

**Applying Skopos Theory to the Arabic Translation of Selected Football
News at beIN Sport Website
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Abstract

The present paper investigates the applicability of Skopos theory to sport language, particularly translating sport news from English into Arabic. This theory is appropriate for this study due to several practical and technical functions sport language involves. The data are football news at the English beIN sport website and their counterparts on the Arabic version. The sport news covers three major football competitions: the UEFA *Champions League*, *LaLiga* and the *Calcio*. It is found that rendering the data need to maintain and adapt the form and style of the source message to ensure a similar effect on TT audience.

Keywords

beIN sport, Football, Skopos Theory, sports language, Vermeer

Introduction

The origin of the term Skopos is Greek, to mean 'aim' or 'purpose', and was used by Hans J. Vermeer (1930–2010) in translation studies in the 1970s. Reiss and Vermeer are the foremost translation scholars in Skopos Theory. The influence of Holz-Mänttari's Translational Action in Skopos Theory is beyond dispute, to the extent that the latter is regarded part of the former since both are concerned with a translational action based on considering the ST as "[an] action [that] has to be negotiated and performed and has a purpose and a result" (Vermeer, 2012, p. 192). On the other hand, a TT must be suitable or functionally adequate for the purpose. Taking into account the reasons behind translating the ST work and the purpose and function of the TT will be so crucial for the translator. Reiss and Vermeer's purpose in introducing this theory is to present a general translation theory for all text types. The basic underlying principles (or rules in the relevant literature) of this theory are the following: (Reiss and Vermeer 2013: 94ff)

- Principle 1: "A translational action is determined by its skopos."
- Principle 2: "It is an offer of information in a target culture and TL concerning an offer of information in a source culture and SL."
- Principle 3: "A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a reversible way."
- Principle 4: "A TT must be internally coherent."
- Principle 5: "A TT must be coherent with the ST".

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•Principle 6: "The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule predominating."

These principles need further examination. Principle 1 is vital: Its function and purpose determine the TT (Skopos). The cultural and linguistic importance of Principle 2 is in linking both the ST and TT to their purpose and function in their respective contexts where the translator is potentially viewed as the principal player in "the intercultural communication and production of the Translatum" (Munday, 2016, p. 127). As far as Principle 3 is concerned, the "irreversibility" affirms that in the target culture, the TT's function and purpose "are not necessarily the same as the ST in the source culture." The main concern of Principle 4 and 5 concentrate on how the "success of the action and information transfer" is to be "evaluated, on its functional adequacy: the coherence rule, related to internal textual coherence; and the fidelity rule, related to intertextual coherence with the ST" (Reiss and Vermeer 2013: 96).

The hierarchy, as mentioned above, is relatively organized according to its importance. Thus, the "intertextual coherence between ST and TT" (Principle 5) is of less importance than that of "internal textual coherence within the TT" (Principle 4). In the same way, it is worth noting that skopos purpose and function (Principle 1) will dominate other principles (or rules). To sum up, these principles can be read as a road map: achieving the TT purpose, then successive steps towards the internal coherence of TT and its coherence with ST. The ST downplaying, or "dethroning," as mentioned by Vermeer, is no more than a general concept of Skopos, and researchers in the field of translation have much time and effort to debate it.

Practically, as stated by Schäffner & Uwe (2001), the main ideas behind Skopos Theory consolidate the fact that "skopos or purpose does not influence a translation only, but also the source text, and that Skopos determines 'free' or 'faithful translation' (p.15). The Skopos Theory demonstrates a shift from "formal translation" to a more "socio-cultural" notion of translation. It highlighted the need for translators to consider diverse elements such as the culture of the intended readers and the commissioner's requirements for the work, as well as the function and purpose of the text in the perspective culture" (Schäffner & Uwe, 2001, p. 15).

According to Vermeer (2012), to translate is "to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees" (p. 194). Further, as stated in Reiss and Vermeer (2013), two types of coherence are identified and distinguished, namely, - the intertextual and the intratextual. Ashqar (2013:64) mentions that:

"the intertextual coherence is built around the type of relation between the source text and the target text (while) the intratextual coherence in Skopos theory as the compatibility between the translation from one hand and the receiver's situation besides the target context of use from the other. It

emphasizes considerations like the background knowledge and situational circumstances".

Respectively, Reiss and Vermeer (2013) confirm the existence of what they called "objective correctness" or a relative kind of balance between "intertextual coherence" and "intratextual coherence." Ashqar comments on this balance, saying:

"For the limited access texts, the importance and degree of relative intertextual coherence can be felt when comparing a heavily intertextually coherent translation with the source text from one hand. The resulting outcome, in this case, can be called "a translation that needs a translation" to benefit our specified audience. The other comparison is with another relatively intertextually coherent translation that approaches the non-specialized audience" (op.cit.).

1. Football Language

Roughly speaking, a simple definition of football language may be put as the "expressive means used in communication about the game, in a wide array of contexts and perspectives where the game is in focus, on and off the pitch" (cf. Bergh and Ohlander, 2012b). It reflects a discourse shared by speakers of different languages. Despite extra-linguistic peculiarities, football language users have a great deal in common. According to Sager et al. (1980: 74), English or any other football language is a unique language that can be defined as: "the totality of means of expression used by specialists in messages about their special subject". With this technical domain of language and translation, every Sunday or Saturday, based on days of football matches or Classico, millions of people all over the globe share a passion and an interest in this game, not as laymen but as specialists and analysts. This means that it is possible to confirm that "sports language, in general, and football language, in particular, maybe the world's most widespread and prevailed special language. Nevertheless, the general point here is paramount: the distinctive nature of any special language can be well noticed in its vocabulary. Football language thrives in terms and words with special meanings—e.g., "winger," "side-foot," "nutmeg," "dive," "four-four-two"—that will make those without sufficient knowledge of football astonished as hopelessly opaque" (see Bergh and Ohlander, 2016: 20).

However, football language may show other distinctive features than mere vocabulary, as represented by the verb syntax (omission of objects/complements) in sentences such as "Messi shot, but the keeper saved" or "Rashford failed to convert" (i.e., score) (ibid.). Also, like other unique languages, football language makes up its collocations, usually making a somewhat vague impression, e.g., "lethal striker," "educated left foot," "clinical finish," "hairdryer treatment." However, given the number of people worldwide watching football matches and discussing them every week, it can be said that football language is not only a unique language but also, to a

considerable extent, a "public language" (Bergh & Ohlander, 2012b, pp. 14–16). Its principal expressions are household expressions to millions of people around the world. Words like "dribble" and "penalty kick" are existent in every used dictionary alike, and increasingly so over the past century (Bergh & Ohlander, 2019, p. 18). However, reading them on social media, for example, Twitter, is much more exciting, and thousands of comments are threading even days after the match. To conclude, there is no clear-cut distinction between football language and general language; football English shades off into ordinary English. The publicness of football-related language is further seen in the popularity of football-related metaphors in other non-football contexts or situations, for instance, "(to score) an own goal" and "moving the goalposts" in English and other languages.

It is worth mentioning here that other sports share most words that are principal to football context, e.g., "foul" and "hat trick," versus more football-specific expressions like "header" and "corner kick." This means that the principal football language is a portfolio of vocabulary expressions often shared by sports language; "football vocabulary in an exclusive sense is just, as it were, the top of the pyramid" (Bergh & Ohlander, 2012, p. 16). In addition, "football language is always in a state of constant change, replicating those changes in the game" (ibid.), of course, accompanied by new tactical developments in training or shooting, new directions, and rules from FIFA). For example, "half-backs" have long been replaced by "midfielders," a new Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology has been invented to complement the old-style refereeing, etc. Such lexical developments recurrently spread from football English to other football languages a century ago; for instance, the term VAR, presented in 2018, is now part of the world football vocabulary.

2. Analysis and Discussion

This paper applies Skopos Theory to the Arabic translations of selected football news on the online beIN Sports website. This news was initially presented in English, of course accommodating fans of football all over the world on English beIN website, revealing one culture then, but in beIN Arabic moved to be read by a different culture and foreign fans of these clubs.

The data of this paper are collected from the online beIN sport website. The data are consisted of three English football news from the English beIN sports website and their counterparts from the Arabic version website. The sports news covers three major football competitions: the Champions League, LaLiga, and the Calcio.

This paper examines how translators of sports language in general and football language in particular render this technical domain, considering which strategies may be adopted for the function and purpose of Skopos. Sports translators may adopt different strategies in the same sentence or text according to the TT function or purpose. The ST and TT texts analysis of Skopos Theory are presented in the following table:

Text No.	Source Text	Target Text	Notes
1	Atletico Madrid consolidated top spot in LaLiga	ابتعد أتلتيكو مدريد في صدارة الدوري الإسباني لكرة القدم	The translator took the ST intended message and gave a new rhetorical style by neglecting the literal translation of the verb “consolidated”, and presenting, instead, a totally different “which reflects أبتعد” equivalent “the meaning of the expression “consolidated top spot” altogether ”. Moreover, the translator used the explicitation strategy in translating into Arabic the common Spanish term “LaLiga” referring to the Spanish Football League.
	The visitors were given a let off	وكان الضيوف السباقين بالتسجيل	The translator here also considered the ST as a “source of information” and took the intended meaning of the idiomatic expression “given a let off” to render it into more simplified expression “التسجيل السباقين”
2	displace Blaugrana	ينتزع الصدارة من برشلونة	The translator in the second text preferred to use a more effective verb than to render a literal translation of the TT verb “displace”. Moreover, the translator rendered Barcelona nickname “Blaugrana” (it refers to colours of the team’s jersey: blau means blue and grana means deep red) into the team’s explicit name.
	a stunning 3-0 away win to top Group G.	فوزاً باهراً على مضيفه برشلونة الإسباني بثلاثية نظيفة لينتزع صدارة المجموعة السابعة	The translator here added further information “على مضيفه برشلونة الإسباني” in the TT to clarify that the ST adjectival phrase “away win” means win against the home

			team Barcelona. Another added information is describing the ST numerical result “3-0” with a TT adjectival phrase “ثلاثية”. Furthermore, the translator نظيفة transfer the group naming from the TT literal to numerical one taking into account what is common for the TT reader.
The Bianconeri had lost 2-0 in Turin in the reverse fixture	وكانت مباراة الذهاب في تورينو قد آلت لمصلحة البلوغرانا بهدفين نظيفين.		The ST function was reversed here by the translator. The ST sentence focused on the beat of the Bianconeri (the Juventus nickname (it refers to the team’s jersey: Bianco means white and nero means black) in the reverse fixture, while the translator made the TT focusing on the win of the Blaugrana.
piling further pressure on under-fire home coach Ronald Koeman, whose side are ninth in LaLiga.	معقداً الأمور على المدرب الهولندي رونالد كومان الذي يعاني الأمرين في مستهل مهمته الجديدة، إذ يقبع الفريق في المركز التاسع ضمن منافسات الدوري المحلي		Taking information from the ST, the translator reformulated the TT according to the TT function and purpose. The translator first rendered the idiomatic expressions “piling further pressure” and “under-fire” into more functional expressions “مقعداً الأمور” and “يعاني الأمرين” respectively. The also added a new information “مستهل مهمته الجديدة” to indicate that the coach is new in charge. Furthermore, the translator translated the ST sport-related term “side” into a general TT term “الفريق” which can be used in sport as well as other contexts.
as Clement Lenglet was deemed to have handled, following a	بعد أن لمس الفرنسي كليمان لانغليه الكرة بيده داخل المنطقة في لقطة تم التأكد منها عبر "في أي آر"		Here, the translator needed to elucidate the ST expression “ handled ” which means that the player deliberately touched the ball inside the box (penalty area)

	VAR check,		which the translator demonstrated بيده داخل المنطقة in the TT expression “لمس الكرة”
	winter champions	بطل الشتاء الشرفي	The translator here clarified that “ winter champions ” is not official title something “ honourary ” (for staying top at the halfway stage of the season) since this is well known for the TT readers, but it is not so for the TT readers.
	Romero stooping to nod the ball past Gianluigi Donnarumma from Robin Gosens' delivery.	بكرة رأسية للأرجنتيني كريستيان روميرو الذي حولها في شباك جانلويجي دوناروما إثر تمريرة طويلة متقنة من الألماني روبن غوسنس.	The ST writer depicted the event using the ST syntactic, semantic and lexical features to achieve the perspective ST function. Similarly, the translator used the TT contrastive features to achieve the TT function.
3	Ilicic firing a penalty beneath Donnarumma after Franck Kessie had caught him in the face with a raised arm.	نتيجة خطأ في المنطقة المحرمة من الإيفواري فرانك كيسييه الذي ضرب بكوعه السلوفيني يوسيب إيليشيتش، فاحتسبت ركلة جزاء للضيوف انبرى لها الأخير بنجاح في مرمى دوناروما	The ST writer began the sentence with “ firing a penalty ” and scoring the third goal, and ended it with the foul led to the penalty. In contrast, the translator preferred to reverse the order with more dynamic details.
	Romero slipped in Zapata - who had hit the post with a header in his side's previous attack - and the forward rifled a left-footed shot beyond Donnarumma.	وكان قريباً من هدف ثالث لو لم يقف القائم بوجه رأسية الكولومبي دوفان زاباتا الذي عوض هذه الفرصة بهدف بعد دقائق معدودة بعدما وصلته الكرة على الجهة اليسرى لمنطقة الجزاء بتمريرة من روميرو، فسددتها من زاوية صعبة في الشباك	The ST described a main event which is the way of scoring the third goal, and within this event there is a secondary event which is the missing of a previous attack by the same player. The TT translator first described the event of missing the attacked and then moved immediately into the successful attack.

Table: ST and TT to Skopos Theory in the Data

To sum up, the analysis of the ST and TT texts of the sports website shows that literal translation as a strategy is more dominant and appropriate, represented by direct translation, direct transfer, etc., in times and adaptation and paraphrasing, as creative micro-approaches in other times. Both work together for Skopos's function and purpose, emphasizing audience attraction and entertainment.

Conclusion

The present study has shed some light on the Skopos Theory as produced by Vermeer. It concludes that this theory has been considerably applied in translating sports texts from one language into another. Besides, the study shows that the translator has used various strategies and tools to achieve the function and purpose of the translation process. Though criticised by some scholars as "dethroning" or unfaithful to the source language, especially when one wants to apply it to literary texts which Vermeer doubts have any Skopos, the present study demonstrates how this theory can empower translators by giving them greater flexibility in tackling their translations. So they can be producers of their text and not reproducers of someone else's text.

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