

## TEXT LINGUISTICS AND SKOPOS THEORY AND THEIR APPLICATION IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Sugeng Hariyanto  
State Polytechnic of Malang

### Abstract

Translation industry is developing very fast with the economic globalization and digital/internet technology development. Unfortunately, the teaching of translation in universities has not adopted techniques that can response this situation. This paper aims to propose a translation teaching technique to train the students to produce target texts demanded in the translation business. The technique is proposed by considering two influential concepts in translation theory, i.e., *Text Linguistics* and *Skopos Theory*.

Text linguistics is a branch of linguistics that deals with texts as communication systems. Text linguistics takes into account the form of a text and its setting, i.e. the way in which it is situated in an interactional, communicative context. In relation to translation, it can be said that translation is not only the business of analyzing the source text sentence by sentence. Instead, the author and the intended audience and the purpose of communication should also be considered.

*Skopos* theory is closely related to text-types and also emphasizes the importance of translation purposes. With these ideas as the basis, this article gives example how to apply text linguistics and *skopos* theory in classroom context to teach functional text translation. The translation teaching materials are selected based on the text type and difficulty levels, students are trained to do text-analysis and be made aware of the purpose of the source text is not always the same with the purpose of the target text. Prior to giving a translation practice, therefore, the teacher writes the clearest translation brief possible

**Keywords:** *text linguistics, skopos theory, classroom teaching, translation teaching*

Translation has been done since long time ago. The activities have created a new profession, i.e. translator. According to Hariyanto (2006), there are two markets for translation business, i.e. publishers (national level) and translation agents (international level). Publishers publish

translated books for several reasons. At least there are three motivations: academic, empowerment and business motivations. With academic motivation, the publishers translate books to meet academic demand. For example, Resist Book translates and publishes a book on

Chomsky to meet the need for literature on Chomsky in Bahasa Indonesia. They also translate and publish books to empower the readers, for example, in the fields of democratization, human rights, entrepreneurship and other fields. Finally, as the most dominating motivation, publishers translate and publish books for economic reasons. Publication of translated books is more profitable rather than publishing local works. As a comparison, local writer's royalty is 10% to 20%; and royalty for translated book is only 6% to 7%. Hence, publishers pay less when they publish translated books than when they publish books written by local writers. This is not to mention "copy left" publishers who publish book translated book without first buying the copyright. In terms of quality, usually local writer's quality is low; while great writers are, unfortunately, co-opted by big publishers. In terms of marketing, some translated books are already backed up with international success. This is illustrated by the high demand of the translation version of *Harry Potter*, the best seller novel ever.

The translation business in the international market is boosted by the globalization needs. With globalization, many manufacturers want to sell their products in other countries. They need to talk to the people of other countries in their local languages. The text types vary now. They do not only cover novels and textbooks but also websites and software interfaces

### **The Practice in Translation Teaching**

The great challenges of translation business illustrated above, however, are not paralleled with the fact found in educational institutions producing potential translators. Chriss, as cited by Nababan (2007:2), states that up to these days the basic approach in translation

teaching seems to remain unchanged from the time of the School of Scribes in Ancient Egypt. The teacher gives out a source text to the students and then without any briefing and notes asks them to translate the text in the class or at home. Upon completing, the target text is then discussed in great depth and detail by the whole class to find out what is lack in the translation. In other words, the translation class is searching for "good" translation. A question to ask is then "good for whom?" or "on what criteria or bases"? As a consequence, such practice can hardly produce potential translator who can take the challenge of the translation business in which a target text should firstly meet the purpose of translating the source text.

This paper, therefore, aims to propose a translation teaching technique which hopefully can train the students to produce target texts demanded in the translation business. The technique is proposed by considering two influential concepts in translation theory, i.e., *Text Linguistics* and *Skopos Theory*. Thus, in its discussion this paper explicates some concepts of *Text Linguistics*, *Skopos Theory* and its *Translation-oriented text analysis* and then describes the translation teaching technique proposed.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Text Linguistics**

It is mentioned in the background of this paper that texts to be translated in translation business nowadays are various. For Indonesian publishers, translators translate *textbooks*, *popular books*, *novels*, *children books*, *books on Information Technology (IT)* and many others; as for many international and a few national translation agents, Indonesian translators work on texts like *technical manuals*, *websites*, *software interfaces*, *advertise-*

ments, legal documents, annual reports, and many others.

In relation to text-type, Snell-Hornby (1988) classifies translation into three general categories: literary translation, general translation and special language translation. Literary translation is the translation of literary works and Bible, and general translation is translation of newspaper, information text and advertising. Finally, special language translation covers the translation of legal, economic, medicine and science/technology texts. For all of these translation types, **text linguistics** is necessary. This can be seen in the Chart 1.

linguistics takes into account the form of a text and its setting, i.e. the way in which it is situated in an interactional, communicative context. Thus, author of a text and its addressee are studied in their respective social and/or institutional roles in the specific communicative context.<sup>[1]</sup> [It is worth noted that Halliday (1978 and 1994) and his followers also talk about the similar concept of analysis under the discussion of genre.] In relation to translation, it can be said that translation is not only the business of analyzing the source text sentence by sentence. Instead, the author and the intended audience and the purpose of communication should also be considered.

What is text linguistics anyway? In

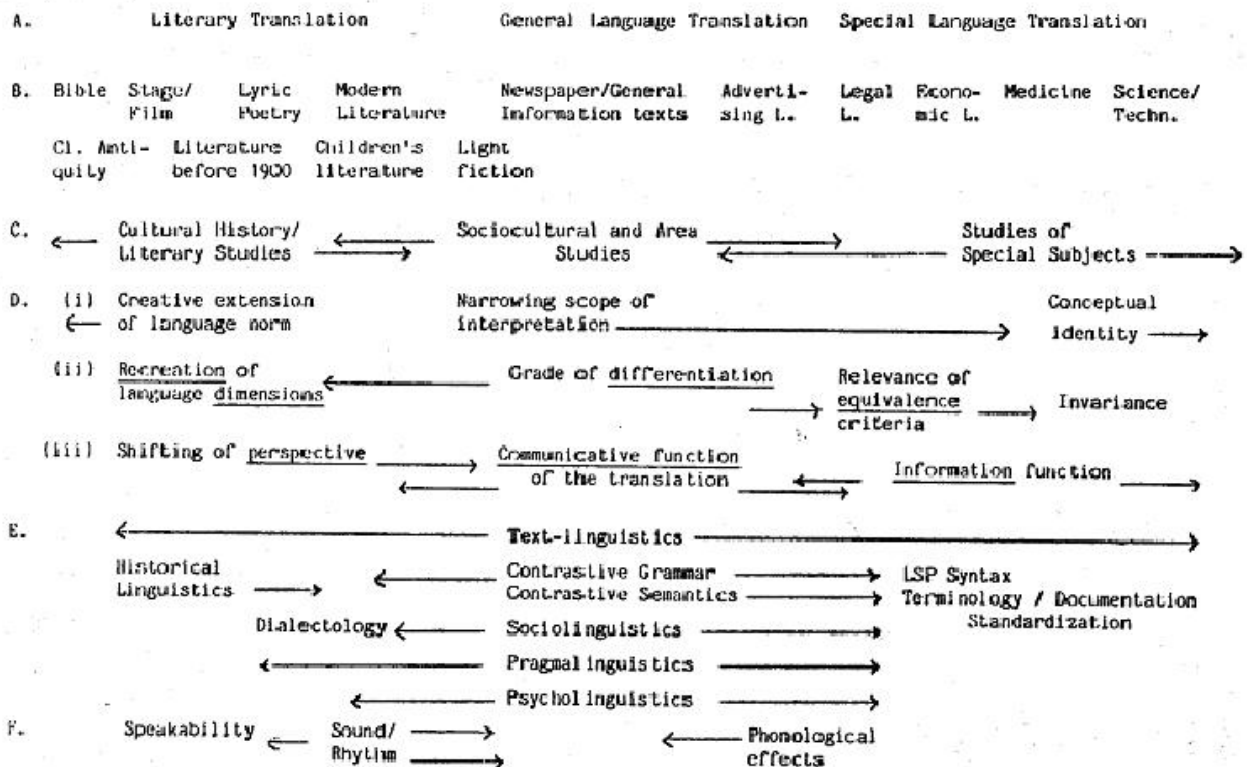


Chart 1. Text type and relevant criteria for translation

general, it can be said that **text linguistics** is a branch of linguistics that deals with texts as communication systems. Text

In relation to this, Reiss (1977/1989) has been very influential in focusing attention on the function of text – both in

the context of the original and in the context of the situation that demands a translation. As a matter of fact, her approach considers the text rather than the word or the sentence as the translation unit and hence the level at which equivalence is to be sought.

She classifies texts based on discourse function into: (a) informative, (b) expressive, and (c) operative. A text is classified as an informative text if the content is the main focus. This kind of texts plainly communicates facts, information, knowledge, opinions, etc. The logical or referential dimension of language is the main aspect involved. Texts are called expressive if the focus is on creative composition and aesthetics aspects. Both

each of these text types. The target text of an informative text should be in plain prose with *explication* where required, because the aim is to transmit the referential content of the text. The target text of an expressive text should use the *identifying* method, the translator having to look at it from the ST author's standpoint. The translation of an operative text has to employ the *adaptive* method, where the translator tries to create the same effect on the readers, as the ST. See Chart 2 for a better understanding of specific translation methods for each of these text types [adapted by Munday (2001: 74) based on Reiss (1977/1989)].

Reiss (1977/1989) also talks of evaluatory criteria, which vary according to text types.

Text type	Informative	Expressive	Operative
Language function	Informative (representing objects and facts)	Expressive (expressing sender's attitude)	Appellative (making an appeal to text receiver)
Language dimension	Logical	Aesthetic	Dialogic
Text focus	Content-focused	Form-focused	Appellative-focused
TT should	Transmit referential content	Transmit aesthetic form	Elicit desired response
Translation method	'Plain prose', explication as required	'Identifying' method, adopt perspective of ST author	'Adaptive', equivalent effect

Chart 2. Functional characteristics of text types and links to translation methods

the author and the message are what are foregrounded. The examples are imaginative creative literature texts. Next, an operative text is a text whose focus is the appellative aspect.

Here the text appeals to the readers to act in a certain way by persuading, dissuading, requesting, and cajoling them. Usually the form of language is dialogic.

Correspondingly Reiss (1977/1989) advocates specific translation methods for

Thus while the translation of any content-oriented text has to aim at semantic equivalence, and a popular science piece will have to preserve the ST style, there is greater need to retain a metaphor in an expressive text than in an informative target text. She thinks that one could measure the adequacy of a target text (TT) by intra-linguistic criteria—like semantic, grammatical and stylistic features—and extra-linguistic criteria—like situation,

subject field, time, place, receiver, sender and implications like humor, irony, emotion etc.

Reiss (1977/1989) also proposes a text typology. Chart 3 illustrates the

concern on text-type is *skopos* theory or *Skopos theorie* introduced by Vermeer (1989/2000), the theory that applies the notion of *Skopos* (a Greek word for **purpose**) to translation. The translation

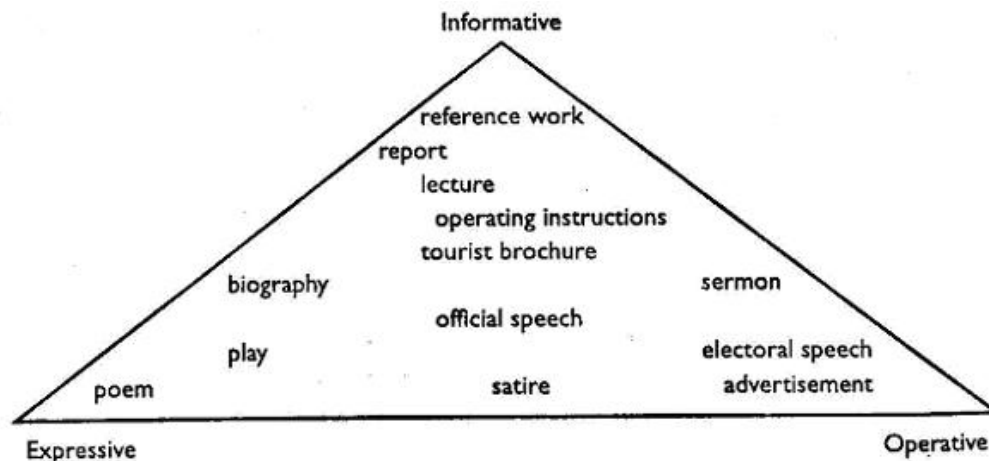


Chart 3. Text types

typology. The above typology is a useful typology of texts but it is clear that texts are often not easily categorized. One single text can have several characteristics. A biography could have informative as well as appellative content. A personal letter could well be informative, expressive and appellative as can be an advertisement. The important thing here is that her approach is built on earlier ideas of rhetoric and language analysis.

### **Skopos Theory and Translation-Oriented Text Analysis**

Under this subheading, skopos theory and text analysis in relation to translation is discussed.

#### *Skopos Theory*

It is clear from the above discussion on text linguistics that the approach to translation can be closely related to the type of text to translate. Translation theory that has a big

process of a text is guided by its function i.e. the use of a receiver makes of a text or the meaning that the text has for the receiver. In other words, the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose/*skopos* of the overall translational action.

Briefly, Reiss and Vermeer (in Nord, 1997: 29) mention the following Skopos rule:

Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The Skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/-interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.

*Skopos* theory is not only closely related to text-types, but also to the importance of translation purposes which is always oriented to the target readers, especially their response. The difference in focus here is that the ST is the point of departure and the *skopos* refers to knowing why an ST is to be translated and

what the function of the TT will be. *Skopos* theory focuses on the purpose of the translation, which determines the methods and strategies of translating, which are employed to produce functionally adequate result (Munday, 2001: 79).

*Skopos* theory which emerged in Germany (Hatim, 2001: 73) is within functionalism. *Skopos* idea relies on key concepts in pragmatics that is intention and action. There are two important *skopos* rules:

*Skopos rule 1: Intention is determined by its purpose.*

*Skopos rule 2: purpose varies according to the text receiver.*

Translator decision is governed by textual and contextual factors. One of the contextual factors is audience design which accounts for the way a target text is intended to be received. This will affect the translation strategies selected by the translator.

Target text must be produced with the given purpose in mind and that translation will function well when shaped by a particular purpose. Three major kinds of purpose are already recognized: communicative, strategic, and general purposes (Hatim, 2001: 74)

Such purposes cannot be equally important. The success or failure of a translation is ultimately decided whether it can be interpreted successfully by the targeted recipient in a manner that is consistent with what is expected of it (Hatim, 2001: 75)

In *skopos* theory, the success or failure of translation is often mentioned as success or protest. Success means definitely success in transferring the text function and protest means failure. A successful translation elicits no protest from the target recipient. No protest

means the message received in the manner intended and/or expected. Thus, intention is related with function. Intention is judged by the writer of source text and the function is judged by the receiver (Hatim, 2001: 75). Success of a translation is measured in terms of harmony of content and intention. Content means content of message. Intention means intention of producer or translator (Hatim, 2001: 75). There are two kinds of textual coherence: (a) intra-textual coherence and (b) intertextual coherence. Here intra-textual coherence is more important. (Hatim, 2001: 76).

As a matter of fact, text only contains information offer. Thus, a text may mean many different things to many receivers (Hatim, 2001: 76-77). Therefore, the target readers must be taken into account. Who, then, determines the *skopos* or purpose of translation? The *skopos* is determined by the initiator or commissioner of the translation, the translation brief and the type of translation.

In a translation project, there are at least three roles: initiator, commissioner, and translator. The following is an example of a case in translation field.

#### *Case 1.*

*One of the lectures in Malang State University has read a book on linguistics. He thought that the book must be translated into Bahasa Indonesia so that Indonesians can study linguistics from the remarkable book. He, then, sent a letter to a publisher to propose translating the book. The publisher agreed, and so the lecturer started translating.*

**Question:**

Who is the initiator? – *The lecturer*

Who is the commissioner? – *The Publisher*

Who determines the translation purpose?  
– *The lecturer*

The commissioner gives a translation job to a translator. The “order” is called Translation Brief (*Ind. Surat Perintah Kerja*). The Translation brief shall contain the function of target text, target audience, where and when target text is to be read, what is the medium (spoken, written) and motive, i.e., why translation is needed. However, publishers rarely issue such a complete translation brief.

There are several principles claimed to be *skopos* rules by Reiss and Vermeer (1984, in Nord, 1997). The rules are as follows:

1. A *translatum* or target text (TT) is determined by its *skopos*.
2. A TT is an offer of information in a target culture and target language (TL)
3. A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way.
4. A TT must be internally coherent.
5. A TT must be coherent with source text (ST).
6. The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the *skopos* rule predominating.

*Translation-oriented text analysis*

Related closely to *skopos* approach is text analysis prior to translating. Nord (1997: 59), one of the proponents of *Skopos* Theory, states that the elements of text analysis area; (a) the importance of the translation commission (translation brief), (b) the role of ST analysis, and (c) the functional hierarchy of translation problems. These points are briefly reviewed as follows.

The commission should give the following information: (a) the intended text function, (b) the addresses (sender and recipient), (c) the time and place of text reception, (d) the medium (speech and writing), and (e) the motive (why the ST was written and why it is being translated). This is also discussed above in which *commission* is termed by *translation brief*.

The ST analysis is also important. In analyzing the ST, according to Nord (1991), the most important thing is the pragmatic analysis of the communicative situation involved and the model to be used for ST and the translation brief.

Which factors are to be analyzed? They can be some of the following, i.e. subject matter; content including connotation and cohesion, presuppositions which mean the real-world factors of the communicative situation presumed to be known to the participants; composition including microstructure and macrostructure; non-verbal elements, for example illustrations and italic; lexis including dialect, registers and specific terminology; and sentence structure and suprasegmental features including stress, rhythm and stylistic punctuation.

Moreover, functions are important in translation. The things that should be noticed in relation to text functions among others are the intended function, the functional elements, and the translation types determining translation style, the

problems of the text can then be tackled at lower linguistic levels as in the second point above.

Below is an advertisement. A commissioner wants a translator to translate and under the text is the text analysis that may be done by the translator.

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**PR Advertorial – Copy Sheet**

**Headline Studies**

***Wulan reveals her ultimate beauty secret***

*Sub-headAs the new ambassador of Bella Skin Care, Wulan shares how Bella Skin Care helped her maintain flawless skin.*

**Body Copy**

Q: *What is the secret behind your skin’s radiance?*

WULAN: *I have always believed in the importance of going for regular, high-quality skincare treatments to achieve great skin. Aside from using Bella Skin Care products daily, I go for weekly treatments to soothe my skin after hours of intense makeup sessions. Because of this, I am able to keep my skin in tip-top condition – perfectly supple and visibly revitalized.*

Q: *How do you keep your skin so luminous despite your hectic film schedule?*

WULAN: *I really love Bella Skin Care’s BioLymph High Symmetry System. It works wonders by detoxifying my skin and remodeling my facial contours, especially the problem areas around my eyes such as puffy eyes and eye bags – which results after long hours of filming.*

Q: *Among all the treatments, what is your favourite?*

WULAN: *One of my favourites is Bella Skin Care’s exclusive Depilux™ Hair Free System. This treatment painlessly impedes hair growth, leading to permanently silky, hair-free skin on any part of the body with zero down time. I’ll never have to worry about wearing revealing clothes during filming. With Bella Skin Care, I know I’m always at my best!*

**Promo Portion**

Indulge in these fabulous beauty offers:

**Wulan’s Skin Perfecting Package for perfectly balanced skin**

*Enjoy 30 Therapies at Rp 3,000,000.00\**

**Wulan’s Ultra Whitening Package for fairer, clearer skin**

*Get 30 Therapies at Rp 4,800,000.00\**

**Wulan’s Nutritive Package for hydrated glowing skin**

*Get 30 Therapies at Rp 4,000,000.00\**

\*Terms and conditions apply.

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The text, if seen from Snell-Hornby categorization, is a general text. The author is the Bella Skin Care firm. The audience is Indonesian young women, middle-up economic class, probably educated women. The purpose of the translation is to sell the product to Indonesian women. Based on Reiss’ categorization it is an operative text. As an operative text, the appropriate method of translation is adaptive method in which all means are taken to achieve equivalent effect, i.e. making Indonesian women buy the



products. The target text therefore should focus on this appellative focus to elicit the desired response. The language dimension is dialogic, as evident in the source target also.

The translation of the advertisement above might be like the following.

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## PR Advertorial – Copy Sheet

### Headline Studies

**Wulan mengungkapkan rahasianya untuk cantik sempurna**

#### Sub-head

Sebagai duta Bella Skin Care yang baru, Wulan mengungkapkan bagaimana Bella Skin membantu agar kulitnya tetap cantik sempurna.

#### Body Copy

**Tanya:** Apa rahasia dari kulit Anda yang indah berseri?

**Wulan:** Saya selalu yakin akan pentingnya perawatan kulit yang rutin dan bermutu tinggi untuk mendapatkan kulit yang cemerlang. Selain menggunakan produk Bella Skin Care setiap hari, saya juga datang untuk mendapatkan perawatan seminggu sekali untuk menenangkan kulit saya setelah berjam-jam memakai riasan yang berat. Hasilnya, saya bisa menjaga kulit agar selalu dalam kondisi prima – lentur sempurna dan terlihat muda lagi.

**Tanya:** Bagaimana cara Anda merawat kulit sehingga tetap begitu bercahaya meskipun jadwal Anda main film sangat ketat?

**Wulan:** Saya sangat suka dengan Sistem BioLymph High Symmetry dari Bella Skin Care. Sistem ini manfaatnya sangat menakjubkan yaitu dengan mengeluarkan racun dari kulit dan membentuk kembali kontur wajah saya, terutama sekali di daerah yang bermasalah di sekitar mata seperti mata bengkak dan berkantung yang terjadi akibat bekerja berjam-jam main film.

**Tanya:** Di antara semua perawatan yang ada, yang mana yang paling Anda sukai?

**Wulan:** Salah satu perawatan dari Bella Skin Care yang paling saya sukai adalah Sistem Pembersihan Bulu Rambut Depilux™. Perawatan ini mencegah tumbuhnya bulu rambut tanpa rasa sakit, hasilnya kulit yang tetap sehalus sutra yang bebas dari bulu rambut dan ini bisa langsung terlihat hasilnya di bagian kulit mana pun pada tubuh. Saya tidak akan khawatir lagi bila harus mengenakan baju yang agak terbuka bisa sedang main film. Dengan Bella Skin Care, Saya yakin saya selalu dalam kondisi puncak!

#### Promo Portion

Manjakan diri Anda dengan berbagai penawaran istimewa berikut ini:

**Paket Kulit Sempurna Wulan untuk kulit sehat sempurna**

Nikmati 30 Terapi dengan harga Rp 3.000.000\*

**Paket Pemutih Ultra Wulan untuk kulit lebih putih bersih**

Dapatkan 30 Terapi dengan harga Rp 4.800.000\*

**Paket Nutrisi Wulan untuk kulit lembut bercahaya**

Dapatkan 30 Terapi dengan harga Rp 4.000.000\*

\*Syarat dan ketentuan berlaku

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### THE PROPOSED TECHNIQUE IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Based on the discussion on Text Linguistics and *Skopos* Theory above, some points can be proposed for translation teaching as follows:

1. The translation teaching material should be selected based on the genres (text type) and difficulty levels.
2. Students should be trained to do text-analysis (based on text linguistics and *skopos* theory) to make sure that the characteristics of texts are well understood and the purpose of translation is well adopted.
3. The students should be made aware of the purpose of the source text which might be different from the purpose of the target text. Therefore, the teacher should write translation brief as clearly as possible prior to giving translation practice.

The actual teaching technique can be like the following 9-step technique:

1. The teacher makes a selection of the material to be translated based on the text type and translation audience.

- Text type based on discourse function: expressive, informative, operative
- Audience: children, adults, academicians, tourists, etc.

2. The students are assigned to do text analysis to the source text based on *skopos* theory. The students, assisted by their teacher, should identify the source text, in terms of the type of text, the register, the style and the readership of the text selected, etc. Please note that the readership of the source text may be the same or different from the readership of the target text as stipulated in the translation brief. In either case, the analysis of such features above benefits the translators (students).
3. The teacher should give a clear translation brief, including the purpose of the translation and the audience of the translation.
4. The teacher guides a discussion on the similarities/differences between the source text characteristics (based on step 2) and the characteristic of the target text of the same text type (genre).
5. Students do “deep” reading, by placing emphasis on items where translation problems may appear. This is called “reading with translation intention,” by Gerding-Salas (2000). When doing this, students should first underline unknown terms and then they should mentally confront potential translation difficulties in the text with suitable translation procedures, by keeping in mind the text as a whole.
6. The students then translate the text using appropriate translation

strategy but keeping in mind the purpose of the translation.

7. The students hand in the final version.
8. The teacher makes a final revision and returns the text to the students.
9. The students finally make comments on the lesson learned in the translation learning process. And that is a kind of self-reflection.

## CONCLUSION

Some new concepts in translation theory, i.e. Text Linguistics, *Skopos* Theory and Translation-oriented Text Analysis are not also fruitful to the translation strategies employed by the translators but also to its methods of teaching. The translation teaching materials are selected based on the text type and difficulty levels, students are trained to do text-analysis and be made aware of the purpose of the source text is not always the same with the purpose of the target text. Prior to giving translation practice, therefore, the teacher writes the clearest translation brief possible.

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