



A Systemic Literature Review of Translator's Style in Translation Studies

Yajie Li^{1,2}, Muhammad Alif Redzuan bin Abdullah¹(✉), and Ling Yann Wong¹

¹ Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
gongdalixiaojie@163.com, muhammadalif@upm.edu.my

² School of Foreign Languages, Henan Institute of Science and Technology, Xinxiang 453003, Henan, China

Abstract. The translator's voice proposed by Hermans doubted the traditional view of the invisibility of the translator in the translation product. Then, Baker's combination of stylometric methods and corpus-based approaches made studying the translator's style possible. However, there is still no agreed-upon description of the translator's style, no practical research methodology, no reliable approach for selecting stylistic indicators, and no compelling theory for studying the translator's style. Hence, this paper aims to summarize the concept, research methodology, research theory, and stylistic indicators of the translator's style study by conducting a holistic literature evaluation of the Translator's Style study. This paper applies the method of systematic literature review which requires the researchers to select the academic articles or books with pre-set criteria. No time limit is set in the selection of meta-data to get a complete picture of the evolution and issues with the translator's style in translation studies. Based on the analysis of 97 samples mainly from Scopus and Web of Science following an updated PRISMA flow, this paper assessed the trend, research methods, and theories of the Translator's Style study.

Keywords: the translator's style study · systematic literature review · trend · method

1 Introduction

Style whose definition is closely dependent on the study field and the focus of the researcher can be seen as an umbrella term [1]. Based on the research concern, style can be taken as a genre, a variant of the language, or a text type. In a broad sense, style in the translation is the characteristics of a register or genre, the choices of a given writer or translator, or his or her specific composing method [2].

The term Translator's Style is first proposed by Baker and is seen as "a thumbprint" that is expressed in linguistic and non-linguistic features. While Baker regarded the translator's subconscious choice in the translation as more significant to be measured

[3], Saldanha was concerned with the translator's conscious choice [4], and Boase-Beier deemed it impossible to distinguish the conscious and unconscious choice of the translator due to the influence of the contextual factors on his or her mindset [2].

The ambiguous and inconsistent understandings of the Style and the Translator's style cause the researchers to utilize various methods to testify to their hypothesis of the Translator's Style.

Regardless of the source text, Baker [3] took the initiative to investigate the translator's style using the monolingual corpus comparison technique. Following the T-type model, Bosseaux [5] and Winter [6–8] applied the parallel corpus comparison approach, also known S-type model. The source text will be used as a control variable, and the examination will concentrate on how the translator handles specific aspects of the original text. However, since retranslation is not actually a common phenomenon, the studying subjects are relatively constrained. In addition, it is more appropriate to call one translator's performance in one translation the style of the translated text.

Realizing the problems of the T-type and S-type models, Huang [9] proposed the multi-complex model which combined the T-type model and the S-type model. The translator's translation style in one translated text suggested by the parallel corpus comparison will be verified with his or her translation style in other translations. The results gained from the multi-complex model are exactly the Translator's Style. The limitation of this model is the research subject must own translation work that has been retranslated.

Besides the above three research models, Olohan has attempted to compare the translators' translations with their original target writing to evaluate their translation styles [10]. The problem with Olohan's research method is that translating is quite a different creating process from original writing due to the constraints of the source texts. Along with the great number of research models and methods, however, there is no agreed-upon research methodology due to the limitations of each model and method.

Although a great variety of stylistic indicators have been examined in the Translator's Style study, it is difficult for a researcher to identify a proper stylistic indicator for his or her study among them. Knowing what stylistic indicators have been investigated and the way of analyzing them may be helpful to conduct the Translator's Style studies.

An exhaustive review is needed due to the lack of a clear definition of the translator's style, practical research methodology, and knowledge of the research status quo of stylistic indicators and research theory for studying the Translator's Style. The major objective of this paper was to measure all the research related to the Translator's Style in the Scopus and Web of Science to conclude the trend, practical research methodology and theories, and feasible method of choosing sensitive stylistic indicators of the Translator's Style.

2 Methods

This paper utilized the method of systematic literature review which is more objective, observable, and repeatable [11]. The steps consist of proposing precise research questions, developing a proper review protocol, conducting the study with minimal bias, and discussing the results [12]. The PRISMA statement [13] was followed to conduct the review.

2.1 Research Questions

This paper aims to examine the following four research questions: What is the trend of the Translator's Style study? What are the research methods for the Translator's Style? How should stylistic indicators be selected? What are the research theories for the Translator's style?

2.2 Databases

Two databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science (WOS), were chosen to provide thorough literature coverage. Scopus was chosen above PubMed, Google Scholar, and WOS due to its greater journal coverage and more robust keyword search and citation analysis features. Scopus, in contrast to WOS, only makes recent papers available [14]. WOS and Scopus are complementary to one another because none is exhaustive [15]. The bias in language that can be seen in the two databases, as seen by the predominance of English journals, is their limitation [12].

2.3 Search Criteria

The following publications are included: those contain "translat* style" or "style of translat*" or "translator* voice*" or "voice* of translat*" in their title, abstract, or keywords; those released before February 24, 2022; those peer-reviewed academic articles, books, book chapters, conference papers, or conference proceedings;

The following publications are excluded: those not written in English; those lacking a full text; those not concentrating on the topic of translation within the context of social science; a publication that does not emphasize the translator's or the translation's style.

2.4 PRISMA Workflow

Figure 1 showed how the final 97 eligible studies had been selected. 100 samples were retrieved from 372 ones from Scopus, WOS, and citation searching in the phase of identification. After screening the title, abstract, and keywords, the researcher excludes 4 conference proceedings with no full texts available online and 83 samples that did not focus on the subject of translation in the scope of social science and the topic of the Translator's Style or the style of translation. In the step of assessing the eligibility of the samples, 88 samples were removed from the 185 samples via the full-text evaluation. Finally, 97 samples were included in the literature review.

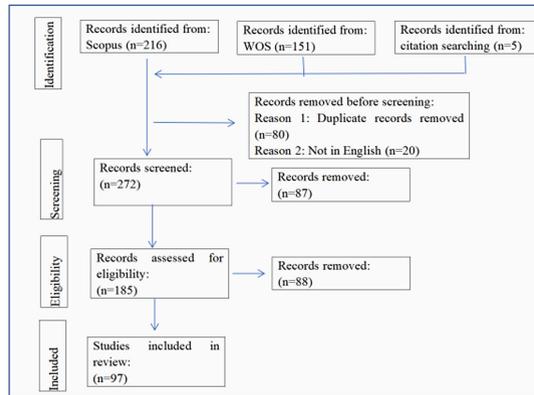


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow chart for systematic literature review

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Trend of the Translator's Style Study

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 indicated the trend of the Translator's style study from the perspective of the number of studies published yearly, the number of different types of translational language pairs yearly, the proportion of research types, and the proportion of different genres of research subjects. As can be seen from Fig. 2, only 5 studies have been made on it before 2000. The number of studies raised abruptly in 2004 but then maintained at a low level until 2010. From 2011 to 2019, the number of published samples has been fluctuating between 3 to 7 without no regularity. In 2020 and 2021, the number of studies boomed.

Few academic works had been published before Baker put forward the concept and research approach of the Translator's Style in 2000 [3]. Although the extent of the concern with the Translator's Style has not always been on the rise since 2000, the concern was consistent and broad. Researchers implemented various research methods to test the hypothesis related to the translator's visibility and style with different types of research subjects [16], review the development of the Translator's Style study [17], and explore the theories of analyzing the Translator's style and its formation [18].

Figure 3 presented the number of different types of translational language pairs in the published studies diachronically. While previous empirical studies before 2006 only took the Indo-European translational language pair as samples, the Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European language pair have drawn consistent interest from researchers since 2006. The number of studies with the Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European language pair as research subjects in 2015, 2020, and 2021 was even greater than that with the Indo-European language pair as research subjects. Moreover, a variety of other translation language pairs have drawn the scholars' notice [19].

The results from the different types of translation language pairs can provide more convincing evidence for the hypothesis of the Translator's Style and the exploration of its shaping factors. For each translation language pair itself, the established corpora and research statistics can be employed as the comparable corpora and statistics for the

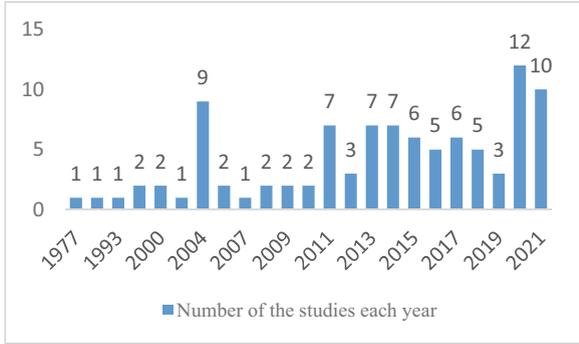


Fig. 2. Number of studies yearly

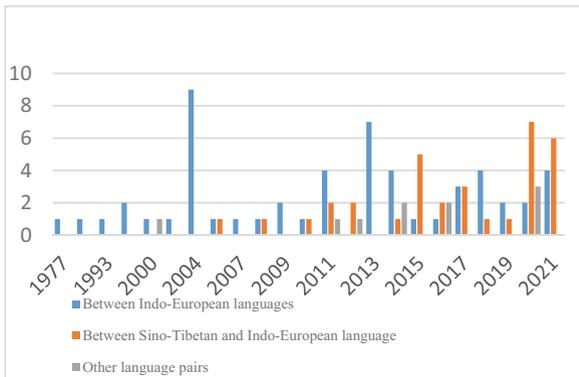


Fig. 3. Number of the translation language pairs of the research subject yearly

potential studies. Therefore, the more one translation language pair is examined with the corpus-based translation study method, the more likely it is to summarize the features and nature of the translation of this translation language pair. Indo-European language pair and the language pair of Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan languages were most frequently examined. The previous studies of these two language pairs establish the foundation for further studies, which is also the reason why the number of published studies boomed in 2020 and 2021.

Besides the language pairs of the research subjects, this paper collected data on the genres of the research subjects. The statistics in Fig. 4 removed 14 literature reviews and theoretical studies. Literary materials (87%) were most frequently taken into account as research materials to evaluate their translators' styles, compare with texts of religion (5%), science (5%), newspaper (1%), public speeches (1%) and dialogues in the court (1%).

The study of literary translation style is the study of translation style in general. The translator's translation style is shaped by the literature's inferred meaning and linguistic gaps [2]. Thus, literary translation materials are the focus of the majority of the studies in this review. However, some non-literary translations are both documentary and

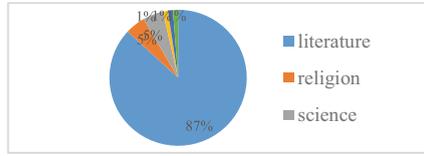


Fig. 4. The proportion of the different genres of the research subject

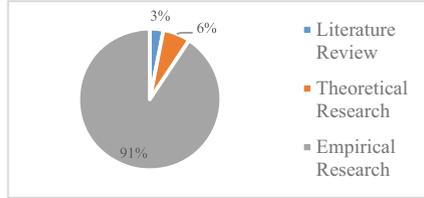


Fig. 5. The proportion of the different research types

instrumental and share the same linguistic gap and inferred meaning as the translation of literature. This is the rationale behind the selection of the religious, academic, and journalistic texts, dialogues in the court, and public speech as the research subjects. The studies of the translation of different genres can further the comprehensive understanding of the Translator's Style.

The distribution of the 3 research types of the 97 studies was illustrated in Fig. 5. The proportion of empirical studies (91%) was overwhelmingly greater than that of theoretical studies (6%) and literature reviews (3%).

Taking the research type into account, in spite of the great contribution made by the empirical studies on the Translator's Style study, it encountered congestion because of its flawed methodology and theories. Therefore, more theoretical research is required to develop its research methodology and research theories.

3.2 Research Methods of the Translator's Style Study

Figures 6 and 7 presented the status quo of the research methods and research models applied in the 97 studies of the review. 32% of studies utilized qualitative methods to carry out the empirical studies. Some of them applied the corporal to locate the recurring linguistic or non-linguistic features in the source texts and translations. Hence, the percentage of the corpus-based studies in the review was 61%, which was bigger than the proportion of the studies employing quantitative methods and mixed methods (59%). For the corpus-based translation studies, 65% of them conducted the studies with the S-type model while only 23% and 12% of them with the multi-complex model and T-type model respectively.

The inductive methods were deployed for the translator's non-linguistic features reflected via his or her choice of translating materials, the paratext of the translation, and unquantified data of the repeated features in the translation. However, the quantitative studies were more objective and scientific than qualitative research thanks to the collection of numerical data from the systematic survey through the corpus. But translation

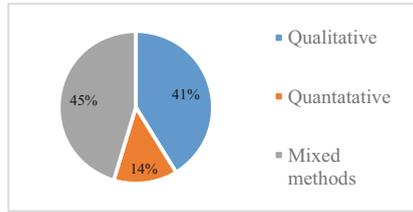


Fig. 6. The proportion of different types of research methods

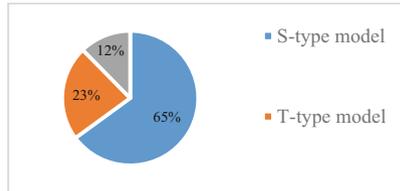


Fig. 7. The proportion of different types of research models in the corpus-based studies

studies are rendered useless by the pure examination of quantifiable data without taking into account the social, cultural, and cognitive factors that may shape the translator’s style. Therefore, the mixed methods may be the best choice for the Translator’s Style study.

For the research models, even though the T-type model was originally put forward as the basis of the other two models, it was not implemented as frequently as the other two models. Regardless of the source text, the finding leaned from the T-type model is translation style which is similar to translation universals. In addition, the style of the translated text is acquired from the S-type model, the most popular model according to the data of this review. Only the multi-complex model studies the style of one particular translator. Moreover, only one study scrutinized one particular translator’s style and its development by analyzing his translations chronologically [20]. It is difficult to discern one particular translator’s style and its shaping mechanism with the S-type model and T-type model. Accordingly, applying the multi-complex model and the translator-oriented model may enhance the Translator’s Style study effectively.

3.3 The Stylistic Indicators for the Translator’s Style Study

Over 37 stylistic indicators have been chosen to investigate the Translator’s Style. As was illustrated in Table 1, Baker’s linguistic parameters [3] were used most. Discourse presentation, speech act report verbs, and transitivity are the most frequently used pragmatic indicators. Moreover, the researchers preferred to choose unique terms, emphatic italics, and figures of speech among the specific language items.

Baker borrowed the linguistic parameters from stylometry [3], but then the researchers in stylometry attempted to test the sensitivity of the linguistic parameters in the translation and identify the translator of one translation based on the methods and

Table 1. Number of different types of stylistic indicators used in the studies

Statistic Indicator	Baker's linguistic parameters	16
	Readability	2
Pragmatic Indicator	Discourse presentation	5
	Speech act report verbs	3
	Deixis, modality, and transitivity	3
	Character's name	1
	Code switch	1
Specific Language Items	Unique terms	9
	Emphatic italics	4
	Metaphor	3
	Contracted forms	2
	Lexical bundles	2
	Repetition	2
	Ambiguity	1
	Key cluster	1
	Colloquial language	1

findings of the Translator's Style study. Stylometry and corpus-based translation studies benefited from one another's progress.

The researchers of the studies paid the most attention to Baker's linguistic parameters, notwithstanding some skepticism about them. Even the data of Baker's linguistic parameters is not always significant to identify one particular translator's style, they can be the basic data to describe it from the macro perspective. Then, the research can proceed to pinpoint certain sensitive indicators based on the linguistic concepts and the observation of the corpora, and the translator's background. Among the pragmatic indicators, the research can observe the features of the discourse presentation, deixis, modality, transitivity, and speech act verbs of the translations primarily. For the specific language items, unique terms (Bei structure in Chinese, German modal particle, and redundancy in Arabic), emphatic italics, and figure of speech (metaphor, repetition, ambiguity) were the most commonly analyzed stylistic indicators. It is suggested that both corpus-based and corpus-driven methods be utilized to seek the proper stylistic indicators. The linguistic knowledge and familiarity with the corpus can assist the researcher to identify the sensitive stylistic indicators for the study.

Table 2. Number of different theories used in the studies

Theory	Number
Baker's framework of the translator's style (2000)	22
Baker's framework of translation universals (1996)	8
theories of narrative stylistics	8
Genette's model of paratext analysis (1997)	7
Halliday's theory of systematic functional linguistics (2013)	6
Semino and Short's framework of discourse presentation (2004)	5
Boase-Beier's cognitive stylistic theory (2006)	3
Biber's function classification of lexical bundles (2004)	3
Newmark's typology for the translation of metaphor (1987)	2
Toury's descriptive model (2012)	2
Vermeer's skopos theory (2000)	2
Gutt's relevance theory (1998)	2

3.4 Research Theories of the Translator's Style Study

Over 23 theories have been applied to extract, describe or analyze the translator's style. Table 2 demonstrated the most commonly used theories that included Baker's framework of translator's style [3] and translation universals, theories of narrative stylistics, Genette's model of paratext analysis [21], Halliday's theory of systematic functional linguistics [22] and Semino and Short's framework of discourse presentation [23].

The data approved that there were no generally accepted theories for the Translator's Style study. Both the phase of obtaining and describing the translator's stylistic features and the phase of evaluating their shaping mechanism require theoretical support. Baker's framework of the Translator's Style study, which is the most widely used theoretical framework in the studies, demonstrates the method of looking for the translator's recurrent language traits with the use of corpora and the necessity of analyzing the factors that led to their emergence from the sociological perspective. However, Baker's analysis of the shaping factors for the translator's style lacked a cohesive theory.

Various theories for classifying and identifying them, such as Newmark's typology for the translation of metaphor [24] and Biber's function categorization of lexical bundles [18], has been used. In addition, to analyze the translator's repeated choices in the translation from the pragmatic aspect, Halliday's theory of systematic functional linguistics [25], Semino and Short's framework of discourse presentation [26], and the theories of

narrative stylistics can be utilized. Nevertheless, very few theories have been developed or put into practice by scholars for the phase of examining the shaping mechanism of the translator's style. As referred before, Baker has not established an explicit theory on it. It is necessary to construct an approved theoretical framework for the Translator's Style study.

4 Conclusion

With the method of systematic literature review, this paper assessed the growth and potential research directions of the Translator's Style study. It also summarized all the research techniques, theories, and stylistic indicators applied in the review's samples to investigate the research gap. Researchers from many regions have consistently focused on the translator's style during the last 20 years. In the experiment research, various translation language pairs and text genres were chosen as the research subjects. Researchers enhanced Baker's [3] study model and followed her potential implications for the Translator's Style study. A wide range of stylistic indicators has been used in addition to the statistics parameters given by Baker [3] to explore the stylistic features of the translators.

The Translator's Style, however, encountered a bottleneck as a result of the flawed research model and the inadequate research theory because there have only been a limited number of theoretical studies conducted for them. The most popular study paradigm, the S-type model, examined translational style as opposed to the style of a specific translator. The multi-complex model's restriction on the research subject excludes a number of translators whose translations don't have retranslation versions. So far, no study has used the corpus-based methodology to investigate the diachronic development of a single translator's style. It may be fruitful for future research to examine how one particular translator's style evolves and is shaped from a social, cultural, and cognitive perspective. To extract and recognize the numerous sorts of stylistic indicators indicating the Translator's Style, various theories are needed. It is the responsibility of researchers to create a commonly accepted theory on how the Translator's Style is formed.

References

1. Huang, L. (2015). *Style in translation: A corpus-based perspective*. Springer.
2. Boase-Beier, J. (2019). *Translation and style*. Routledge.
3. Baker, M. (2000). Towards a methodology for investigating the style of a literary translator, Target. *International Journal of Translation Studies*, 12(2), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.12.2.04bak>
4. Saldanha, G. (2011). Translator style: Methodological considerations. *The Translator*, 17(1), 25–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-71322-410>
5. Boase-Beier, J. (2004). Translation and style: A brief introduction. *Language and Literature*, 13(1), 9–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947004039483>
6. Winters, M., & Scott, F. (2004). Fitzgerald's Die Schönen und Verdammten: A corpus-based study of loan words and code switches as features of translators' style. *Language Matters: Studies in the Languages of Southern Africa* 35(1), 248–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228190408566215>

7. Winters, M., & Scott, F. (2007). Fitzgerald's Die Schönen und Verdammten: A corpus-based study of speech-act report verbs as a feature of translators' style. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 52(3), 412–425. <https://doi.org/10.7202/016728ar>
8. Winters, M. (2009). Modal particles explained: How modal particles creep into translations and reveal translators' styles, Target. *International Journal of Translation Studies*, 21(1), 74–97. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.21.1.04win>
9. Huang, L., & Chu, C. (2014). Translator's style or translational style? A corpus-based study of style in translated Chinese novels. *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*, 1(2), 122–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23306343.2014.883742>
10. Olohan, M. (2004). *Introducing corpora in translation studies*. Routledge.
11. Siddaway, A. P., et al. (2019). How to do a systematic review: a best practice guide for conducting and reporting narrative reviews, meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 747–770. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102803>
12. Morton, S., et al. (2011). *Finding what works in health care: standards for systematic reviews*. National Academies Press.
13. Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *Systematic Reviews*, 10(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-021-01626-4>
14. Falagas, M. E., et al. (2008). Comparison of PubMed, Scopus, web of science, and Google scholar: Strengths and weaknesses. *The FASEB Journal*, 22(2), 338–342. <https://doi.org/10.1096/fj.07-9492LSF>
15. Burnham, J. F. (2006). Scopus database: A review. *Biomedical Digital Libraries*, 3(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1742-5581-3-1>
16. Kenny, D., & Winters, M. (2020). Machine translation, ethics and the literary translator's voice. *Translation Spaces*, 9(1), 123–149. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.00024.ken>
17. Huang, L. (2021). New trends in corpus-based translator's style studies. In V. X. Wang, L. Lim, & D. Li (Eds.), *New perspectives on corpus translation studies* (pp. 59–73). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4918-9_3
18. Liu, K., & Afzaal, M. (2021). Translator's style through lexical bundles: A corpus-driven analysis of two English translations of honglougong. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.633422>
19. Abualadas, O. A. (2020). Optional shifts in existential presupposition in two Arabic translations of a farewell to arms: A shift into a more narratorial involvement and an approximated reader. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 20(1), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.20.1.7>
20. Cockerill, H. (2014). *Style and narrative in translations: The contribution of Futabatei Shimei*. Routledge.
21. Genette, G. (1997). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*. Cambridge University Press.
22. Halliday, M. A. K. & Matthiessen, C. M. (2013). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.
23. Semino, E., & Short, M. (2004). *Corpus stylistics: Speech, writing and thought presentation in a corpus of English writing*. Routledge.
24. Su, K. (2021). Translation of metaphorical idioms: A case study of two English versions of Honglougong. *Babel*, 67(3), 332–354. <https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.00222.su>
25. Yu, H., & Wu, C. (2017). Text complexity as an indicator of translational style: A case study. *Linguistics and the Human Science* 13(1–2), 179–200. <https://doi.org/10.1558/lhs.35709>
26. Obaid, Z., et al. (2017). Discourse presentation as an index of style: A comparative corpus stylistic analysis of self and other translators. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(1), 119. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n1p119>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

