articles thoroughly examine the stylistic choices made by translators in fictional works, thus establishing the focus of the research. The linguistic, statistical, and pragmatic characteristics of the elements contribute to the overall

tone of the translated fiction.

The integration of technological tools in Translation has brought about new academic viewpoints. As employed in literature, traditional vocabulary richness has been found to be inadequate in identifying translator stylometry (El-Fiqi et al., 2019). Researchers have utilized network motifs and complex network analysis to achieve an average three-way classification accuracy of 83% in Translator’s Style detection. These methods have facilitated the advancement of feature design for analysing translator stylometry (El-Fiqi et al., 2019). In addition, according to Huang (2015a, 2015c), the statistics offered by corpus tools, such as the standard type-token ratio, mean sentence length, frequency of reporting verbs, and optional usage of reporting, are not very useful for differentiating between the styles of various translators. Lee (2018) proved that bootstrap consensus tree analysis and consensus network analysis have shown that the degree of structural dissimilarity between two languages positively correlates with the visibility of the Translator's Style. In future research, scholars may investigate using support vector machines and other specialized indicators to analyze the Translator's Style effectively.

In brief, analysing the Translator's Style in fiction translation encompasses linguistic, statistical, and pragmatic cues and specific language elements. Technology and computer tools have greatly aided the analysis of the Translator’s Style, especially in network motifs and complex network analysis. Advancements in technology, such as support vector machines, can enhance future research on understanding and analyzing the Translator's Style.

*D. Research Theories Used in the Study of Translator’s Style in Fiction*

Eight theories have been employed to extract, describe, or analyze the Translator’s Style. They are shown in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6  
NUMBER OF DIFFERENT THEORIES USED IN THE STUDIES

Theory	Number
Baker’s Framework of the Translator’s Style (2000)	23
Translator stylometry (2019)	1
Newmark’s model of translation techniques (2001)	1
Millán-Varela’s model of translator’s voice (2004)	1
Relevance theory (2013)	1
Mathesius’ complex condensation (2013)	1
stylometry or computational stylistics (1996)	3
Machine learning (2021)	2

*Note: Adapted from A Systemic Literature Review of Translator’s Style in Translation Studies (Li et al., 2022)*

The theories applied in investigating the translator's style in fiction can be used to derive the following facts and conclusions. Baker’s (2000) Translator's Style Framework is highly regarded and widely recognized as the leading theory in the field, with support from 23 references. This approach offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending and analyzing the stylistic choices of translators in literary works. In their study, Li et al. (2022) showcased the application of Baker's (2019) framework in examining a translator's style. They employed a corpus-based approach to identify recurring linguistic characteristics among translators and investigate the sociological factors that shape their stylistic development. Li et al. (2022) contend that Baker's (2019) analysis of the factors influencing translators' style lacks a cohesive theoretical framework.

Translation stylometry is a relatively recent development, as evidenced by the work of El-Fiqi et al. (2019). Translator stylometry is the term used to describe a translator's style assessment through quantitative analysis and the application of diverse computer-based methodologies. The field of stylometry, alternatively referred to as computational stylistics, is mentioned three times, while machine learning is alluded to twice, underscoring the significance of computer-based methodologies and quantitative analysis in investigating translator’s styles (Binongo, 1996; Zhou, 2021).

Examining translation style in novels encompasses a range of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Baker’s (2019) framework is widely recognized as the predominant model for facilitating a comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter. Quantitative analysis and computer technology play a significant role in the fields of stylometric and computational stylistics, which hold paramount importance in the present study. Moreover, several additional theories, such as the Newmark model (Simanjuntak et al., 2021), Milan Varela model (Guo et al., 2020), Arlott's (2013) correlation theory, and Mathieuth's (2014) complex condensation theory, make significant contributions to the understanding of different dimensions of translator's style. Using computer tools facilitates the progression of research on the translator’s style.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this extensive analysis, conducted over ten years, contribute substantially to investigating the translator's style within fictional Translation. The utilization of corpus-based or corpus-driven approaches in quantitative research is widely acknowledged and accepted, as demonstrated by the outcomes of numerous research endeavors. This discovery underscores the significance of employing computer technology and linguistic proficiency in identifying stylistic cues. Incorporating linguistic and pragmatic lines holds significant relevance in enabling a thorough examination of decision-making procedures, lexical and syntactic inclinations, and the impact of the surrounding milieu and cultural factors on

translators' style. Baker's (2019) framework is regarded as the most encompassing and all-encompassing approach within the fundamental theory, specifically in comprehending the Translator's Style. However, additional theoretical research is necessary to provide a more comprehensive framework that examines stylistic characteristics. The achievement of this objective necessitates the execution of a thorough and all-encompassing inquiry.

Based on the findings acquired, it is advisable for forthcoming studies in the domain of Translation to comprehensively investigate the stylistic choices of translators in connection with the Translation of literary texts. To optimize the implementation of this concept, it is imperative to undertake the following measures. A more profound comprehension of the Translator's Style can be achieved by embracing an interdisciplinary framework and integrating literary theory, stylometry, and social perspectives. A comparative analysis of multiple translations of a particular book could provide valuable insights into various translators' decision-making processes and methodologies.

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the systematic literature review has demonstrated the importance of examining the Translator's Style in fictional Translation, creating opportunities for further research in this field. The utilization of computerized tools can be further enhanced by reviewing the Translator's Style. Future research should address the identified gaps, such as theoretical development, methodological advancements, exploration of multimodal analysis, and extensive comparative studies. These initiatives aim to enhance understanding of the Translator's Style, enhance translation quality, and foster cultural and literary appreciation in fiction translation.

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