

Translating Narrative Voice in *The Book Thief* Into Arabic

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Abstract—Narrative voice is a central element of prose fiction, as it shapes the story structure, conveys values, and establishes the narrative stance. This study investigates the translation of the narrative voice in Markus Zusak’s (2005) *The Book Thief*, in which Death serves as narrator. Voice is studied through Phelan’s (2023) triad of style, tone, and values, with Leech and Short’s (2013) stylistic categories used to trace voice across source and target languages. Chesterman’s (1997) strategies are employed to explain and classify shifts identified in translation. It is hypothesized that although Arabic translation accurately conveys narrative events, it recurrently introduces modifications to narrative voice through explicitness and trope change. The study draws on five selected samples taken from *The Book Thief*, through which narrative voice is identified using foregrounding and deviation. The study reveals shifts in Death’s voice that stem from overlooking narrative voice. These shifts align with Arabic norms of clarity and descriptive detail, yet at the expense of weakening narrative voice. Cross-cultural variations further shape how voice is perceived across the two languages. The study concludes with an examination of the impact of translation strategies on style, tone, and values. A lack of thematic awareness leads to a loss of coherence in the representation of the narrator’s moral and emotional stance. It also concludes that translating complex narratives requires a unified sensitivity to the narrator’s style, tone, and values, along with awareness of the novel’s central theme and of cultural differences between Arabic and English.

Index Terms—narrative voice, *The Book Thief*, tone, Chesterman’s translation strategies, power of words

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation is defined as the process of establishing equivalence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). The translator seeks to reproduce in the target reader an effect comparable to that of the original. However, achieving equivalence becomes increasingly complex when what must be translated is not merely meaning, but the distinctive voice through which meaning is conveyed. Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief* presents such a challenge through Death’s voice—a blend of irony, compassion, and moral reflection. This study examines how the Arabic translation reconstructs voice, analyzing the interaction of stylistic choice and cultural context. Building on Phelan’s (2023) account of narrative voice and its triad components, the study foregrounds the emotional and moral dimensions of narrative across languages. Leech and Short’s (2013) stylistic framework reveals where foregrounding and deviation contribute to voice construction, while Chesterman’s (1997) strategies reveal how shifts reshape meaning. It argues that translating the narrative voice depends on preserving moral vision, and emotional and thematic depth across cultural contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Narrative has evolved into a site of interdisciplinary scholarship, bridging literary theory, stylistics, cognitive and cultural studies, and criticism. It permits layered exploration at both micro and macro levels—from stylistic choices like metaphor and metonymy to broader concerns such as voice, structure, and genre. Due to their differences and complementarity, interdisciplinary studies can more comprehensively interpret the formal aspects of narrative fiction (Shen, 2025). The so-called “narrative turn” in contemporary scholarship confirms this expanded scope (Lambrou, 2020). In line with this orientation, the present study draws on narratological and stylistic frameworks that illuminate different sides of fiction. Together, they offer a more thorough account of narrative form, illustrating how a story functions. This integrated approach allows macro narrative structure and micro stylistic devices to be interpreted together.

A. Narrative

Narrative can be defined as anything that tells or shows, be it oral narration, written texts, visual imagery, staged performance, or a multimodal combination of these (Jahn, 2025). Narrative appears in contexts as varied as conversation, jokes, novels, plays, films, comic strips, and blogs. This can be illustrated in the following figure:

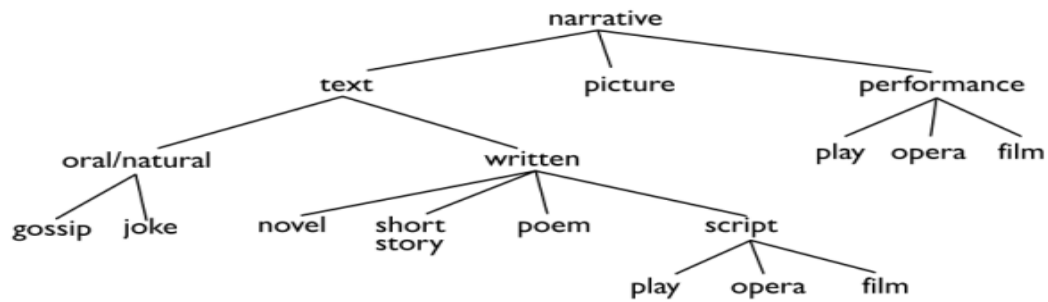


Figure 1. Barthes's Loose List of Narrative Forms, Genres, and Media (as cited in Jahn, 2025, p.16)

Rimmon-Kenan (2005) describes narration as comprising (1) a communication process in which the addresser transmits the narrative as a message to the addressee and (2) the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message. It is this verbal nature that distinguishes narrative fiction from other types. A story in a narrative fiction, in turn, refers to a sequence of events involving characters who act as agents (causes of events), patients, or beneficiaries (affected by events), unified by a central theme that holds the whole novel together.

According to structuralist theory, narratives consist of two levels: a story (*histoire*), which includes what happens, who is involved, and settings, and discourse (*discours*), which refers to how these elements are organized and narrated. In short, the story is “what,” and discourse is “how” (Chatman, 1978).

Genette (1980) in his influential “Narrative Discourse” distinguishes three domains: tense, which examines the relationship between story time and discourse time, mood, which addresses narrative distance and narrative perspective as devices of representation, and voice, which analyzes narrative situation involving both narrator and audience, whether real or implied.

B. Narrative Voice

At the heart of every narrative discourse lies the narrator. Defined most simply, the narrator is the voice—spoken or written—that mediates the text, maintains communication with the narratee, manages the unfolding of events, selects perspective and sequence, and withholds what remains untold. The narrator’s authority extends further, allowing for metanarrative comments that draw attention to the moral or thematic significance (Prince, 2003; Rimmon-Kenan, 2005; Margolin, 2013).

Depending on the narrator’s relationship to the story—the question of whether they are or were present or absent in the storyworld—Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) distinguish between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, while in his book “*Discourse and Story*”, Chatman (1978) distinguishes between overt and covert narrators. An overt narrator can be identified through certain features. They speak in a distinct personal voice, employing rhetorical figures, imagery, evaluative phrases, and emotive or subjective expressions, and often intervene directly to insert philosophical or metanarrative commentary. In contrast, covert narrators are those who completely erase their presence. They have no distinct voice, no individual style, and no reference to themselves or to narratees, and appear nameless and beyond gender.

C. James Phelan’s Rhetorical-Narratological Approach to Narrative Voice

In his rhetorical narratological theory, James Phelan introduces the concept of narrative voice. In *Narrative Medicine* (Phelan, 2023), he acknowledges Genette’s (1980) separation of perspective and voice, and introduces “voice as the answer to the question, who is speaking?” (p. 8). To Phelan (2023, p. 209), “rhetorical theory adds that voice is a synthesis of style, tone, and values”. Those three key aspects can be illustrated as follows:

- 1- Style: includes the narrator’s choices of diction and syntax, whether rhythmic or not,
- 2- Tone: refers to the speaker’s evaluative attitude toward what is said, and
- 3- Values: include the ethical and ideological commitments informing style and tone.

D. Stylistic Realization of Narrative Voice

Building on the stylistic framework proposed by Leech and Short (2013), this study analyzes foregrounding and deviation markers in shaping literary style. Their framework situates stylistic analysis within a linguistic account of English narrative prose, demonstrating how an author’s creative writing emerges through deliberate deviation from linguistic expectation. In alignment with Prague School tradition, foregrounding is viewed as an artistically motivated deviation that produces textual salience through which readers apprehend the individuality of a writer’s style.

Foregrounding theory constitutes a foundational framework within stylistics, developed by “Russian Formalists (Shklovsky, 1988; Jakobson, 1964) and the Prague School of linguistics (Mukařovský, 1964), who formulated the principle of making a literary text more noticeable” (Yemet, 2019, p. 95). Arnold (as cited in Yemet, 2019) defines foregrounding as “the ways of the text organization which focus the reader’s attention on certain elements of the message” (p. 95). Yemet would prefer to replace the word “certain” with “significant” or “pragmatic importance” to widen the reader’s attention to pragmatically important elements of the message. Leech (2013, p. 118) also argues that

“foregrounding –significant literary ‘deviation’ against the background of non-literary form— is just applicable to the pragmatic study of language in context as to other, more formal, aspects of language.” According to the majority of stylisticians, including Leech (2013), foregrounding is of two types: parallelism and deviation.

(a). *Parallelism*

Schemes such as parallelism and repetition are devices that achieve stylistic distinctiveness through structural repetition that reinforces emphasis, rhetorical persuasion, or emotive intensity. They also help the reader seek meaningful connections of ideas that have the same degree of importance arranged in successive lines (Almehmdawi, 2018).

(b). *Deviation*

Deviation is one of the foregrounding strategies that marks intentional departure from standard norms (Scott, 2023). It addresses multiple linguistic levels. At the syntactic level, deviation manifests through intentional breach of grammatical conventions or patterned irregularities. At the semantic level, deviation entails the reorientation of meaning through figurative expression, whereby words breach the expectations of meaning and create stylistic salience through tropes such as metaphor and metonymy.

In this study, conceptual metaphors are incorporated into the analysis as instances of semantic deviation, aligning with Leech and Short’s stylistic categories. They illuminate how Death adopts Liesel’s developing perceptual world into figurative expressions that shape narrative voice. The novel’s richness in conceptual metaphors justifies their inclusion, particularly when examining how Chesterman’s semantic and pragmatic translation strategies are employed in translation.

Lexical deviation occurs when a writer departs from conventional vocabulary through the use of rare lexemes, morphological distortion, or unconventional collocations. At the graphological level, deviation manifests through unconventional orthography, punctuation, or spacing.

E. *Translation Strategies*

Chesterman’s (1997) translation strategies distinguish three primary groups: mainly syntactic/grammatical (coded as G), semantic (S), and pragmatic (Pr). Chesterman notes that these categories often overlap: those pragmatic strategies usually involve syntactic and semantic ones, and strategies from different groups frequently co-occur in the same translation decision.

(a). *Syntactic Strategies*

These strategies involve duplicating the SL form, either partially or completely, through syntactic or grammatical adjustments. Chesterman (1997) identifies ten main types of syntactic strategies: “literal translation (G1), loan, calque (G2), Transposition (G3), Unit shift (G4), Phrase structure change (G5), Clause structure change (G6), Sentence structure change (G7), Cohesion change (G8), Level shift (G9), and Scheme change (G10)” (p. 91).

(b). *Semantic Strategies*

Chesterman introduces semantic strategies as changes that primarily affect lexical meaning, encompassing certain clause-level alterations, such as emphasis. Rooted in Vinay and Darbelnet’s concept of modulation (Munday et al., 2022), these strategies adjust meaning in response to the demands of natural expression in the target language. This group includes “synonymy (S1), antonymy (S2), hyponymy (S3), converses (S4), abstraction change (S5), distribution change (S6), emphasis change (S7), paraphrase (S8), trope change (S9), and other semantic changes (S10)” (Chesterman, 1997, p. 98).

(c). *Pragmatic Strategies*

While syntactic and semantic strategies deal with form and meaning, respectively, pragmatic strategies can be used to manipulate the message itself. These strategies typically involve more extensive shifts, often combining both form and meaning, and emerge from the translator’s global decisions concerning the overall orientation of the target text. Chesterman (1997, p. 104) identifies ten such strategies: “cultural filtering (Pr1), explicitness change (Pr2), information change (Pr3), interpersonal change (Pr4), illocutionary change (Pr5), coherence change (Pr6), partial translation (Pr7), visibility change (Pr8), transediting (Pr9), and other pragmatic changes (Pr10)”.

F. *The Case Study: Markus Zusak’s The Book Thief*

Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief* (2005) offers a distinctive foundation for a stylistic and narratological examination of narrative voice in translation. With Death as the narrative voice, the narrative fuses irony and compassion to depict Liesel’s life, including her relationship with her foster parents, Max, a Jewish fist-fighter who hides in Hubermann’s basement to escape Nazi persecution, and other main characters during destruction. The narrator’s shifts between moral detachment and emotional intensity shape the thematic force of the “power of word,” which is foregrounded through linguistic deviation and other stylistic markers. Analyzing its Arabic translation provides insights into how narrative stance and stylistic form interact to preserve or modify the novel’s central concern with the power of words across languages.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study limits itself to Phelan's (2023) account of narrative voice as an interaction between style, tone, and values, providing a framework for understanding how stylistic form conveys narrative voice and contributes to the novel's thematic significance. Leech and Short's (2013) account of foregrounding provides the analytical basis for examining how deviation, parallelism, and repetition serve as stylistic markers closely tied to the theme of the power of words. Chesterman's (1997) taxonomy of translation strategies is used to clarify and interpret the translator's decisions that produce shifts in the rendering of narrative voice between the English and Arabic versions. The samples comprise five texts from Markus Zusak's (2005) *The Book Thief* and its Arabic translation by Dalia Masri (2018), chosen for their high concentration of narrative markedness, stylistic foregrounding, and thematic relevance. A qualitative approach guides the analysis, which proceeds by identifying foregrounded patterns in the source text, evaluating their contribution to narrative voice and thematic emphasis, and contrasting them with their Arabic renderings to uncover stylistic shifts. These shifts are then interpreted through translation strategies to clarify how equivalence in tone and narrative stance is negotiated. When necessary, suggested translations are provided to restore the intended stylistic and emotional effect. The ultimate objective is to determine whether the translation maintains or redefines the narrator's distinctive voice and whether stylistic transformations alter the thematic depth of the translated narrative.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the data, the analysis reveals that deviations in narrative voice stem from the translator's partial handling of style, tone, and values, and from overlooking how these components work collectively. This limited attention ultimately compromises the formation of narrative meaning in the Arabic version.

Example (1): Original Text

"Liesel could see it on her face. Blood leaked from her nose and licked at her lips. Her eyes had blackened. Cuts had opened up, and a series of wounds were rising to the surface of her skin. All from the words. From Liesel's words" (Zusak, 2005, p. 204).

Translation

استطاعت ليزيل أن ترى آثار ذلك على وجهها. تسرب الدم من أنفها ومسح شفيتها، واسودت عيناها، وتفتحت جروحها، وارتقت سلسلة من الجروح الدامية إلى سطح جلدّها. كل ذلك بسبب الكلمات. بسبب كلمات ليزيل

(Dalia, 2018, p. 321)

Although Death narrates the passage in the third person and past tense, it carries an emotive intensity that aligns with Liesel's consciousness. This scene is not merely a confrontation between two characters; it marks a moment of emotional release from accumulated grief. This pain is conveyed through metaphorical language drawn from the source domain of bodily harm, in addition to personification and parallelism through which Death expresses his style, tone, and values.

Style

Death's style displays an ordered, figurative narrative. The violent imagery of physical injury transforms language into wounds, functioning as a semantic deviation through conceptual metaphor and personification. The recurrent patterns themselves generate parallelism that builds a stylistic crescendo, reflecting Death's instinct to narratively structure pain.

Tone

Death's tone balances emotional intensity with narrative control. His calm narration refrains from direct emotional commentary; yet this detachment is not indifference but discipline, allowing the violence of the scene to speak for itself. The tone resembles a witness's calm testimony—measured, respectful, and deliberate.

Values

Death's values reveal his moral philosophy: He sees words as dual-edged—words can heal, but they can also wound. The line "All from words. From Liesel's words." captures his belief that pain can arise from verbal violence as much as physical harm.

The translator has employed literal translation (G1) in translating 'Blood leaked from her nose', 'Her eyes had blackened', and 'Cuts had opened up' into Arabic directly without stylistic modulation, and scheme change (G10) where the recurrent patterns in the ST have been successfully translated into the TT through the same scheme, that of parallelism. As for semantic strategies, she has employed emphasis change (S7), which appears in translating 'a series of wounds were rising to the surface of her skin', where the addition of 'الدامية' intensifies the depiction of injury. The choice of 'ارتقت' instead of 'were rising' also creates emphasis in the TT. Additionally, trope change (S9) is evident in translating the verb 'licked' as a verb with a faint trace of agency, 'مسح', leading to a shift that weakens the personification and results in a less emotionally charged image. As for pragmatic strategies, she has applied illocutionary change (Pr5); the translator has preserved the metaphor in the TT, but it is delivered in a clinical, sequential report. This reframes Death's voice from symbolic witness to medical reporting, resulting in a clear illocutionary change (Pr5). Such tonal displacement corresponds to Popović's generic shift, where the constitutive features of the text as a literary genre may change (Bassnett, 2005).

The TT does not capture Death's style, tone, and values in the ST, mainly because the figurative language and its functional impact are lost in translation. The Arabic version delivers the scene with clinical directness, which undermines the tone and moral reflection found in the ST.

Proposed Translation

استطاعت ليزيل ان ترى آثار ذلك على محياها فقد وشح السواد عينيها واستوطنت شفقتها حروفاً قانيةً وهكذا انتفضت جروحها سيلاً من الكدمات وجعاً نابضاً.

In the proposed translation, the researcher has applied trope change (S9) to recreate the ST's metaphor in a form that aligns with the Arabic literary genre, ensuring that the emotional and thematic weight of Liesel's hurtful word remains prominent. The scheme change (G10) is similarly maintained, though its elements are reordered to support the progression of imagery.

Example (2): Original Text

"They read through the early hours of morning, circling and writing the words she did not comprehend and turning the pages toward daylight."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 69)

Translation

قرأ خلال الساعات الأولى من الصباح، ورسماً دوائر حول الكلمات التي لم تفهما ليزيل، وتدرجا عليها كعادتهما إلى أن يزغ ضوء النهار

(Dalia, 2018, p. 109)

Although the sentence is written in third-person past tense—typically signaling Death's narration—its linguistic cues, such as the pronoun “she” and the verb “comprehended,” signal Liesel's consciousness, producing an instance of free indirect discourse. In this fusion, the phrase “turning the pages toward daylight” stands as a form of semantic deviation—realized through conceptual metaphor—that still bears the imprint of Death's stylistic presence, expressing his calm tone, moral reflection, and alignment with Liesel.

Style

Through style, the metaphor transforms reading into an act of enlightenment, reinforced by rhythmic parallelism that links physical persistence with intellectual survival.

Tone

Through tone, the metaphor conveys Death's empathy and admiration toward the girl's effort to grasp the meaning through words.

Values

Death's values are revealed through the moral metaphor of daylight, fostering understanding and reverence for language.

The translator, employing the abstraction change strategy (S5), has rendered the phrase “toward daylight” as “إلى أن” adding the verb “بزغ” which flattens the metaphorical vitality of the original. Gebbia (2023) supports the claim that literalness results in neutral, less connotative renditions. The style becomes literal and descriptive, no longer performing the figurative function of reading, and instead becomes a mere temporal reference. The tone, once empathetic and reverent, turns neutral. Consequently, Death's values—his association of light with moral force—become weakened, and the translation erases the ethical resonance that framed reading as a journey toward enlightenment.

Proposed Translation

حتى تشرق أنوار الكلمات في قلبها

The researcher has applied explicitness change (Pr2) to add clarity, reinforce the emotional function, and support the narrative central theme. The rendition preserves the metaphorical function by clarifying the symbolic link between light and understanding and ensuring that the emotional impact of the original is carried into the TL.

Example (3): Original Text

“Upstairs, when they returned, they found Mama sitting in the kitchen, alone and pensive. When she saw them, she stood and beckoned Liesel to come over, noticing the dried-up tears that streaked her. She brought the girl into her and heaped a typically rugged embrace around her body.

‘Alles gut, Saumensch?’

She didn't need an answer.

Everything was good.

But it was awful, too.”

(Zusak, 2005, p. 155)

Translation

عندما عادا إلى الطابق العلوي، وجدا ماما جالسة في المطبخ، وحدها متأملة. عندما رأتهم، وقفت وأشارت

إلى ليزيل لتقترب أكثر. لاحظت الدموع التي جفت على وجهها، وضمت الفتاة إليها في معانقة خشنة

“أليس غوت ساومينش؟” هل كل شيء على ما يرام، أينها الخنزيرة؟

لم تكن في حاجة إلى إجابة

كل شيء على ما يرام

إلا أنه فظيع أيضاً

(Dalia, 2018, p. 251)

Unlike the previous two examples, in which the selected samples were narrated through Death, this line is direct speech by Rosa, Liesel's foster mother, to Liesel. Here, the narrative voice steps aside, allowing the character's voice to emerge unmediated. Genette (1980) describes this as a case in which "the narrator is obliterated and the character substitutes for him" (p. 174). Nevertheless, his filtering presence persists, guiding what is shown and concealed. His covert stance masks his stylistic identity, yet his decision to include this scene suggests an awareness of its emotional and thematic significance.

Style

In this scene, Death remains in the background, making it impossible to trace his stylistic imprint. His narrative presence fades, allowing Rosa's unfiltered language and emotional immediacy to take center stage.

Tone

Death's tone conveys quiet compassion and restrained sensitivity through the inclusion of this scene. His framing — "She didn't need an answer. Everything was good. But it was awful, too." — embodies irony with empathy, balancing serenity with grief.

Values

Death's controlled narration makes his moral stance emerge with quiet clarity. He values empathy and endurance as the last safeguards of humanity. Rosa's rough language, full of hidden care, proves that compassion still breathes under cruelty. His silence is an act of moral witnessing, honoring love's small defiance against violence.

In the Arabic rendering of the metaphor "Saumensch", a form of semantic deviation which is used to describe Liesel, the translator has rendered it as "الخنزيرة". She has successfully employed borrowing and calque (G2) by preserving the German form through transliteration while transferring the word's meaning into Arabic. She has also successfully applied trope change (S9) by translating the metaphor in the ST into a metaphor in TT, though without achieving the appropriate cultural equivalent in Arabic. However, the interpersonal change (Pr4) strategy has been applied unsuccessfully, specifically by translating an informal German expression into formal Arabic.

Although this rendering foregrounds the cultural specificity of the original, it disregards its stylistic nuance—specifically the italics—and distorts its emotional intent. Consequently, the Arabic term "الخنزيرة" conveys deep insult and moral offense, which makes it unsuitable for expressing Rosa's rough affection toward Liesel.

The translator has failed to capture Death's tone and values. The tone of the Arabic version alters the narrative voice's emotional stance. By replacing the slang intimacy of the source with Standard Arabic formality, the translation diminishes the narrator's empathy and weakens the interpersonal bond between Rosa and Liesel. This distortion extends to values, erasing Death's moral awareness of Rosa's affection.

Proposed Translation

آليس غوت ساومينش " كل شي تمام يا شيطانة! "

In this proposed translation, the researcher combines borrowing and calque (G2), supported by italicization to keep the cultural identity of "Alles gut, Saumensch?" in the ST. The researcher also employs trope change (S9) to render Rosa's rough yet caring tone, substituting the original insult with a culturally resonant Arabic metaphor.

Example (4): Original Text

"Did you see the sky tonight?"

'No.' Max looked at the wall and pointed. On it, they all watched the words and the picture he'd painted more than a year earlier—the rope and the dripping sun. 'Only that one tonight,' and from there, no more was spoken. Nothing but thoughts."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 293)

Translation

"هل رأيت السماء الليلة؟"

"لا". نظر ماكس إلى الجدار وأشار. وعلى الجدار، شاهدوا جميعاً الكلمات والصورة التي رسمها منذ ما يزيد على السنة—الحبل والشمس التي تقطر باللون الأصفر. "لم أرها سوى في تلك الليلة فقط". بعدها، لم يتحدث أحد. لم يكن سوى الأفكار المتراحمة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 461)

This sample exemplifies a moment of narrative convergence, collapsing the boundary between Death and Max. The moment captures the tension between silence, memory, and survival, transforming Death from a distant narrator into a silent witness of endurance.

Style

Irony, interruptions, and a grim wit typically mark Death's stylistic signature. However, in the "dripping sun" scene, his style shifts. Instead of reducing the mural to a simple description, Death repeats Max's own metaphor of "dripping sun". This repetition creates an intentional stylistic echo. Stylistically, the effect approximates free indirect discourse because Death's language folds Max's imagery into his own narration. The "dripping sun" thus signifies both Max's painted hope and Death's empathy and intimacy.

Tone

In this scene, Death's tone is not detached but compassionate, reducing narrative distance and positioning the narrator as a fellow witness who shares Max's longing. Death essentially steps back from his intrusive persona to let Max's imagery speak for itself.

Values

The narrator's reuse of "dripping sun" is not a neutral choice. Death's decision to echo Max's metaphor reveals his recognition of its emotive impact and the persistence it symbolizes. This evaluative alignment is reinforced by Oliveira and Maggio (2017, p. 136):

Such a long shift on focalization might be justified by the empathy Death feels towards the suffering of the Jews, whose inner voices he hears every time he goes to concentration camps or any other site where Jews are being killed. Nevertheless, Death assumes a neutral position in relation to this vision and refrains from making any kind of comment before, during or after this vision. It is relevant to say that Death, when collecting the souls of murdered Jews, does not make any of his sarcastic comments either, which might imply a respectful attitude towards the miserable situation Max is going through.

Death's silence here is not absence but ethical presence, preserving the dignity of suffering without irony.

In translating "dripping sun", the Arabic rendering "الشمس التي تقطر باللون الأصفر" employs trope change (S9) and explicitness (Pr2). Although the verb "تقطر" conveys lexical deviation that matches the verb "drip", the added adjective "yellow"—which is absent in the ST—constitutes a significant translation shift. In this scene, Zusak's original expression serves as a conceptual metaphor for both the diminishing of hope and art as a form of resistance.

Unlike the ST, the TT reformulates the phrase as a relative clause, fixing the image in an explicit color description. While in English the sun conventionally symbolizes hope and renewal, in Arabic, light (النور/الضياء) serves that symbolic function. The translator's recourse to yellow thus reduces the ST's interpretive openness.

The translator has failed to capture Death's style, tone, and values. Transforming the metaphor "the dripping sun" into a plain description erases its stylistic compression, and the added "yellow" shifts toward descriptive commentary, giving the line a factual, detached tone. As for values, in the ST, the metaphor sustains an empathetic alignment with hope and resistance, whereas in the TT, it is recoded in terms that carry the connotation of the color yellow in Arabic.

Proposed Translation

شمس يقطرُ ضيأها

Although the proposed rendering "شمس يقطرُ ضيأها" introduces a degree of explicitness (Pr2) by anchoring the metaphor in the domain of light, this explicitness is functionally justified. In Arabic literary culture, it is light, not the sun, that carries the symbolic weight of hope and renewal, and the translation, through trope change (S9), aligns the metaphor accordingly as a metonymy in the TL. More importantly, it maintains the thematic significance of the power of words: like light, words are fragile and vulnerable, yet they continue to resist darkness. The explicitness, therefore, secures their symbolic alignment with one of the novel's central themes.

Example (5): Original Text

(1) "On the wall, he painted a long, tightly knotted rope with a dripping yellow sun at the end of it, as if you could dive right into it. On the ropy cloud, he drew two figures—a thin girl and a withering Jew—and they were walking, arms balanced, toward that dripping sun. Beneath the picture, he wrote the following sentence.

THE WALL-WRITTEN WORDS
OF MAX VANDENBURG

It was a Monday, and they walked
on a tightrope to the sun."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 193)

(2) "Liesel came over from the wall. She'd been writing the word argumentsix times, next to Max's picture of the ropy cloud and the dripping sun. Max handed her the paper and she confirmed it. 'That's him.'"

(Zusak, 2005, p. 200)

(3) "'Did you see the sky tonight?'

'No.' Max looked at the wall and pointed. On it, they all watched the words and the picture he'd painted more than a year earlier—the rope and the dripping sun. 'Only that one tonight,' and from there, no more was spoken. Nothing but thoughts."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 293)

(4) "PASSED ITEMS, HAND TO HAND

Blocks of cement and roof tiles.

A piece of wall with a dripping sun painted on it. An unhappy-looking accordion, peering through its eaten case."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 377)

(5) "Personally, I like to imagine her looking briefly at the wall, at MaxVandenburg's tightrope cloud, his dripping sun, and the figures walking toward it."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 397)

Translation

(1) على الحائط، رسم حبلًا طويلًا معقودًا بإحكام وفي نهايته شمس تقطر باللون الأصفر، كما لو أنه يمكن للمرء أن يغوص فيها. ورسم على السحابة " التي أخذت شكل حبل، شخصيتين - فتاة نحيلة ويهودي يذوي - كانا يمشيان، وأيديهما ممدودة على جانبيهما ليتوازنا فوق الحبل، في طريقيهما نحو الشمس.

تحت الصورة، كتبت العبارة التالية

الجدار—الكلمات التي كتبها ماكس فاندنبورغ

كان ذلك يوم اثنين، وقد سارا معًا، على جبل مشدود، نحو الشمس

(Dalia, 2018, p. 305)

اقتربت منه ليزيل، التي كانت تكتب على الحائط كلمة "جدال" ست مرات، بجانب الصورة التي رسمها ماكس لغيمة على شكل جبل والشمس التي (2) تقطر باللون الأصفر.

(Dalia, 2018, p. 316)

(3) "هل رأيت السماء الليلية؟"

"نظر ماكس إلى الجدار وأشار. وعلى الجدار، شاهدوا جميعاً الكلمات والصورة التي رسمها منذ ما يزيد على السنة— الجبل والشمس التي تقطر " باللون الأصفر. "لم أرها سوى في تلك الليلة فقط". بعدها، لم يتحدث أحد. لم يكن سوى الأفكار المنزاحة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 461)

من يد إلى يد (4)

كتلّ من الاسمنت وقرميد السقف

قطعة من جدار مرسوم عليها صورة شمس تقطر باللون الأصفر

أكورديون تعيس، يُحدّق من حقيبته المتأكلة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 591)

شخصيًا، أحبُّ أن تصوّرنا تنظر لفترة وجيزة إلى الجدار، حيث رسم ماكس فاندنيبورغ غيمته ذات الجبل المشدود، وشمسه التي تقطر باللون (5) الأصفر، والشخوص التي تمشي نحوها

(Dalia, 2018, p. 626)

The five repetitions of "the dripping sun" across separate instances transform it from an individual image into a shared moral symbol. Through this recurrence, the metaphor conveys narrative empathy and affirms Death's alignment with Max's endurance.

Style

Stylistically, Death is well known for his fragmented and intrusive style. However, in his fivefold use of this metaphor, his narration achieves thematic discipline, shifting from discursiveness into structured rhythm. The use of repetition parallels Genette's (1980) frequency technique, employed as a device of thematic insistence.

Tone

Death, through his use of "the dripping sun" metaphor, shows calm continuity and complete alignment with Max's endurance. By abstaining from commentary or judgment, Death's tone reflects an ethical gesture of respect toward Max's suffering.

Values

Death's repeated echo of Max's metaphor marks his moral and ethical stance. The recurrence turns language into an act of witnessing.

While the translator accurately has reproduced the repetition of the ST in the TT through scheme change (G10), she has compromised the metaphor's layered meaning by dissolving its ambiguity through trope change (S9) and explicitness change (Pr2). Consequently, the style, tone, and values weaken due to the illocutionary shift (Pr5). Interestingly, in sample (4), she managed to preserve the indefiniteness of "a dripping sun," which the narrative voice in the ST uses on purpose to treat items as fragments and foreground the broken, partial nature of the remaining world, and this has to do with Death's tone and values.

The table below summarizes the practical analysis of the five samples in this study.

TABLE 1
A SUMMARY OF FOREGROUNDING DEVICES, NARRATIVE VOICE'S ELEMENTS, AND APPROPRIATENESS IN THE TRANSLATION

Text no.	Types of Foregrounding					Narrative Voice			Appropriateness	
	Scheme		Deviation			Style	Tone	Value	Partial	Full
	Parallelism	Repetition	Semantic	Lexical	Graphological					
1	+		+			+	-	-	+	-
2			-			-	-	-	+	-
3			+		-		-	-	-	-
4			-	+		-	-	-	+	-
5		+	-	+		-	-	-	+	-

Notes:

(-) Foregrounding devices are present in the ST, but the translator failed to use them in the TT.

(+) means that the device exists in both ST and TT.

(-) In the narrative voice, this means the translator has failed to convey the same element in the TT.

(+) means that the translator has successfully conveyed the same element in the TT.

(-) Inappropriateness means that the translation does not match the interpretation in the ST.

(+) means that the translation conveys the same interpretation intended in the ST.

V. CONCLUSION

The close analysis shows that syntactic strategies (G1, G2, and G10) function reliably, preserving syntactic flow and stylistic rhythm between the source and target texts. In contrast, semantic (S9) and pragmatic (Pr5) strategies were responsible for the majority of interpretive shifts. The persistent failures in trope change (S9) reveal the translator's

difficulty in maintaining the figurative depth of the source metaphors. Likewise, repeated illocutionary shifts (Pr5) weaken the narrator's stance, replacing reflection with neutrality. In sample 1, the translator has successfully maintained the metaphor (S9) but at the expense of an illocutionary shift (Pr5). Beyond the dominant (S9) and (Pr5), additional interpretive shifts emerged through (S5), (S7), (Pr2), and (Pr4). The misapplied abstraction change (S5), the overemphasis on emotion (S7), the explicitation of meaning (Pr2), and the personal reframing of the statement (Pr4) collectively displaced Death's voice from moral reflection to descriptive commentary. Taken together, these shifts reveal that the translation succeeds linguistically at the micro level but fails to reconstruct Death's moral stance, thereby weakening the thematic continuity of the power of words. This study emphasizes that effective literary translation lies not only in applying translation strategies effectively but also in the translator's ability to interpret narrative voice as the intersection between stylistic form and ethical vision. The study also highlights the importance of tracking the underlying theme to ensure that the same intended meaning is conveyed in the target text. While this study is based on five selected samples, this limitation reflects a deliberate emphasis on qualitative depth and stylistic precision. Such an approach is particularly suited to examining subtle shifts in narrative voice. However, future investigations may broaden the analytical scope by engaging larger corpora, diverse genres, or comparative methodologies, thereby reinforcing the stylistic appropriateness as a tool for translation assessment.

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