

## Translating Vermeer from the student's perspective

From the vantage point of the translation student, Vermeer is no mean feat to translate. Although his work contains meticulous logic, it can be considered somewhat challenging to render an 'adequate' translation of his complex ideas in another language. This we have learned from experience.

We were commissioned to translate two texts, *Naseweise Bemerkungen zum literarischen Übersetzen* and *Text und Textem*, for a Vermeer reader in English. The *skopos* of our project was to translate the German texts into British English in a reader-friendly manner, whilst doing justice to Vermeer's ideas.

We were asked by our commissioner (our lecturer) to apply Vermeer's *skopos* theory to the process of translating the texts. In effect, we not only translated texts by Vermeer, but we also applied his *skopos* theory to our class, in line with the translation brief given by our commissioner. Before we began translating, we agreed on certain guidelines regarding the terminology, formatting and layout, but were also given a certain degree of freedom to translate the texts in a way we felt would do justice to Vermeer's ideas. The class was split into groups of twos and threes and each group was given a section of text to translate. This allowed us to devote more time and energy to one part of the text (which was definitely needed). It also helped to maximise our use of time and to allow for inter- and intra-group discussions. Other tasks such as terminology work, writing a style guide, rereading tasks and research work were allocated to different students as part of the project. To better understand Vermeer's ideas, all team members read the parallel texts, which proved to be very useful for style and terminology. These included texts written by Vermeer himself in English and texts written by other translation scholars.

As well as having an overall *skopos* for the project, each text also had its own individual *skopos*. In our translation of the first text, *Naseweise Bemerkungen zum literarischen Übersetzen*, we were keen to convey Vermeer's theoretical style yet playful use of language and spontaneity of ideas. We feel that we were able to achieve this *skopos*. The second text, *Text und Textem*, proved to be more of a challenge to translate (to say the least!). Much more theoretical and complex in nature, it also presented numerous terminological issues. As a result, we found it more challenging to render a reader-friendly translation; however,

we feel we managed to do justice to Vermeer's ideas and convey them in a clear manner. The success of the project is also evident in the positive feedback received from various team members involved in the translation of the texts as well as terminology work and organisational tasks.

We would like to thank our lecturer, Marina Dudenhöfer, for her invaluable guidance and feedback, and for giving us the opportunity to be involved in this project.

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