

Compilation of reports from the students: Vermeer Reader project WS 2011-12

Compiled by Marina Dudenhöfer

Introduction

In the 1980s, [it was generally considered that] translation theory experienced a paradigm shift (Pym 2010: 43). Until then, the prevailing approach to translation was that of equivalence, whereby a source text is to be translated as literally as possible, e.g. “word-for-word” (Chesterman 1997: 22). Hans J. Vermeer, a German translation scholar, was amongst those who saw the limitations the equivalence theory imposes on translators and developed his own theory of translation. According to this theory, translation is to be understood as an action, and every form of human action as having an aim or a purpose (Vermeer 2001: 130). For translating, this means that the translation has to function in the situation it is intended for, thus determining the necessity to adapt the translating technique or strategy accordingly. Vermeer chose to refer to his theory as *skopos* theory; *skopos* being derived from Greek for ‘purpose, aim’ (Vermeer 2001: 138). The *skopos* then is the ‘purpose or aim of the translation; the function it is supposed to carry out in the situation of reception’ (Pym 2010: 46). As a text might be translated for different audiences in different situations, Vermeer argues further that there may be a number of *skopoi* for the same text, requiring different strategies and approaches in order to achieve each *skopos* (cf. Vermeer 2001: 137). Far from restricting the translator to just one overall *skopos*, Vermeer’s theory further allows for – even demands – the use of *subskopoi* (cf. Vermeer 2001: 138), thus enabling different parts of a text to have different functions.

As most of Vermeer’s work was published in German, his ideas are well-known in the German-speaking world of translation, however, [they are less well-known elsewhere]. Professor Dilek Dizdar and Dr. Şebnem Bahadır of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz aim to publish a Vermeer Reader in German, English and Turkish. Although Vermeer published some of his work in English, the majority of the Reader’s texts will have to be translated from German. To this end, Marina Dudenhöfer is supervising a project centring on students translating [some of] the pertinent texts into English (Dudenhöfer and Bubenheim 2010). Since the winter semester of 2010/11, a number of texts have been translated into English; this semester (winter semester of 2011/12), we have been translating *Erst die Unmöglichkeit des Übersetzens macht das Übersetzen möglich* (cf. below).

Anna Steilen

Skopos makes sense to me because of its simplicity. By simplicity, I mean its practicability. Based on my limited but growing understanding of general translation theory, *skopos* theory successfully embraces the subjective nature inherent in this field. It allows for the multiple cultural complexities, including the inconsistencies of human nature, which exist in the communication between individuals, regions, states, and countries. Additionally, *skopos* theory is able to accommodate the changes in perspective that occur with the passing of time. To me, the combination of flexibility and responsibility that are found in *skopos* theory is the ideal combination for this inexact science.

Amanda Stanfield

The preparatory stages

To prepare for the translation, we were asked to read a number of parallel texts. These included some of the [handful of] texts Vermeer published in English, a translation of Vermeer by Andrew Chesterman as well as excerpts from the work of Jeremy Munday, Christiane Nord, Erich Prunč, Anthony Pym and Christina Schäffner. In addition, we were given a style guide and a translation brief providing us with a *skopos* of our own, stating that we were to translate the text in a reader-friendly manner, whilst doing justice to Vermeer's complex ideas.

Within the project, we were divided into groups of two to three students and each group was assigned a different section of the text. Before beginning with the actual translation, our lecturer, Marina Dudenhöfer, had all of us write a summary of the entire source text. This was a valuable experience in my opinion. Apart from *skopos*, Vermeer touches on biology and neurophysiology, action theory, the concept of culture and its subcategories etc., requiring much attention to detail. It can be very difficult to do justice to Vermeer's complex ideas and keep sight of how they interact, which is why I believe being forced to summarise them was very helpful in reinforcing their interconnected nature. Also, it helped to provide us with a better understanding of what we were about to translate; having to put something into writing oneself requires much more consideration than simply reading it. The fact that every group summarised the text encouraged us to see and understand the source text not only from our own perspective; one of the ideas Vermeer explains in this text is that text is not objective; every person perceives it differently according to their cultural background and prior experience (cf. Vermeer 2001: 128). Being able to read other students' take on Vermeer was a beneficial experience in that I did not become too focused on my own understanding of him. Writing and submitting our summary for correction was an opportunity to see whether we as a group had understood the source text correctly, but also to adapt our approach, technique and style to Vermeer's and to make mistakes and learn from them before beginning the translation. A similar effect was achieved by having the entire group translate the introduction; this was particularly helpful in determining the right style for the remainder of the translation.

Anna Steilen

However, as a non-native speaker, I had to read him [Vermeer] many times to understand his way of thinking, which was in syntactically complex German. The various texts were at times confusing. However, the more I read, the more I got a sense of *skopos* and Vermeer's way of thinking. While reading these texts and during class, I took a lot of notes to share with my group members at my home university when I return because neither this theory nor Vermeer himself is well-known in Russia, and I believe it is important to apply *skopos* theory to the field of translation.

Ekaterina Gurova

Given the complexity of the text and in order to fully understand Vermeer's theories and concepts, there were several stages of work prior to the translation itself. I felt that it was a 'slowly but surely' type of approach, which I believe is absolutely necessary when translating Vermeer for the first time.

...We were meant to read the [parallel] texts in a certain order so that we would understand them better. I did not encounter any problems at this stage, although I have to confess to taking a sneak peek at one of the last texts before even starting the second one and it did not make any sense to me then. However, once I had read the texts in the right order, it was much

easier to understand the content of each one. Once the reading of the parallel texts was completed, it was discussed in class. This helped me because we received further explanations about the texts, as we found out that we had not all understood them in the same manner.

Jérémy Herry

Translating complex ideas in a reader-friendly manner seems like a contradiction in terms. Complex ideas are by definition not reader-friendly. Consequently, the very fickle balance between the two could easily be disrupted resulting in either an oversimplified, and possibly misinterpreted, *translatum* or in an overly complex and incoherent one. The only way to avoid this was to read the text carefully and to try to understand Vermeer's ideas in depth. Moreover, the realization that Vermeer had a very unique thought pattern made it clear that misinterpretation was less likely if we [ourselves] were able to follow his thought pattern.

Konstantina Stergiou

Our commissioner then gave us the task of summarising the entire text. This proved invaluable, as a complete understanding of the whole text is the key to producing a translation that meets the *skopos*. We also learned how to summarise a text correctly, as this was something some of us had either never attempted or had forgotten how to do. After the summary, we began to translate the introduction in our groups. When we submitted our effort, we received some key feedback which would influence the rest of our translation. Our translation had a very clear style, but could be more literary and formal throughout [in line with Vermeer's own style]. This was something we tried to take on board when it came to translating our section of the text.

Mark Casey

The first problems we faced were in the first two introductory sentences: "Der vorliegende Beitrag trägt wahrscheinlich einige Eulen nach Athen. Die Vögel werden dabei etliche Feder lassen müssen" (Vermeer 2001: 125). We were immediately faced with two peculiarly German idioms, which it is impossible to translate literally into English. As our *skopos* was "to do justice to Vermeer's complex [...] writing style", we decided to look for parallel idioms in English. For the first idiom this was relatively straightforward because there is a comparable saying, 'to take coals to Newcastle', i.e. to do something unnecessary. The second idiom proved more challenging. The German meaning is literally 'to lose feathers', i.e. to have a negative effect. The problem was not to find an appropriate idiom, but rather one which conveyed Vermeer's clever combination of two ornithological idioms - the owls (*Eulen*) and feathers (*Federn lassen müssen*) - into a single coherent idea. Having decided to use 'to take coals to Newcastle', we opted to modify the '*Federn lassen müssen*' to fit, which proved difficult because we had to strike the right balance between the literal meaning and the idiomatic meaning. Our decision to use 'to drop coals' seemed to strike that balance.

Sebastian Daniell

The terminology work

For this semester (as well as the next), I have been entrusted with the task of compiling the individual research and adding the new entries to the already existing master glossary. Once each student ha[d] completed his or her research [this semester], they forward their findings to me. The next step for me [was] to review the research and to determine whether or not the [context] provided highlights the way the terms are to be used sufficiently and whether the source is adequate. Having worked with glossaries before, I was already convinced of their importance and did not question the need to compile a glossary specifically for this project. As some members of the team had no previous experience with glossaries, it became clear to me that it is not self-evident what constitutes a reliable source. In this case, most technical terms were related to translation theory and more specifically to *skopos* theory, for which the parallel texts were a good starting point. These were nonetheless only useful to a certain extent, as the terminology involved required thorough and detailed understanding and clear context for the glossary. The parallel texts were invaluable however in supplying leads to other authorities on translation theory.

Most useful to me in dealing with terminology matters were Vermeer's own texts in English; of these, I found *A skopos theory of translation (some arguments for and against)* and *Luhmann's 'Social Systems' Theory: Preliminary Fragments for a Theory of Translation* to be most illuminating. The latter was indispensable in resolving a particular terminology issue; another student was initially responsible for the research on the German terms *Stimulus* and *Sinnesreiz* and *Wahrnehmung* and *Perzeption*. To begin with, these terms seemed not to require much research, as I deemed them rather straightforward; in line with my own instinct, the student in question chose to translate both *Sinnesreiz* and *Stimulus* as 'stimulus' and *Wahrnehmung* and *Perzeption* as 'perception', meaning we would have been using one term in English where Vermeer purposely uses two separate terms in German. It was only while trying to find a suitable context for these terms that I came across a footnote in Vermeer's *Luhmann's 'Social Systems' Theory: Preliminary Fragments for a Theory of Translation*, explaining in his own words why he makes this deliberate distinction in German; in the case of *Stimulus* and *Reiz* Vermeer says "I distinguish two types of 'stimuli'. Something incoming from the outside that meets a sense organ is called a '*Reiz*' in German, the subsequent dealing with it starts with a '*Stimulus*' and continues by filtering it, if necessary or convenient, and transforming it into neural activities called '*Perzeption*'" (cf. above; cf. also Sperber + Wilson 1986)' (Vermeer 2006: 49). As for perception, he says: "I differentiate 'perception' into '*Wahrnehmung*' (what a sense organ perceives) and '*Perzeption*' proper (what the brain receives and works on)" (Vermeer 2006: 49). We narrowly avoided confusion over these terms only because Vermeer had noticed the difficulty of expressing these concepts in English himself and was far-sighted enough to make this distinction clear in the footnotes quoted above. In the case of 'stimulus', there was not much else we could do than follow Vermeer's example of indicating which German term he refers to by including it in brackets every time the English term was used. For the 'perception' issue, we were fortunate to discover a useful context in John Field's *Psycholinguistics: a resource book for students*: "For the reader or listener, there are two important stages in processing a stimulus: Sensation: the unanalysed experience of sound meeting one's ear or light meeting one's eye. [P]erception: the mental operation involved in analysing what the signal contains. The term 'perception' is applied to lower-level processes, where the language user is decoding information that is physically there" (Field 2003: 18). For me, this incidentally drove home Vermeer's point that translation theory is a largely interdisciplinary field (cf. Vermeer 2001: 125).

Once we started translating, we made good use of the research that had been done for the glossary. Incorporating the English terms into an English text also proved a valuable exercise

in testing whether or not the terms we had previously deemed technical were in fact technical or not. In some cases, the terms that had been decided on for our translation into English turned out to be restrictive rather than helpful, causing awkward phrasing and a strong German influence in the English text. These we later omitted from the glossary, a development that exemplified the need to distinguish between terminology and translation problems.

Anna Steilen

We learned that the first step to translating any text is completing a cursory scan of the text for any unknown words or phrases that are likely to be [crucial] for text understanding. Katya and I scanned our assigned sections, “Die Nicht Übertragbarkeit” and “Folgen für die Translation (in traditioneller Ausdrucksweise)” (Vermeer 2002: 135 – 138), and put together an initial list of nine words. Five of the words proved to be relevant, and one more word, *Botschaftsträger*, which was suggested by the commissioner (Marina Dudenhöfer). The directions were specific: define the word according to how it was used by Vermeer. We began by reviewing the master glossary to study the format and made a list of the resources used by previous students. We attempted to utilise Vermeer’s own texts as much as possible to ensure we could define the words in the correct context. We also quickly learned the importance of reviewing Vermeer’s abundant footnotes for definitions, or for the works he referenced. We utilised this strategy to define ‘*Kosten-Nutzen-Kalkulation*’

Amanda Stanfield

Having only five terms to research, I thought the research would be done rather quickly, but I had not taken into account the specificity of the terms and the fact that the vast majority of documentation on and by Vermeer and his theories is only in German. For each German term, we had to find an English equivalent and an example of its use in context.

All things considered, I can safely say that this glossary work was an essential preparation to acquire a sufficient level of understanding of the text before beginning to translate it. I also think that the glossary will be very helpful for other students in future who also have to translate a Vermeer text. I think I had quite underestimated the importance of glossary work and terminology research beforehand. Moreover, I found that through the in-depth research of these key terms, I also became more aware of their meaning and the general meaning of the parallel texts, Vermeer's texts and his concepts. Furthermore, I found out how useful a forum could be, as it turned out to be essential in my terminology research.

Jérémy Herry

The translation stages

I count myself fortunate to have been working with two highly motivated and thorough team mates (Richard Pearson and Konnie Stergiou), as this fact made for a pleasant working atmosphere and a thoroughly enjoyable experience. So as to achieve the best possible translation between the three of us, we each translated our section of the text separately and created a master version in a second step, taking the best of all three versions and combining them to shape a new whole. Similarly to the translation of the introduction, this had the pleasant effect of making the concepts of what we were translating clearer to us and enabling us to take into account and translate nuances we might otherwise have missed. One of these instances was the translation of *Trinkgelage* into English. In explaining that a variety of factors influence a person in any given situation, Vermeer cites the individual’s disposition at the time, exemplifying this by the feeling of being hung-over after an all-night carouse (cf.

Vermeer 2001: 130). In this case, 'carouse' was suggested by one of my team mates, lending the same literary feel to our English version of Vermeer's German text and elegantly avoiding such slightly unsavoury alternatives as 'binge', 'bender' and (worse still) 'piss-up'.

I also very much appreciated having a native Greek speaker in the group; Vermeer's vocabulary and use of language in general is highly sophisticated and frequently presupposes a similar level of sophistication and erudition from his audience. In such instances, it was helpful for my overall understanding of the text to have someone in the group who was able to shed light on a number of expressions (e.g. 'orography') hitherto unknown to me. After having completed this first draft of our translation, we reread it a few weeks later; in particular, the amount of time that had passed since our initial translation made it possible for us to find more suitable expressions in quite a few cases and to notice and address problems we had been previously unaware of. Particularly considering our translation was really made up of three individual texts, there were plenty of inconsistencies for us to rephrase.

Anna Steilen

Katya was responsible for finding the key ideas amidst Vermeer's complex words, while I focused on finding the subject matter covered in our text within Vermeer's other English-language texts, so we could try to capture his 'Vermeer-isms' (our name for his unique phrases) and his writing style. An example of this would be our experience in translating the first two paragraphs under the heading, "Implications for translation (in the traditional sense)." I was completely discombobulated by the tangle of 'Text', 'Textteilen', 'Texteme', 'Translat' and other 'text' terms that Vermeer used in various combinations to describe the process of translating a text from its commission to its completion as a completed target text. Katya, however, did a beautiful job of capturing the simple logic behind the words.

Amanda Stanfield

We decided to read some of Vermeer's texts, which he wrote in English, in order to develop a real sense of his style and in order to produce an end product more similar to his own. This helped us to find connections and reproduce Vermeer's style. We decided to try to translate the text separately and then compare our results and discuss possible variants. Having different cultural backgrounds, we sometimes came up with different solutions, but it was a part of our teamwork and we enjoyed it. At the very beginning of the text, page 135 in the source text, we faced the first difficulty of translation, which was *Generiert/Generiert werden*. The first thing we did to find an adequate translation was to go through the parallel texts. We also debated how we would translate *Deklaration*, however, our decision to use 'brief' was wrong, as we found out during our feedback session with Marina. Vermeer was actually referring to the 'explanation' a translator should give (in a foreword or afterword) when changing the function of the TT with regard to the ST. During our work, we always had the possibility to consult with our teacher and German native speakers or to post questions on a special forum on ILIAS (learning platform). In order to check our decision (creating or being-created), we consulted with Anna and Marina. We had difficulties dealing with some sections of the text, and it took us some time and discussion to come up with a translation solution.

Ekaterina Gurova

Vocabulary and the use of formal or informal register was another problem worth mentioning. There were times when we were really uncertain about our word choice because we felt that we might have crossed the line, which is implicit in the translation brief and is referred to as a reader-friendly manner. Vermeer's texts are academic texts [and that] means that they are meant for an academic readership or at least a readership which has received higher

education. Assuming that the target audience is made up of scholars, translators and people who have a professional interest in reading Vermeer [...], it becomes clear that both the language and the writing style have to remain strictly academic, thus formal. The 'layman' has no interest in reading Vermeer and his translation theories. Texts of this sort are not intended to be entertaining and cannot become comprehensible to people who have absolutely no background knowledge in linguistics or translation theory.

Konstantina Stergiou

Once the terminology research had been completed, we could finally begin the actual translation. As with our research, our group decided to split the text up into three sections, with me taking page 127. It quickly became apparent that this was a difficult section, with long sentences broken up by parentheses and numerous references to other material. I also had to understand not only the German language, but also the ideas that Vermeer was presenting. This required several re-reads and I also checked with German native speakers to see if I had correctly understood the content.

Our feedback from the translation of the introduction was useful during the translation process; we were made aware of the required literary style, as well as the need for coherence and consistency. We also had to keep in mind the *skopos* set out in the translation brief. One of the first problems I encountered during the translation was translating the following quote: "in der Erkenntnis keine Objektivität und sogar nicht einmal den Anspruch darauf geben könnte, wenn sie in Abbildern des Wirklichen bestünde". After several attempts, I was still unhappy with my solution. It was at this point that one of my fellow group members, Sebastian, suggested I search online to see if the quote had already been translated. I managed to find an English translation, which I then modified slightly to fit the flow of the sentence.

Mark Casey

One general difficulty I, and my fellow group members, had with translating the ST concerned the use of the passive. Having become accustomed to German culture and writing conventions, I found myself automatically adopting German passive constructions used in the ST forgetting that in English the use of the active is much preferred and completely acceptable. I was reminded of this by the comments of our commissioner related to the first draft of my group's section of text. Subsequently, when reading through the amended text it was evident that the use of active constructions, wherever possible, allowed the TT to flow better and sound much more idiomatic.

Another problem I encountered time and time again when translating on my own was my tendency (perhaps a natural inclination?) to stick too close to the ST. And that became very clear whenever I met with the rest of the group to discuss our work. Anna, being the other [English] native speaker in the group, was particularly aware of this in my translations. It was really helpful to have her there because that forced me to take a step back and view my translation solutions more critically. Whenever I did that I realised that, often, my English translation of the German text (although correct) was anything but idiomatic. That, it became clear, was another real advantage of working in a group. People as individuals are very subjective in their interpretation of what they read and are influenced strongly by their respective backgrounds, knowledge and experience [...]. So being able to compare individual interpretations in a group gave/gives all concerned the opportunity to experience just how one particular ST can be interpreted in many different ways. In his article "*Übersetzen als kultureller Transfer*", Vermeer directs our attention to this problem of subjectivity and how **meaning** is very much a question of personal interpretation conditioned by norms and conventions (arguing it is "kultur- und sprachspezifisch"). His example illustrates how this

sometimes can lead to a too literal translation making the TT sound stilted, i.e. obviously 'translated' (1994: 44). So translating as part of a group certainly helped me to become aware of the value of being able to compare different interpretations of the ST and in doing so I was able to assess the accuracy of my own translation.

Richard Pearson

The revision stages

Having completed our own rereading process, we submitted the translation for its first official reread by our lecturer and were then given some time to consider her suggestions and alterations to the text. As rereading one's own work is always difficult, it was very helpful to be given some indication as to where we were too close to the German, a problem that arises frequently when focusing exclusively on the process of translating, rather than seeing the translation as a text in its own right. We then reworked the parts in question before submitting our final version. Before publication, the text will undergo further rereading stages by Marina Dudenhöfer, Anna-Lena Bubenheim, Dilek Dizdar and Şebnem Bahadır.

Anna Steilen

I found the meeting at the end of semester to be an excellent conclusion to the course. We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of our translation with our commissioner (and course instructor). We learned that the skeleton of our translation was good. However, our translation did not keep to the *skopos*, which was to translate Vermeer's ideas in a reader-friendly manner. Instead, it tended to keep too close to the German version. This was due to a lack of experience and a lack of confidence or understanding. The key take-away for me is that I really must take the time to understand the text before I begin to translate [it], otherwise, it will tend to become an effort in equivalence, which is not very *skopos*-adequate.

Amanda Stanfield

We received an email from Marina with all her comments on what we [could] have done differently. When I first saw the 'corrections', I have to admit I was slightly shocked, as it looked like we had [not done a good job]. Not a single sentence was left untouched and I was immediately introduced to the tough world of translation. The following week, we met up with Marina and discussed our translation. It turned out, we had stuck to the source-text to such an extent that our translation was not fully clear and coherent. Our team-work was acknowledged which was good to hear, but our translation was far too literal.

We were given the task of rereading our translation and deciding on what changes to accept. We took a week to do this task and then sent our translation back in with all the necessary changes made.

Emily Wattison

[W]e decided early on to divide the text into three different sections, with the aim of decreasing the individual work load. Whilst this did help in some ways – for example, I felt like I could really concentrate on my own section – it did also mean that our first-draft was [somewhat] lacking in coherence and consistency. In particular, some terms such as '*Aussenwirklichkeit*' were translated differently at different points in our translation.

I was put in charge of the final re-read for our group's section of text. This involved checking for any errors and finding solutions for any unresolved issues. [...] I also met up with two members of another group, Richard and Anna, to get their opinion and this turned out to be

extremely beneficial. The importance of 'fresh eyes' when translating a text can not be underestimated and, with their input, several issues were raised which our group had not noticed, perhaps from being 'too close' to our translation.

Mark Casey

However, after feedback from Marina, I now understand that we should have had more awareness of our limits as inexperienced translators: we needed to have spent far more time at the reception stage and making sure we fully understood the ideas in the ST before beginning translation.

The project has given me a lot of knowledge and background information about the world of translation. I have learned from this project to be more precise, responsible and better-informed. *Skopos* is not only a very practical translation theory that I can apply to my other translation projects, this course has also taught me the importance of teamwork.

Ekaterina Gurova

Teamwork

[I]t is rare for teams or groups not to have challenging dynamics. Therefore, it is important for a team to identify and accept its different personalities and work habits, so that each team member's strengths can be exploited in order to produce the best possible product while minimizing disruptions.

Amanda Stanfield

It is my personal view that teamwork is very helpful in such projects because it is possible to discuss the strategies and translation issues with another person. At times, it is much more advantageous to have two opinions than only one.

Ekaterina Gurova

Despite our reservations, Katya and I quickly developed an excellent working relationship. We decided we would attempt to complete our translation of the introduction individually and then meet to discuss our versions, from which we would produce a cohesive final copy. This strategy proved to be ideal for us and our given circumstances: no prior translating experience and no background in translation theory. By working individually and then meeting to discuss our results, each of us benefited from the different interpretation of the material; we utilised this system for the rest of the course.

Amanda Stanfield

I was very happy in my teamwork with Amanda who performed an exceptional job, and I really doubt that I would have been able to handle it and complete the task satisfactorily without her help. The most important thing, however, is that we established an outstanding personal contact with each other. We met each other not only because of the teamwork, but also because we enjoyed the time spent working together. Amanda was extremely helpful and was always ready to support me in difficult moments by giving me advice – exactly what I was missing by attending a foreign university.

Ekaterina Gurova

By working in groups, I learnt how useful and efficient cooperation applied to translation can be. Not only within my group, but also when discussing our progress in class, using the forum

on ILIAS or by going to both Annas or the teacher for help. This cooperation helped me go much further in my work.

Jérémy Herry

Translating in a group was a new experience for me and was something I found to be both positive and negative. Having a fluent German speaker in the group certainly helped with the understanding of the text and, perhaps surprisingly, having a non-native English speaker in the group added a different perspective and was in no way a handicap during the translation process. However, it was sometimes difficult to come to a consensus as our different backgrounds and language abilities caused some occasional differences in opinion.

Mark Casey

Working in a team made it harder to ensure consistency throughout the text, but did make the translation process easier in parts as three heads are often better than one, especially when it comes to Vermeer! Working as intensively as translating a Vermeer text requires, it can become difficult to identify where you have become too deeply absorbed in the details, or if you have kept too close or strayed too far from the German source text. In a team, we were able to use each other to help us take a step back and regain our bearings.

Sebastian Daniell

My [...] source of inspiration and assistance in times of trouble were my two fellow group members. Working in a group showed me, as Pym in his analysis of Vermeer's *skopos* theory alludes to, how sometimes the same ST can have several *skopoi*, depending on individual, subjective interpretation of the same ST (Pym 2009: 45). That is what we as a group experienced time and time again and that is what helped me/us, ultimately, to arrive at our final **negotiated** translation solutions, i.e. in a style of English that was in keeping with our *skopos* (reader-friendly manner but doing justice to Vermeer's complex ideas). It was very interesting to witness how working as part of a group forced us to justify and rationalise our translations. The differences in opinions and preferences in translation solutions (i.e. choice of vocabulary and phraseology to express the German ST) were considerable at times, in spite of the fact that, essentially, we are all native – or near native – speakers of the target language. So at times we did encounter some difficulty in trying to agree on one solution but we managed to resolve our differences by adopting a pragmatic approach, i.e. trying to agree on a synthesis of everyone's individual translation work. Compromise and objective criticism were [crucial] to making progress. Of course in the absence of satisfactory terminological '**equivalents**' (I use the word advisedly!) in English there was no choice but to agree on a translational solution that best expressed (conveyed the meaning of) the German text.

Richard Pearson

Conclusion

Being a part of this project has been a valuable learning experience for me; it has been especially rewarding to see the research for the glossary forming an integral part of the translation process, making concepts clearer and enabling a more precise translation. Translating a text on translation theory has been an experience in every sense of the word; until now, I have not had such an in-depth encounter with translation theory in general and *skopos* theory in particular and translating *Erst die Unmöglichkeit des Übersetzens macht das Übersetzen möglich* has made me perceive translation theory as entirely more approachable and practical than I originally thought. It has also made me realise that particularly *skopos* theory and Vermeer's ideas surrounding it are applicable to more than just translation; his

ideas on culture being more than just a facet of identity, but a conditioning factor in how we interact with others and how we perceive the world around us, I found especially interesting. Apart from that, I feel I now appreciate the work that goes into professional translating and publishing far more than I previously did. Especially with regard to the glossary work, I am now able to see how important communication is, not just within the confines of a university project, but also professionally. In general, I believe this project has given me a better understanding of professionalism, reinforcing the importance of clear instructions, respecting deadlines and effective communication.

Anna Steilen

On the whole, I would definitely say that this experience helped me a lot for the start of my career as a translator. I learned the importance of team-work and really noticed how much easier it is to work under good communicative circumstances... Marina taught me an especially vital lesson, namely that one should never begin a translation without having a complete understanding of the source text. I think this was [our main difficulty] with this translation, as we ended up translating far too literally due to lack of comprehension. I will keep this aspect in mind for the rest of my time as a student at this university and will make an effort [to improve in this area].

The fact that this project was a 'real project' gave me great pleasure, as I felt my work was actually going to be of some use, as opposed to any other average university work, purely invented for the sake of a lesson. I am grateful to have been given the chance to experience Vermeer's work so intensively. I am sure that *skopos* theory will follow me throughout my university career and I am glad to have been given such an understanding of this theory so early on.

Emily Wattison

In the end, after all the difficulties that we went through, I must admit that I am pleased: this was definitely a valuable experience for me, and I felt great satisfaction after finishing the second draft. Credit should also go to Anna, who was very supportive when it came to my part of the glossary work. I also noticed that I am now more interested in translation than I was before this project.

Miodrag Mijatovic

Unlike other translation classes, this one allowed a team of students to experience what working as a translator really can be like. It taught us the importance of being able to work as a team, the necessity of communication and also brought us closer to one of the more practical translation theories, an added bonus being the knowledge that our texts were going to be published.

Sebastian Daniell

Truthfully, even now at the end of this particular project, it would be nothing less than presumptuous of me if I were to claim I now *understand* Vermeer and how he – his mind – works: I do not. But what I can say is that I now do have a **better** understanding of him and his ideas and of *skopos* theory in its essential elements.

Richard Pearson

I feel as though I have learned a great deal from working on this project and will certainly use the experience to shape my translation strategies in the future. For example, for future projects

I would encourage more group discussion and maybe not split the text up into individual sections. Making this change would hopefully lead to a more natural, consistent translation. I would also try to ask more questions and use German native speakers to improve my understanding of the content in the source text. A full understanding of the source text was something I had underestimated during the translation process. In the past, I had viewed translation as the transfer of words from one language into another but, having broadened my horizons with *skopos* theory, I now know that there can be more freedom when translating. By remembering this in the future, I would hope to avoid sticking too closely to the original German text when producing a translation, as this was an issue raised by our commissioner upon submission of our first-draft. All in all, I feel as though I have greatly improved my translation knowledge and ability and look forward to translating Vermeer again next semester.

Mark Casey

Undeniably, the project was – although real – carried out under ideal conditions. Receiving a clearly defined *skopos* from the very beginning of a translation assignment is not common practice in the real world, sadly! So we were all the more grateful to our tutor and commissioner, Marina Dudenhöfer, for her input, which made our task that bit easier. [...]

Personally, working on the project helped me to gain a different perspective on translating in general in terms of the relationship between the ST and TT. Vermeer certainly does have his critics in respect of *skopos* theory, but I feel his theory does stand up to scrutiny in most respects. *Skopos* theory clearly illustrates the intimate and indisputable connection between translation and culture and the vital role culture plays in the translation process. His ideas, though hard to follow at times, are actually very coherent and can be applied in a very practical way in both a classroom and real-world environment.

There is no doubt that Vermeer's *skopos* theory places a huge burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the translator. In addition, the expectations of the commissioner(s) of work are always high and inevitably – or often – purely cost-driven forcing translators to strike an acceptable balance between efficiency (time spent on a translation against remuneration) and quality (what is adequate based on the translation brief). This problem is further compounded by the fact that the translation industry is full of people who are neither appropriately qualified nor sufficiently experienced to work as professional translators. That is regrettable but also unavoidable. Nonetheless, although the real-world translation marketplace today may still not be the exclusive domain of language and intercultural experts, I believe expertise (quality in translation) coupled with a high degree of professionalism could give qualified translators that decisive edge on the 'rogue' competition. Then there would be no reason for the professional translator to "[...] hide in her/his invisibility; [...] and she/he would be justified in their demand to be [...] acknowledged as a co-author on the title page of her/his translation.[...]" (Vermeer 2007: 13).

Richard Pearson

Bibliography:

Publications:

CHESTERMAN, Andrew (1997). *Memes of Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins B.V.

FIELD, John (2003). *Psycholinguistics: a resource book for students*, Abingdon/New York, Routledge

MUNDAY, Jeremy (2001/2008) *Introducing Translation Studies*. London/New York: Routledge (2001/2008), 79-81

PYM, Anthony (2010). *Exploring Translation Theories*, Abingdon/New York, Routledge

SCHÄFFNER, Christina (1998/2001) "Skopos theory". In: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, first edition, Baker, Mona (ed.). London/New York: Routledge, 235-238

VERMEER, Hans J. (2007) "No „State of the Art“". Transcript of lecture held at the "Translation and translation – *des faux amis*" conference at the University of Boğaziçi, Istanbul

VERMEER, Hans, J. (2006). *Luhmann's "social systems" theory: preliminary fragments for a theory of translation*, Berlin, Frank & Timme

VERMEER, Hans J. (2002), „Erst die Unmöglichkeit des Übersetzens macht das Übersetzen Möglich“ in *Übersetzung als Medium des Kulturverstehens und sozialer Integration*, Joachim Renn, Juergen Straub, Shingo Shimada (eds.), Frankfurt/NY, Campus, p. 125-143

VERMEER, Hans J. (2000/2004) "Skopos and commission in translational action". In: *The Translation Studies Reader*, Venuti, Lawrence (ed.),. Chesterman, Andrew (translator). London/New York: Routledge, 227-238

VERMEER, Hans J. (1996). "A skopos theory of translation (some arguments for and against)". In *TEXTconTEXT*, Reihe Wissenschaft, Band 1. Heidelberg

VERMEER, Hans J. (1994) "Übersetzen als kultureller Transfer". In *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*, Snell-Hornby, Mary (ed.). Tübingen: Franke Verlag, 30-53

Internet:

DUDENHÖFER, Marina and BUBENHEIM, Anna, *Translating Vermeer/Vermeer in Translation*. See: http://www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/vermeer/191_ENG_HTML.php and http://www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/vermeer/191_DEU_HTML.php