

## MEDIATED TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY

GAYANE GASPARYAN\*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3353-8512>

BRUSOV STATE UNIVERSITY

**Abstract:** Skopos approach based on the TT reader-oriented principles seeks a translation purpose, which focuses merely on the final result. It acquires a specific or additional quality when applied to the so-called “mediated” or “intermediate translation,” as the product that will function in an exact environment, becomes of vital significance for the so-called secondary translation (translation from translation) within a different/additional communicative situation. The ST once translated for a certain socio-cultural community and reencoded for an exact cultural environment undergoes additional reencoding within a different communicative situation. The present article focuses on the identification of the translation purpose and respectively translation motivated goals through intra-textual constituents within the scope of indirect translation.

**Keywords:** mediated translation; intermediate translation; Skopos theory; translation purpose; reencoding of the meaning

### 1. Introduction

Skopos theory being a rather controversial and debatable approach towards translation practice was proposed by Hans J. Vermeer in 1978. It developed further within the scope of interaction and interdependence of extra-textual and intra-textual determinants in terms of functionally and socio-culturally oriented target text (TT) generating. This approach based on the TT reader-oriented principles seeks a translation purpose, which focuses merely on the result. According to Katharina Reiß and Hans J. Vermeer (Reiß & Vermeer 2013: 29),

“... the translator deals with three factors: (1) the source text as a source language text form, (2) the meaning, which remains the same, and (3) the target text as a target language text form. This means that the meaning of the source (language) text is identical to the meaning of the target (language) text. As this requirement of identical meaning may be difficult to achieve in practice (!), it is often reduced to the requirement of ‘equivalence’: the meaning of the target language text should be ‘equivalent’ to the

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\* [gasparyan.gayane@yandex.ru](mailto:gasparyan.gayane@yandex.ru)



meaning of the source language text... In translational practice, the meaning is extracted from the given source text and then reencoded in the target text.”

Thus, the most important unit in the chain of translation operations, the meaning, should be reencoded in order to keep equivalent comprehension in different conditions and cultural environment of the TT reader. It means that extra-textual coherence becomes of vital importance for the TT to ensure the equal value of the message and the necessary communication in between the source text (ST) addresser and the TT receptor.

C. Nord further developed this concept in terms of communicative/functional approach to the ST analysis for equivalent translation. She considers the TT equivalence from the perspective of extra-textual and intra-textual coherence interdependence in terms of communicative purpose of the ST and the TT function. A. Pym in his “On Nord’s Text Analysis” writes (Pym 1993: 184), “The most concrete illustration of this method is a three-column table in which the various text-analysis categories are applied to the source, the target, and the moment of transfer as a comparing of functions.”

Any translation presupposes special transformations in the TT to make it readable and comprehensible for the target reader. The socio-cultural aspect of any ST is based on the historical, political, social and cultural environment, moral norms and values specific to people who create and develop them throughout centuries. To retain the equivalence in the translation the ST undergoes reencoding due to new socio-cultural conditions. It is a mandatory step to keep the communicative purpose of the ST, the author’s message and intention in the TT. This process creates new communicative relations in between the ST author and the TT reader.

H. J. Vermeer’s and C. Nord’s approach towards translational practice acquires a specific or additional quality when applied to the so-called “mediated” or “intermediate translation,” and the interaction of extra-textual and intra-textual components becomes of indisputable importance from the perspective of their functional and socio-cultural significance. The ST once translated for a certain socio-cultural community and reencoded for an exact cultural environment undergoes additional reencoding within a different communicative situation. Sometimes the translation purpose may undergo definite modifications due to double reencoding of the ST meaning and become of vital significance within the scope of indirect translation (translation from translation).

The indirect translation was extensively practiced in the Soviet era for specifically national literatures of the Soviet Union republics due to the lack of professional translators knowing the languages of the source texts. The ideological and political situation in the country as well as the socio-cultural environment determined exactly the target-reader-oriented function of the secondary translation and made it relevant for the demands of socialist society with its propagandist policy. Sometimes the socialist ideology with its specific world conceptualization had its definite impact upon the reencoding of the ST meaning. Simultaneously it had its positive value, since a great deal of world literature was translated into national languages from Russian translations and became accessible for the multinational community.

The present article focuses on the identification of the translation purpose and respectively translation motivated goals through intra-textual constituents within the scope of indirect translation.

## 2. Indirect Translation: Translation Purpose, Reencoding, Transformation

The famous poem “Cranes” by Rasul Gamzatov is of special interest from the perspective of indirect translation. The poem was written in 1965 in the Avar language spoken in Dagestani (Rasul Gamzatov’ native land) and was translated into different languages. There exist several translations of the poem into Russian. The translations slightly differ in terms of translation purpose, reencoding of the meaning and transformations of cultural elements. The translations into English and Armenian were done from Russian, specifically Naum Grebnyov’s two versions of translation.

The original story, which was used by the author in the poem is about a family from village Dzuarikau in North Ossetia (North Caucasus). They had seven sons. They all fought in the Great Patriotic War (World War II) and none of them was back home. In 1963 a memorial was erected in the village: a grieving mother and seven flying birds. There were geese as birds at the memorial so typical to Ossetian culture to commemorate victims of different events. The Dagestani poet was very much impressed by the story and the memorial. Besides, he was inspired to write the famous poem by another event too: later when visiting Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan he saw the monument to Sadako Sasaki one of thousand child victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima – a statue of a girl with a crane in her hands. According to Japanese tradition if one creates a thousand cranes, he/she is granted one wish. Sadako’s wish was to have a world without nuclear weapons.

In different countries there exist various symbols to commemorate victims of certain events. Thus, in Europe and most English-speaking countries a poppy symbolizes a bloody bullet mark. It is used to commemorate all those who died in all wars and a call: Never Again. In Russia and some other countries white cranes symbolize the victims of any war signifying “I remember. I grieve for everyone who died. I will do everything so that the war will never happen again” (Kavkazpress 2018).

In his poem Rasul Gamzatov preferred to use “cranes” instead of “geese” to keep the rhyme in the stanza of his native Avar language and to be well perceived by a broader readership. So, the first transformation of the cultural element (geese – cranes) was made by the author himself while transmitting it into a different socio-cultural situation.

While working at the article, I had at hand four Russian translations of the poem: two of them by Naum Grebnyov and the other two by Yuriy Lifshits.

The literal translation of the first stanza is:

Мне кажется, что погибшие на войне джигиты  
Нигде не похоронены,  
А высоко в синем небе превратились в белых журавлей.

In Naum Grebnyov's primary version the meaning was not basically reencoded and the cultural elements were retained and did not undergo definite transformations.

Мне кажется порою, что джигиты,  
В могилах братских не были зарыты,  
А превратились в белых журавлей... (Trans. by Grebnyov 1968)

The word **джигит** (*dzhigit* or *jigit* – a horseman, a rider) is of Turkic origin used in the North Caucasus and Central Asia to describe a skillful and brave rider, or a brave person in general. In the Socialist era the word **dzhigit** was well known among the people of different nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union. This is why there was no need to transmit it as **всадник** (*a rider*) or **храбрец** (*a brave man*).

In Yuriy Lifshits's translation the meaning was not reencoded either but the cultural element **джигит** (*dzhigit*) was transformed into **погибшие солдаты** (deceased soldiers): they did not turn into ash; they became cranes in the sky.

Мне кажется, погибшие солдаты  
не превратились в пепел или прах,  
но вознеслись, бессмертны и крылаты,  
и журавлями стали в небесах (Trans. by Lifshits 2017)

There are minor deviations in both translations. In Yuriy Lifshits's translation, a number of additions are used: **не превратились в пепел или прах, но вознеслись, бессмертны и крылаты** (literally: *they did not turn into ashes, but ascended, immortal and winged*). In Naum Grebnyov's translation, a few omissions are determined together with such addition as **В могилах братских не были зарыты** (literally: *They were not buried in the mass graves*). One cannot say that there is any change in the communicative situation, there is any reencoding of the meaning as both versions transmit the idea and the message is properly conveyed due to the equivalent translations. In Yuriy Lifshits's second version of the translation **Мне кажется, погибшие солдаты...** (literally: *It seems to me that the deceased soldiers*) was replaced by **Я верю, что погибшие солдаты...** (literally: *I believe that deceased soldiers...*) probably to emphasize his personal attitude towards the situation: **I believe**, as if I am sure, instead of the vague **It seems to me** (trans. Lifshits, 2017).

From the perspective of Skopos theory the target-reader-oriented translation purpose is achieved. As a result, the equal value of the message is transferred. The meaning of the TT is equivalent to the meaning of the ST: the poem describes one family tragedy like lots of families experienced because of the war and people of any nationality in the Soviet Union would adequately realize the situation.

A few years later in 1969, a famous Russian singer Mark Bernes suggested composing a song "Cranes," due to which a single-family tragedy would become a requiem to all the soldiers perished in the Great Patriotic War, therefore the translation purpose has changed. For this reason, the translation of the poem has undergone several modifications in Naum Grebnyov's second version of translation, which became the lyrics of the song. First, the cultural element **джигиты** (*dzhigits*) was substituted by **солдаты** (*soldiers*) to sound panhuman for a broader readership.

Besides, in the second stanza the meaning of the ST and the first version of Naum Grebnyov's translation was reencoded. Instead of:

Они летят, свершают путь свой длинный  
И выкликают чьи-то имена.  
Не потому ли с клином журавлиным  
От века речь аварская сходна? (Trans. by Grebnyov 1968)

(Literally: *They fly, they make their long way  
And they call out someone's names.  
Isn't that why with the crane wedge  
The Avar speech similar from times?*)

a new version appears:

Они до сей поры с времен тех дальних  
Летят и подают нам голоса.  
Не потому ль так часто и печально  
Мы замолкаем, глядя в небеса? (Trans. by Grebnyov 1969)

(Literally: *They still from those distant times  
Fly and send us voices.  
Isn't that why so often and sad  
We fall silent, looking at the sky?*)

The cultural/national element **the Avar speech** if maintained in the new version, would not identify the value of the meaning for the new purpose: a requiem to all the victims of the Great Patriotic War.

There exist several versions of the translation into English. They all are indirect translations from Russian and the translation purpose deviates here due to the so-called secondary (Russian) ST and the result they specify. Thus, one of the translations (unfortunately the name of the translator is not mentioned in the source) was done from Naum Grebnyov's first version of translation:

I sometimes think that riders brave,  
Who met their death in bloody fight,  
Were never buried in a grave  
But rose as cranes with plumage white.  
And ever since until this day  
They pass high overhead and call.  
Is that not why we often gaze  
In solemn silence at them all? (Trans. unknown 2017)

The cultural element **dzhigits** was transmitted as **riders brave** to make it well located into English-speaking environment for the English-speaking readership. The translation purpose is to determine the situation with skillful and brave riders, or brave people who struggled in any "bloody fight" but not in a definite war, and the original meaning is reencoded due to this vision.

Boris Anisimov's translation was done from Naum Grebnyov's second version, the lyrics of the well-known song.

Sometimes it seems to me each fallen soldier  
That never came back home from fields of gore  
In fact did never perish, as they told you,  
But turned into a crane as white as snow.  
And ever since those days in their due season  
We've seen them soaring high across the sky  
With distant voices giving us a reason  
To stand in tears and watch them flying by. (Trans. by Anisimov 2008)

The translation is very close to the secondary (Russian) ST both in meaning and in form. The conceptual value which is determined by the translation purpose in the intermediary version is also retained: a requiem to victims of a war. But a minor deviation is manifested here: the translator uses the pronoun **each** (method of addition) and the singular form of the noun **soldier** in its collective meaning (method of grammatical transformation) to emphasize the shift in the translation purpose and to reencode the meaning in order to generalize it for a different type of readership. In fact, it becomes a requiem to any soldier fighting in any war.

Semyon Vencimerov's translation was done from Naum Grebnyov's lyrics as well. But its impact upon the reader becomes even more convincing due to the intra-textual content and the use of specific language means.

Sometimes I dream that fallen hero soldiers,  
Forever lost in brutal old campaigns,  
Were never buried under mournful alders,  
But turned to mystic snowy crying cranes.  
Since then, they wing and wing and cry till now.  
We recognize the heartily darling voice.  
We pray I sorrow, souls don't allow  
To take the look away without choice (Trans. by Vencimerov 2008).

A number of additions and transformations make the text sound more persuasive and effective. The translator seems to believe that every soldier fallen in the fields of such bloody wars (**forever lost in brutal old campaigns** – methods of addition and lexical substitution) is a hero (**hero soldiers** – method of addition). In his dreams (**I dream** – method of lexical substitution) they are not buried under sorrowful trees (**mournful alders** – method of lexical substitution), they turned to mystic cranes (**mystic snowy crying cranes** – method of addition), as there is really something mysterious in the cranes who appear in the dreams but not in the real life instead of the soldiers lost in the war (**mystic cranes**). In the second stanza a conceptual reinterpretation occurs: *We do not so often fall silent, looking at the sky* (так часто и печально мы замолкаем, глядя в небеса) but *we pray and sorrow as the souls of those soldiers until now do not allow us to take the look away from the cranes and to forget them*. The translation purpose seems to be shifted due to the reconceptualization of the extra-textual situation and generalization of the war vision. It sounds like an

alarm call for coming generations not to revive the experience of “brutal old campaigns.”

The poem was translated into Armenian by Hovik Charkhchyan. It is Naum Grebnyov’s lyrics version.

Ինձ մերթ թվում է, թե զինվորներն այն՝  
 Արյան դաշտերից էլ ետ չդարձած,  
 Ոչ թե մեր հողին փարվեցին անձայն,  
 Այլ ճերմակ, ճերմակ կռունկներ դարձան:  
 Եվ այդ հեռավոր օրերից ի վեր  
 Թռչում են նրանք, ձայնում են կրկին.  
 Դրա համար չէ՞, որ մենք տրտմորեն  
 Համբանում ենք ու նայում երկնքին: (Trans. by Charkhchyan 2011)

The translation very accurately transmits the text of the lyrics into Armenian. It seems a carefully done mirrored copy of the lyrics. The only shift in the translation is seen in the third stanza: instead of Russian

И в том строю есть промежуток малый —  
 Быть может, это место для меня! (Trans. by Grebnyov 1969)  
 (Literally: And there is a small space in that row —  
 Maybe this is the place for me!)

in the Armenian version appears:

Նրանց շարքերում մի փոքրիկ հատված  
 Գուցե հենց վաղվա իմ օրն է հուշում: (Trans. by Charkhchyan 2011)  
 (Literally: There is a small space among them —  
 Doesn’t this foretell my future?)

Exclamation is replaced by a question and the Russian ST “Быть может, это место для меня!” (Literally: *Maybe this is the place for me!*) in Armenian sounds as “Գուցե հենց վաղվա իմ օրն է հուշում” (Literally: *Doesn’t this foretell my future?*). Likewise in Semyon Vencimerov’s version the translation purpose is shifted due to the generalization of the war vision. It sounds like an alarm bell for coming generations as well. The translation purpose presupposes the identical result as the Armenian reader is well aware of the vandalism and violence of brutal wars, our people experienced throughout history.

### 3. Conclusion

As mentioned above, indirect translation was extensively practiced in the Soviet era for specifically national literatures of the Soviet Union republics. The poem “Cranes” by Rasul Gamzatov, translated into different languages from Russian, is a remarkable

sample of the so-called intermediate translation. The initial translations into Russian were very accurately done maintaining the ST communicative goals and the author's intention. The translation purpose in all these translations resulted in the equivalence of the meaning, and the existing extra-textual environment determined the equal value of communicative relations in between the ST addresser and the TT receptor.

But once the translation purpose changed which led to the reencoding of the meaning in terms of cultural elements transformations and modification of the ST impact upon the readership. A poem describing one family tragedy became a requiem to all the soldiers deceased in the Great Patriotic War. It was oriented on the socialist period multinational society which lived in identical historical, political, social and cultural environment and was grieving for the victims of the war long after. Thus, the TT extra-textual situation determined the intra-textual specific features equivalent to the ST form and meaning.

Furthermore, the translation purpose was shifted in English and Armenian translations due to the reconceptualization and generalization of the war vision. It sounds now like an alarm call for coming generations not to revive the experience of brutal campaigns, vandalism and violence of the cruel bloody wars.

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**Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

**Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.