

## **XXIX. Skopos Theory**

Skopos is the Greek word for 'aim' or 'purpose' and was introduced into translation theory in the 1970s by Hans J. Vermeer as a technical term for the purpose of a translation and of the action of translating. Although skopos theory predates Holz-Manttari's theory of translational action, it can be considered to be part of that same theory, as it deals with a translational action which is ST-based, which has to be negotiated and performed, and which has a purpose and a result (Vermeer 1989/2000:221). Skopos theory focuses above all on the purpose of the translation, which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This result is the TT, which Vermeer calls the *translatum*. Therefore, in skopos theory, knowing why an ST is to be translated and what the function of the TT are crucial for the translator.

The basic underlying 'rules' of the theory (Reiss and Vermeer 1984: 119) are:

- 1 A *translatum* (or TT) is determined by its skopos.
- 2 A TT is an offer of information (*Informationsangebot*) in a target culture and TL concerning an offer of information in a source culture and SL.
- 3 A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way.
- 4 A TT must be internally coherent.

5 A TT must be coherent with the ST.

6 The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule predominating.

An important advantage of skopos theory is that it allows the possibility of the same text being translated in different ways according to the purpose of the TT and the commission which is given to the translator. In Vermeer's words:

What the skopos states is that one must translate, consciously and consistently, in accordance with some principle respecting the target text. The theory does not state what the principle IS: this must be decided separately in each specific case.

(Vermeer 1989/2000: 228)

Text by: Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*.

Reading Guidelines:

Readers must pay due attention to non-English words (like skopos), new coinages (like translatum) and points listed following a certain order (of importance like here).

**Q.I** Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: technical, predates, negotiated, performed, determines, employed, crucial, reversible, hierarchical, commission, consistently.

**Q.II** Derive as many words as you can from the following words: purpose, technical, negotiated, determines, strategies, employed, offer, initiate, advantage, according, consciously.

**Q.III** Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: technical, predates, part, adequate, reversible, internally, advantage, allows, consciously, consistently, separately.

**Q.IV** Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Was the word skopos originally a technical term?
2. What are the common grounds between Manttari's theory of translational action and Vermeer's skopos theory?
3. What is the focus of skopos theory and what does it determine?
4. Which rule is most predominating? What is the order followed in listing the rules?
5. What is the main advantage of the theory?
6. Do you agree with holding a motto saying "Translators, translate much, consciously and consistently"?

**Q.V** Read aloud, discuss, memorize and translate into plain Arabic the six rules above.

Research Activity:

What is the major work about skopos theory? Who are the authors? What does it contain? Do you agree with the very title?

**Quote of the Day:**

Translation, unfortunately, is something you learn only by doing.

William Weaver, translator of *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco