

# **Focusing on the Target Text. Skopos Theory**

## **Lecture 5**

# Overview

- Equivalence-based approaches disadvantages;
- Skopos Theory;
- Skopos Theory Bases;
- Skopos Theory Problems;
- Translation Brief Components;
- Equivalence-based Approach and Skopos Theory.

# Equivalence-based Theory

## Disadvantages

- Difficulty in incorporating real-world, extra textual issues such as time constraints, preferred terminology and style, reader expectations, etc.
- equivalence cannot tell us which of its various levels should be used.
- Equivalence levels can be applied only as tools or policies which can be selected in order to achieve some translation goal.

# Skopos Theory

(translation as communicative activity)

**Skopos theory** was developed by

**Hans Vermeer** in 1978 -

the ***purpose*** of the target text is the most important in determining the way we should translate texts

A text is written for specific **purpose** and it is translated for the specific **purpose**. It is this **purpose** which is known as the **Skopos**

# Skopos Theory Bases

Translation process is determined by the Skopos of the TT as specified by the commissioner and the translator.

**Text – an offer of information from which a number of translation can be produced**

“Correct” translation depends on:

- who is going to read it
- how they are going to use it
- the way in which the text will be distributed

# Example

## User guide for toaster:

**1) *Source language culture*** – tone which emulates an expert “speaking down” is normal

***Target language culture*** – the same tone would be insulting

Thus, this expert-layperson register should be replaced by a peer-to-peer register

2) if the user guide is simply being translated for use by a service engineer, the tone is not important

# Skopos Theory Problems

If source text can give rise to any number of translations, how is the translator to know which one is the most appropriate one?

## **Translation Brief**

is to clearly define what the translation is to be used for and who will use it

# Translation Brief

However,

a translation brief is quite a hit and miss affair as clients rarely able to provide anything more relevant or specific than

“I have a 7,500 word document that I need translated. It’s got something to do with electronics and I need it by the end of the week”



# Translation Brief Components

- Information about the target audience
- Intended purpose of the text
- And any stylistic or terminological requirements

# Equivalence-based and Skopos Theories

Solution is to combine the best features of Skopos theory, equivalence theory and work carried out on text typologies.

1. Skopos issues - give us our general overview of what type of translation is required
2. shape the features such as language, terminology and content, based on what is known about comparable texts in the target language
3. the various levels of equivalence not as criteria for comparing texts, but as guidelines can be used