

## Translating Vermeer from the teacher's perspective

I consciously structured my class in a certain way so that we were not just translating Vermeer texts but also applying *skopos* theory to the translation process. This involved giving the students a clear *skopos* for our translation project in the form of a translation brief. *Skopos* theory brings with it Vermeer's ideas on translation ethics, i.e. that translators bear the responsibility for the quality of a translation but that they are also free to negotiate with the client about how to proceed. Accordingly, I did not make the translation brief very detailed so that the students had to negotiate the details with me, thus enjoying some freedom and taking responsibility for their work. Naturally, as this was a classroom setting, I gave the students plenty of guidance and feedback because it should be, above all, a learning experience for them.

In as far as possible, we functioned like the "outside world", as this is a real translation project: the translations will be published. I encouraged students to try and find the answer to their questions within the team first before asking me. The students worked with parallel texts and carried out any necessary research and terminology work. They also were able to see how any text which is going to be published needs to go through various rereading stages and how laborious proper terminology work is. Like any translation team, they had individual and joint tasks to carry out. Again, this being a classroom environment, the students came to me with questions and I checked their work at regular intervals.

I was particularly pleased to see how some students became far more meticulous as the semester progressed, taking the time to research and think about translation issues to reach a better solution. One student commented that group work lends itself to working to a *skopos*; another agreed and added that so does being able to negotiate and ask questions. At the beginning, some students wondered if working to a *skopos* would be restrictive but discovered that it was not, rather, it helped to have a clear goal. There was briefly some confusion as students grappled with the theoretical level of understanding required to apply *skopos* to our work and for translating Vermeer texts. This is why we began the semester by reading and discussing the parallel texts. All in all, I would say that it has been a valuable experience for all concerned.

Marina Dudenhöfer