How Much “Translation” Is in Localization and Global Adaptation?
Exploring Complex Intersemiotic Action on the Grounds of Skopos Theory as a Conceptual Framework

Olaf Immanuel Seel, Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to contribute to the discourse by clarifying the extent to which complex intersemiotic action can still be regarded as translation. This will be shown by two of its major representatives (i.e., localization and [global] adaptation), both of which constitute contested issues in translation studies research with regard to their conceptual belonging. Functional translation theory will be employed to achieve this aim. Employing functional translation theory will show that the decisive criterion for the conceptual affiliation of any intersemiotic action to translation is whether or not it constitutes a predominantly language-based text-to-text transfer. Finally, given its successful implementation, this paper proposes functionalist skopos theory as one possible interdisciplinary methodological tool for intersemiotic action that is not only useful for translation studies but could also be useful, if accordingly adapted, for other neighboring disciplines, such as, for example, adaptation studies.

KEYWORDS

Adaptation Studies, Conceptual Categorization, Functional Translation Theory, Global Adaptation, Intersemiotics, Localization, Non-Textuality, Textuality, Translation Studies

1. INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge that, given our (post-)global age and its technological advances, new forms and modes of intracultural and intralingual communication have emerged. The social media, the email, video-conferences, SMS, just to name a few, have been part of our everyday life since around the advent of the 21st century. New technologies and globalization have also brought about changes in intercultural and interlingual communication, especially in professional intercultural communication. In the latter context, and since the late 20th century, one of the most prominent new text types in everyday life has been that of ‘localization’. Additionally, a very interesting and frequent case of intersemiotic transfer in everyday life is the one of ‘adaptation’, which, though much older, is, nevertheless, fostered by globalization and new technological progress. In both cases, translation
studies research has led to a contentious discussion with regard to whether they have to be regarded as translational actions or not. A short overview of these discussions will be presented here in later sections of this article. As such, this article seeks to contribute to the discourse by shedding more light on this issue by utilizing a theoretically founded methodological approach. We posit that this will assist in determining the compliance (or not) of localization and adaptation with translation.

As functional theory has explicitly pointed out, translation has to be regarded as a text-based activity: “The source unit of a translation is always a text” (Reiß & Vermeer, 2014, p. 108; Reiß & Vermeer, 1991, p. 120). This implies that both the process and the product of translational activity have to be text-based. However, as will be shown later on, both localization and adaptation seem to challenge the conventional notion of text. Given this hypothesis, it would be useful for the methodological and theoretical purvey that follows to have a reference point on a specific definition of ‘text’. This definition will comply with the functional approach implemented and is also generally accepted in translation studies. We therefore propose using a textpragmatic definition. Accordingly, a ‘text’ is “a (more or less) complex, functional unit of written or oral utterances with a specific content and communicative intention that fulfills a specific communicative function in a given situation” (Göpferich, 1995, p. 56). Though without explicit reference, this definition implies the potential additional use of other secondary means of language-based human communication, such as, tables, figures, images, symbols, paralanguage, kinesics, which may also be digital. However, wider semiotic entities with no common discursive orientation in everyday human communication, as for example any kind of movies/films, drawings, and music are not included.

As it will be shown later in this article (cf. 3.1 and 3.2), localization and adaptation are both characterized by a semiotic complexity which is due to its multimodality. Both these complex intersemiotic actions rely progressively on the dynamic replacement of linguistic modes, as, for example, on the replacement of verbal with non-verbal language and vice versa and/or on the replacement of verbal with also extralinguistic language (e.g., images, symbols) and the reverse. In addition, adaptation has many different conceptual manifestations (Bastin, 2011). Adaptation as ‘local adaptation’ is possible on the level of word or utterance, and is, as such, semiotically less complex. In contrast, adaptation in its ‘global’ form, known as ‘genre-switching’, consists of a more complex phenomenon. One can differentiate between two different types, the ‘reductive’ one and the ‘expansive’ one. In both cases, adaptation can be equated with a ‘changing of the text type’, which may also lead to a function that differs from that of the source text. Its reductive type refers to adapting, for example a novel into a children’s book or an Ancient Greek drama into a comic book (cf. Seel, 2015). Particularly extreme, however, are the semiotic transformations needed with regard to its expansive type which entails a shift of semiotic medium, such as from text to screen or from text to image and vice versa.

In view of this, the realization of both localization and adaptation entails progressive minor to major intertextual, intermodal and intermedial diversifications and transformations. Thus, it is clear that localization, and especially global adaptation as complex transfer actions, entails an explosive intersemiotic potential that challenges traditional text pragmatics as well as traditional translation theory. They do so, as they progressively seem to not comply with the textpragmatic definition of text and with what is conventionally assumed to be ‘translation proper’, that is, interlingual translation as an “interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” in Jacobson’s sense (1959, p. 233).

In view of the above, the following research questions arise: How does localization and global adaptation as complex intersemiotic actions (and products) fit into the afore-mentioned textpragmatic definition, that is, to what extent can they be regarded as being text-based? And, hence, to what extent can they be regarded as translational actions (and products)? And, most importantly, do they both belong to the realms of translation studies or do they find their conceptual affiliation in other, neighboring disciplines, such as for example adaptation studies?

Against this background, the overarching rationale of this paper is a translational one. Both localization as well as global adaptation as genre-switching seem to be conceptually positioned
between the two disciplines of translation studies and adaptation studies. Thus, by answering these research questions, the central aims of this paper are to determine to what extent these two complex intersemiotic actions can be conceptualized as translational activities and products and, hence, if and to which extent they pertain to the realms of translation studies. In this context, we will demonstrate that employing functionalist skopos theory in translation studies has the potential to theoretically and methodologically ground the intersemiotic phenomena of localization and global adaptation in both its manifestations, the reductive and the expansive type, and, as such, to give answer to this central aim. Finally, our prospective findings will reinforce the argument that functionalist skopos theory may be used as an all-round interdisciplinary tool for intersemiotic translational action which may also be helpful for other neighboring disciplines, as, for example, for adaptation studies.

In the following section, using the work of Reiß and Vermeer (1984) and skopos theory, the dominant rules of functional translation theory will be presented to form the theoretical, methodological and definitional framing upon which these two complex intersemiotic actions in all its manifestations will be then examined.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMING: CENTRAL RULES OF FUNCTIONALIST GENERAL TRANSLATION THEORY


We begin with a short overview of Reiβ’ and Vermeer’s five of six central rules of general translation theory (Reiß & Vermeer, 1991, p. 119, as translated by Nord, 2014, p. 107) out of which skopos theory is generated:

1. A *translatum* is determined by its *skopos*. […]
2. A *translatum* is an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language. […]
3. A *translatum* is a unique, irreversible mapping of a source-culture offer of information. […]
4. A *translatum* must be coherent in itself. […]
5. A *translatum* must be coherent with the source text. […]

The sixth (6) rule posits that “[t]hese rules are interdependent and linked hierarchically in the order set out above” (Reiß & Vermeer, 1991, p. 119; Reiß & Vermeer, 2014, p. 107). The flexibility of this approach is grounded in the fact that the overarching rule is the ‘skopos’ which accounts for and justifies any top-down diversification in the four rules that follow. Thus, as it can be seen and established, according to general translation theory and skopos theory, ‘translation proper’ (see above) has to be perceived as only one possible form of translational action. This is because these rules obviously pave the way for flexible skopos-dependent changes, alterations and diversifications with regard to the source text in the making of the target text. These changes, alterations and diversifications are always target-culture-dependent, as the skopos is per se target text-oriented and, as such, target culture-oriented. In this context, dependent on the skopos, the range of information transferred from source to target may vary accordingly. This undoubtedly holds true for the transfer from source to target of every kind of discourse pattern, that is, verbal, non-verbal and extraverbal ones, and even for the text type itself. Thus, it is all too evident that, dependent on the skopos of a translation, the target text may lose its coherence with the source text, whereby the gamut of the coherence may range from ‘very strong’ to ‘very faint’. At the same time, though the target text can still comply with rules
(2), (3), (4) and (5). However, it is important here to point out that there has to be to some extent coherence with the source text, even if it is a minimal one.

Hence, according to the briefly analyzed Reiß’ and Vermeer’s functionally oriented general translation theory, the ‘fidelity’ of the target text to the source text can vary according to the skopos of the translation. Nevertheless, regardless of the degree of the coherence of the target text with the source text, the former is regarded as still being a skopos-dependent translation. As such, the predominance of the source text in the transfer action is downgraded and made relative.

In the following sections, functional translation theory as formulated by Reiss and Vermeer will be applied on localization and adaptation in its semiotically more complex global form in order to answer the questions raised in the introductory section of this article and to reach its aims.

3. TWO COMPLEX INTERSEMIOTIC ACTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF SKOPOS THEORY

The first complex intersemiotic action under scrutiny is the one of localization.

3.1 Localization

There are quite a few definitions of the term ‘localization’ in translation studies literature (cf. for example Gerhardt, 1998, p. 213; O’Hagan & Ashworth, 2002, p.66; Pym, 2004, pp. 2-3; Göpferich, 2002, p. 335; Forstner, 2000, p. 164; Cronin, 2003, p. 62). However, we prefer citing a definition of localization provided by an international localization industry player, that is, ‘Gala Global’. We do so because from a practical point of view it very clearly refers to the variety of the multimodal semiotic diversifications that have to be realized in these intersemiotic transfer actions. Hence, (Gala Global, n.d., para. 1-2): “Localization […] is the process of adapting a product or content to a specific locale or market. […] The localization process may also include:

- Adapting design and layout to properly display translated text in the language of the locale
- Adapting sorting functions to the alphabetical order of a specific locale
- Changing formats for date and time, addresses, numbers, currencies, etc. for specific target locales
- Adapting graphics to suit the expectations and tastes of a target locale
- Modifying content to suit the tastes and consumption habits of a target locale”

For some translation studies scholars, localization is mainly placed in the context of “software, manuals, user instructions” (Rike, 2013, p. 73; cf. also Pym, 2004; Mazur, 2009). However, translation studies research has been shown that localization may also be used with regard to products in the marketing domain (Forstner, 2000; Göpferich 2002; Seel, 2008). Essential to both approaches, in the ideal case, is that the localization is realized on the basis of an internationalized neutral English source version (Gerhardt, 1998, p. 213).

But what is important in the context of this paper is that the multi-modal, multi-semiotic nature of this transfer action obviously involves to a lesser extent translation proper in Jacobson’s sense. This kind of transfer can be regarded in a wider sense ‘adaptive’, in that it envisages “[m]odifying content to suit the tastes and consumption habits of other markets” (Gala Global, n.d., para. 2). But, most of all, it also comprises transfer techniques that involve extra-verbal adaptations (graphics, design and layout) and verbal adaptation of technical information (currencies, units of measure, local formats for dates, addresses, and phone numbers, local regulations and legal requirements). And, of course, the whole process of target culture-oriented adaptation may very likely also involve intersemiotic multimodal changes from the verbal mode to the non-verbal mode and vice versa, given that what is expressed in one culture verbally may have to be expressed in another culture in a non-verbal manner (Reiβ & Vermeer, 1991, pp. 33-34). In addition, localization may also necessitate the changing of
the medium, as, for example, internationalized English source text is programmed to be localized in the target culture in the form of an advertising street poster, a brochure or a leaflet. The overarching question at this point is: Is this still translation? As of now, translation studies research does not clearly answer this question. The contradiction in translation studies becomes evident when for Pym (2004, pp. 2-4), Göpferich (2002, p. 336), and Cronin (2003, p. 62) localization is translation, while, for example, O’Hagan and Ashworth (2002, p. 69) plead for a differentiation between translation and localization because, for the latter researcher, translation constitutes only one sub-action of the localization process. This differentiation is also claimed by practitioners, for example, Gala Global (gala-global, n.d., para. 1) which claims that “[t]ranslation is only one of several elements of the localization process”. However, we argue in alignment with the former research attitude in translation studies that, on the grounds of functionally oriented general translation theory and skopos theory, its main constituent, the localization process as a whole has to also be considered as translation. This is because localization fully complies with the five central rules of functionally oriented general translation theory. Furthermore, the intersemiotic action of localization does result in a ‘text’ that is still in accordance with its conventional textpragmatic definition as outlined above. Let us have a quick look at all this:

1. ‘A translatum is determined by its skopos’: In the case of localization, the skopos is to produce a multi-semiotic target text whose function is mainly informative (and in the case of marketing localization appellative and/or manipulative). It does so on the basis of an internationalized source text most usually conceived in the English language (cf. Göpferich, 2002, p. 339). This multi-semiotic target text is tailored to the needs and profile of specific target receivers of a specific target culture. In these terms, the functions of both texts are not differing from each other, as both the English internationalized source and the localized target text distinguish themselves by their inherent informative and/or appellative/manipulative function (cf. Seel, 2008, pp. 168-181). On these grounds, localization usually implies functional constancy between the source text and the target text. In regard to this, localization easily complies with the first rule of functional translation theory.

2. ‘A translatum is an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language’: The selective procedure, by which the foremost adaptive transfer of multisemiotic and multimodal elements of the source text to the target text is governed, is that of the target text skopos. This allows for any target text-dependent transformations in relation to the source text by omitting, diversifying, replacing, etc. any of its materials. In that, localization may constitute a distantiation of the target text from its source that has to be considered as being, in terms of semiotic distance, a medium one. This is because the neutrality of the English source text does not imply, as a general rule, radical diversifications. However, the localized target text is indeed ‘based on an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language’. On these grounds, localization also fully complies with the second rule of functional general translation theory.

3. ‘A translatum is a unique, irreversible mapping of a source-culture offer of information’: This rule also fits localization, as the skopos-dependent transformations realized when transferring the multisemiotic potential from the internationalized source text to the target-culturally molded target text, if back-‘transferred’, would not be congruent with the internationalized source text. Thus, it is evident that localization complies with the third rule of functional general translation theory as well.

4. ‘A translatum must be coherent in itself’: If producing a successfully localized product means having complied with the first three rules of functional translation theory, it is all too obvious that localization as a multisemiotic and multimodal transfer product, if professionally realized, has to be coherent in itself and, as such, it also complies with the fourth rule of functional general translation theory.
5. ‘A translatum must be coherent with the source text’: This last of the five central rules is interdependently related with the previous four. In the case of localization, its coherence with the internationalized source text is to a certain extent given, as, mostly due to functional constancy of both texts, not every single semiotic element of the source always has to be completely altered. Main data (i.e., the central idea of the source version, its main linguistic frame or even, especially in marketing localization, extra-linguistic elements, e.g., images) may often be kept unchanged in the target version. The extent of these diversifications depends, of course, on the distance of the two cultures involved in the multimodal intersemiotic transfer process (cf. Seel, 2008, pp. 168-170). In these terms, one could claim that, dependent on the text type to be produced (e.g., software, manuals, user instructions, marketing texts) and according to the ‘semiotic distance’ of the both the source and the target text (cf. above 3.), localization generally shows a medium coherence with its internationalized English source text.

On these grounds, one can claim that localization is a predominantly text-based multimodal intersemiotic transfer action that absolutely complies conceptually with the five central rules of skopos theory of functional translation studies, as well as with the textpragmatic definition of text given used herein. As such and in spite of the multitude of intrinsic adaptive transfer strategies needed for its realization, localization as a whole has to be regarded as a complex translational action.

3.2 Adaptation

The second intersemiotic action under discussion, namely the one of ‘adaptation’ in both its dominant manifestations and sub-manifestations, goes far back in translation studies literature. Since the times of Cicero and Horace and reaching until today, there has always been a division between adaptation and translation and a dispute on the extent to which an adaptive action can still be regarded as a translational action or not. To present this in Bastin’s (2011, p. 3) words

*a*adaptation may be understood as a set of translative interventions which result in a text that is not generally accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text. As such, the term may embrace numerous vague notions such as appropriation, domestication, imitation, rewriting, and so on. Strictly speaking, the concept of adaptation requires recognition of translation as non-adaptation, a somehow more constrained mode of transfer. For this reason, the history of adaptation is parasitic on historical concepts of translation.

Nord (1997) prefers not to use the term ‘adaptation’ “at all, believing that the concept of translation as such can be stretched to cover all types of transformation or intervention, as long as ‘the target text effect corresponds to the intended target text functions’ (Nord 1997, p. 93), be the latter those of the source text or different” (Bastin, 2011, p. 5). However, though clearly applicable to local adaptation, Nord seems to not to take into account ‘global adaptation’ (cf. 3.2.1), its semiotically complex counterpart. Others distinguish between these two actions, as does the Quebec poet and translator Michel Garneau, using the term “tradaptation” to express their close relationship (Bastin, 2011). For other scholars, adaptation is, to some extent, a disputed concept that has been criticized on the one hand as “an abusive form of translation” (Raw, 2012, p. 21) but also supported on the other hand “if a translator systematically refuses to adapt, it will eventually lead to a weakening of a target text” (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 41). Other translation studies scholars take a conciliatory stance and see adaptation as “translative interventions which result in a text not generally accepted as a translation, but nevertheless recognized as representing a source text” (Bastin, 2011, p. 5). In any case, what is important in the current context, is that only “very few scholars [...] have attempted a serious analysis of the phenomenon of adaptation and its relation to translation [and to investigate
This article endeavours to contribute towards resolving this controversy.

### 3.2.1 Local versus Global Adaptation

A closer look at adaptation reveals that it is a communicative transfer process between a source and a target that can be viewed from two transfer perspectives. The first perspective is the one which, due to situational differences between the source text and the target text, regards adaptation as a transfer process that focuses on specific target text-intrinsic alterations and moderations which are realized predominantly on the pragmatic and socio-cultural level of the target text. Translation studies literature refers to this form as “local adaptation” (Bastin, 2011, p. 5) and has to be regarded as one possible strategy among others in the context of translation, as has been shown above in the context of localization (cf. also Volkova & Zubenina, 2015). The second perspective of adaptation is the one when the transfer process refers to the target text as a whole and is due to extrinsic factors of the source text and entails more extensive transformations. This adaptation procedure is called “global adaptation” (Bastin, 2011, p. 5) and can be done intersemiotically, as well as intrasemiotically when, for example, “adapting a novel for a play” (Volkova & Zubenina, 2015, p. 91). The most common reasons for implementing either local adaptation or global adaptation or both of them are, according to Bastin (2011, p. 5), the following ones: (1) “cross-code breakdown” (there are no lexical or any other kinds of equivalents in the target language), (2) “situational or cultural inadequacy” (contexts and views of a source text cannot be properly applied to the target text), (3) “genre switching” (a need to switch from one genre to another), (4) “disruption of a communication process” (a need to address a different type of readership) (cf. also Volkova & Zubenina 2015, p. 90). Obviously, reasons (1), (2) and (4) trigger out local adaptation and may be interdependent and/or are combined, while reason (3) clearly promotes global adaptation which may also include some of the factors that trigger out local adaptations or even all of them. It goes without saying that local adaptation as a special form of translational technique is used to cope with a particular source text-intrinsic hindrance that is incompatible with the target text for one of the three aforementioned reasons ((1), (2) and (4)) and, as such, has to be ‘eliminated’. On the contrary, the existence of reason (3), the one which is commonly known as ‘genre-switching’, makes alterations and modifications necessary that are more ‘strategic’ (cf. Bastin, 2011, p. 5) and lead to an extensive reconstruction of the whole target text, “by changing its purpose, functions or impact on the target audience” (Bastin, 2011, p. 46). The practice of local adaptation as (1), (2) and (4) is, hence, a clearly translational one and, as outlined above, has been discussed extensively (cf. Chesterman & Wagner, 2002; Chang, 2009). It evidently complies with the textpragmatic definition of text given in the introductory section of this article and, therefore, will not be discussed in this paper. In contrast, the practice of global adaptation in the form of ‘genre-switching’ is the core of this section, as it is not entirely clear whether it complies with the textpragmatic definition of text given. As such, the issue to be examined is whether it has to be regarded as a ‘translational’ action and therefore falls under the theoretical umbrella of translation studies, or if it conceptually belongs to the realms of neighboring disciplines, such as for example, adaptation studies.

### 3.2.2 Global Adaptation as Genre-Switching

Global adaptation as genre-switching is also binary. On the one hand, it can be defined from a more reductive point of view “as the practice of transferring a printed source text from one literary genre to another genre” (Balodis, 2012, p. 24). Thus, genre-switching would be, for example, the intersemiotic (or intrasemiotic) dramatization of a novel. However, from a wider angle and more expansive point of view, adaptation as genre-switching may also refer on the other hand to all forms of transformations involving a metamorphosis […] from one medium into another (which can include multiple media types), a transmission that, by definition, is a creative interpretation of the prototype – irrespective
of how loyal the adapter claims the palimpsest may be. However, due to differences in the use of aesthetic forms, and hence to differences in the use of sign systems, it is problematic to ground a discussion of adaptation on notions of accurate or loyal versions. By virtue of this formal diversity, there will always be divergences – always ‘something more’, ‘something other’. (Svendson, 2015, p. 223, with reference to Hutcheon, 2006)

It is obvious that this definition is at the core of this paper, as it raises the question of whether or not and to which extent general translation theory and its functional approach can be successfully applied to the practice of global adaptation. We examine this as genre-switching in both its dimension, in the one that refers to switching from one textual medium to another, for example, a dramatic adaptation of prose, as well as in the other one that refers to switching from a textual medium to a non-textual medium, for example, a visual adaptation of a novel. While the former implies a deviance of text function, the latter implies an obvious distantiation from the conventional textpragmatic definition of ‘text’, as outlined earlier.

3.2.3 ‘Reductive’ and ‘Expansive’ Genre-Switching and Functional Translation Theory

In this section we investigate the agreement of both the ‘reductive’ and the ‘expansive’ version of genre-switching as interlingual/intercultural intersemiotic transfer actions with skopos theory and with the textpragmatic definition of text employed in this article. In this context, we argue that only the reductive version of genre-switching complies with this definition and the five main rules of functionally oriented general translation theory. Therefore, this intersemiotic transfer action has to be considered as translation, while, conversely, the second and more expansive conceptualization of adaptation does not comply with this definition and these rules. Hence, the latter cannot be regarded as a translational intersemiotic action. On this basis, we posit that only the former of these two intersemiotic transfer actions applies to translation studies. The reasons why this is the case are buttressed by relating both the reductive and the expansive conceptualization of adaptation as genre-switching to the five central rules of functionally oriented general translation theory. Let us have a quick look at this:

(1) ‘A translatum is determined by its skopos’: In the reductive case of adaptation as genre-switching, the main skopos that underlies the transfer process is to produce a different target text type than the source text type. This is for example the case when switching from novel to drama, from poetry to prose, from drama to comic, etc. and vice versa. This shift in function is absolutely legitimate from the point of view of skopos theory and its first rule. This also applies to the expansive type of adaptation as genre-switching, where the skopos is to realize an intersemiotic transfer of a ‘text’ into a ‘non-text’ or vice versa. Thus, in spite of the fact that this implies an extensive distantiation of the target skopos from the source skopos (which applies to both types of adaptation as genre-switching), both the reductive and the expansive version of adaptation as genre-switching comply with the uppermost rule of functionally oriented general translation theory, as the changing of the skopos is regarded by this theoretical approach as one possible option.

(2) ‘A translatum is an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language’: It is dependent on the skopos by which the target text/product is conditioned which specific information of the source text/product is to be transferred to the target text/product. In both cases of adaptation as genre-switching discussed, this entails a global semiotic re-creation of the original. With regard to the reductive adaptation as genre-switching, as, for example, the dramatization of a novel, language in prose has to be replaced by target culture-specific dialogic stage language thoroughly enriched with paralinguistic and kinesic features, and where descriptions in prose may, for example, have to be creatively replaced in the dramatic text by extralinguistic elements. This would possibly be the case actualized by using the scenery, or paratextual elements as for example with stage directions. This
entails extensive moderations, omissions, replacements and/or condensing of the information load of the source text/product. This also goes for the aspects of narration, time and space. With regard to the expansive version of adaptation as genre-switching, this involves a similar transfer of similar semiotic qualities, while, additionally, the specific features of the changed medium demand even more extensive moderations, omissions, replacements and condensing. Thus, for example, where the written symbolic conventional language does not contain the indexical and iconic language that films have (Svendson, 2015, p. 221). In terms of the semiotic distance of the target text/product from the source text/product, the reductive versions of adaptation as genre-switching are great but the expansive version of adaptation as genre-switching has to be considered even greater. However, this necessary selection of source text/product information is conditioned and determined by the hierarchically uppermost rule of the skopos’ intersemiotic transfer. Hence, both the reductive and expansive version of adaptation as genre-switching also fully comply with the second rule of skopos theory.

(3) ‘A translatum is a unique, irreversible mapping of a source-culture offer of information’: Furthermore, it goes without saying that the skopos-conditioned transformations realized in both the reductive and the expansive case of adaptation as genre-switching involving expansion, condensation and reduction of the semiotic qualities of the source text/product inevitably lead to new semiotic products that are more or less radically transformed. Thus, if back-‘transferred’, by no means do they depict their informational load reversibly in relation to the source text/product. Consequently, here too both versions of adaptation as genre-switching under discussion undeniably comply with the third rule of functionally oriented general translation theory.

(4) ‘A translatum must be coherent in itself’: As it is the case with translation proper in general where the target text produced in accordance to rules (1), (2) and (3) has to be coherent in itself as a textual entity and, as such, absolutely intelligible by its target receivers, both the reductive and expansive forms of adaptation as genre-switching have to be coherent in itself in order to legitimate their existences. In these terms, it is obvious that, if rules (1), (2) and (3) are realized consistently by intersemiotic transfer experts, then both forms of adaptations under discussion also comply with the fourth rule of functionally oriented general translation theory.

(5) ‘A translatum must be coherent with the source text’: This last of the main five rules of general translation theory refers to the relationship of the target text with its source text and thus the concept of fidelity or infidelity is crucial (Reiß & Vermeer, 1991, p. 114). In accordance with rule (1) and (2), both types of adaptations under discussion inevitably manifest merely reduced fidelity with their source texts/products (the expansive version even more) on the semiotic level of information, of language and of extra-language. However, coherence with these semiotic levels still exists. Moving on to the textual level of coherence, however, the situation changes dramatically. Given that translation as a product is by definition a text-based activity, the last rule implies that the target text has to be, even widely defined, by all means a text in the conventional sense, in order to manifest even a faint level of coherence with its source text. Thus, it seems only reasonable to deduce that the perfect compliance with this rule can only be achieved as long as the transfer action is also based on a transfer from text-to-text (‘text’ as defined in the textpragmatic sense at the outset of this paper), even when one or both of these texts involved is/are a multimodal one(s). Let us see whether this is the case for adaptation as genre-switching in both its versions.

With regard to the reductive version of adaptation as genre-switching, one can easily conclude that the envisaged product of transfer is still a ‘text’, even if it is characterized by multimodality, for example, written language, spoken language, and/or image. Thus, in spite of the different medium platform or channel of the reductive version of adaptation as genre-switching, the transfer realized is a text-to-text transfer in the conventional sense and in compliance with the textpragmatic definition of text used in this article. Conversely, in the case of the expansive type of adaptation as genre-switching,
its special transfer features are even more complex, as the main skopos of this transfer process is to create a multimodal target product which consists of a non-textual medium. This happens when, for example, prose, drama, poetry is transferred into a visual medium, such as film, video game, web series, or vice versa. In view of this, one can deduce that only the reductive, genuinely textually based adaptation as genre-switching complies with the fifth rule of skopos theory and, as such, with the textpragmatic definition of text given, while the expansive form of adaptation as genre-switching does not. Consequently, only the reductive version of adaptation as genre-switching can be regarded as being a purely translational action. In contrast, the expansive version of adaptation as genre-switching, where the intersemiotic transfer is realized from a text-based medium into a non-text-based medium (or vice versa), has to be regarded as not pertaining to the realms of translation studies.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on these findings revealed by implying skopos theory, the research questions posed in the introductory section of this article have been answered. Localization, local adaptation and global adaptation as genre-switching in its reductive form have to be regarded as translational actions. As such, they fall under the theoretical framing of Reiß’ and Vermeer’s general translation theory, as they comply with the textpragmatic definition of text used in this article and they can be regarded as pertaining to translation studies. Given the fact that localization and adaptation as genre-switching more or less cover the two ends of a gamut of possible complex intersemiotic transfer actions, it is very likely that the above conclusion also applies to other complex intersemiotic text-to-text-based transfer actions. These may include, for example, transcreation, (lyrics) tradaptation, transmutation and every other ‘radical’ transformative technique, as one can deduce that they may also comply with all rules of skopos theory, though this has still to be examined through further research. Accordingly, and as demonstrated above, the point where the intersemiotic transfer does not comply with general translation theory, skopos theory and the textpragmatic definition of text used in this article is where intersemiotic transfer as part of translation studies ends and, obviously, adaptation studies begin. This has been shown through the implementation of skopos theory on the expansive form of adaptation as genre-switching. What we established is that this complex, intersemiotic transfer action cannot be regarded as a text-to-text operation, which then allows us to deduce that it cannot be regarded as translational action. Hence, as a complex intersemiotic transfer action it does not pertain to translation studies and must seek its conceptual, theoretical framing in adaptation studies, a field which is concerned with the “transport of form and/or content from a source to a result in a media context” (Bruhn et al., 2013, p. 9).

Grounded in the aforementioned, the author has attempted to show that functional translation theory through the medium of skopos theory assists in determining a central conceptual factor that separates translation studies from neighboring disciplines, as, for example, adaptation studies. Based on Göpferich’s (1995, 56) definition of ‘text’, this can be roughly outlined as shown in Table 1.

By eliminating from its conceptual apparatus the problematic notion of ‘fidelity’ as the uppermost aim of intercultural transfer actions and substituting it with the concept of ‘skopos’, functional translation theory still manifests, in spite of the criticism directed against it (Kohlmayer, 1988; Chestermann, 2010), a very useful theoretical and practical instrument capable of conceptually

Table 1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSLATION STUDIES</th>
<th>ADAPTATION STUDIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Every form of (multimodal) intersemiotic text-to-text transfer</td>
<td>Every form of (multimodal) intersemiotic text-to-non-text, non-text-to-text, non-text-to-non-text transfer</td>
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framing but also practically guiding a wide range of complex intersemiotic actions in the wider realms of intersemiotic transfer.

Finally, based on these arguments, we put forward the functionally oriented approach of general translation theory of Reiß and Vermeer as a basic and all-round interdisciplinary methodological tool for any intersemiotic action. Hence, we believe that it is not only useful for translation studies but that it could also be a great conceptual support and theoretical and practical tool for adaptation studies if accordingly adapted and put into the discipline’s services. With this in mind, the five of the six rules of functionally-oriented general translation theory could be easily adapted to the needs of adaptation studies as follows (adaptive alterations made by us are italicized): (1) ‘An adaptatum is determined by its skopos’, (2) ‘an adaptatum is an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language’, (3) ‘an adaptatum is a unique, irreversible mapping of a source-culture offer of information’, (4) ‘an adaptatum must be coherent in itself’, (5) ‘an adaptatum must be coherent with its source’ (not ‘source text’!), and (6) ‘These rules are interdependent and linked hierarchically in the order set out above.’.

The functional approach to translation studies has much to offer. It is hoped that the adaptation proposed can contribute to the interchange and collaboration between two neighboring disciplines, as it is the case with translation studies and adaptation studies.
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**ENDNOTES**

1 Another prominent intersemiotic transfer type which should be mentioned is the one of ‘transcreation’ (cf. e.g., Gaballo, 2012; Rike, 2013; Pedersen, 2019).

2 Obviously, adaptation has to be regarded as pre-globalized text type. However, globalization and new technologies undoubtedly foster its genesis and distribution even more.
Reiß & Vermeer (1991, p. 120): “Ausgangseinheit einer Translation ist immer ein Text.”

Both intersemiotic transfer types under discussion have been chosen deliberately among other intersemiotic actions (e.g., transcreation and tradaption) because they seem to be positioned at the two ends of an increasing gamut of complex intersemiotic transfer actions and, as such, constitute the two poles of the complexity one can encounter in intersemiotic transfer actions. By choosing both these transfer types, this paper intends to cover an as wide as possible range of intersemiotic actions (and, thus, includes also ‘transcreation’, ‘transmutation’, etc.).

A contrastive analysis of more theoretical approaches in translation theory, such as the descriptive or the hermeneutical one, would be of course also fruitful. However, this is due to space constraints not feasible and remains as a desideratum for further research.


In the context of skopos theory, we use ‘skopos’ for ‘what the text is for’, and ‘function’ (as a noun) is in this context the ‘internal purpose of a text’ which may be informative, persuasive or expressive or a combination of two or all of them.

Cf. Nord (1988, p. 32) and her less open functionalist approach where she claims the ‘bilateral loyalty’ of the translator to the target receiver by being committed to producing a functionally correct target text, as well as to the author of the source text by keeping the original intention of the latter unaltered.

At this juncture, it seems interesting to quickly mention Justa Holz-Mänttäri, another seminal functional theorist. This pioneer of functional translation theory, who developed the Theory of Translational Action (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984), a backbone of Reiß’ and Vermeer’s general translation theory and of the functional approach in translation studies, is fully in line with Vermeer and Reiss, but goes even further in her open conceptualization of translation. Thus, according to her, translational action may but doesn’t necessarily have to make use of a distinct source text of a specific source culture for the production of a target text in the target culture, as “the translator is someone whose role it is to transfer for someone else a text from one culture to another, whereby he may make use of a given text from the source culture to be transferred to the target culture” (Vermeer, 1992, p. 20, our translation and our emphasis, with reference to Holz-Mänttari, 1990).

Holz-Mänttäri’s approach is completely void of source text dependency, and as such facilitates every possible diversification of the source text in favor of the target text. In spite of the similarity with Reiß and Vermeer, it seems more productive for the scope of this paper to ground the analysis of the intersemiotic actions under discussion on a theoretical approach that is less extreme and that includes the source text in its conceptualization, even if its importance for the target text production is downgraded, as shown above.

The author of this article believes that a critical account on skopos theory would exceed the scope and argumentative boundaries of this paper. However, in order to have access to the critique directed against it in the past, cf., for example, Kohlmayer (1988) and Chesterman (2010).


Since then, more research was conducted to analyze this ‘tenuous nature of borderline’ (cf. Cattrysse, 2014 from a descriptive point of view and, however it does so more with a focus on adaptation studies; Doorslaer & Raw, 2016 with a focus on the differences between the neighbouring disciplines, i.e., translation studies and adaptation studies, and on their common grounds and borderlines).

Olaf Immanuel Seel is a native bilingual in German and Greek. He also speaks English, French, some Spanish and Italian. He holds a B.A. in German Language and Literature, in English Language and Literature, in Theatre Science and a Ph.D. in Translation Studies. As a Ph.D. candidate, he was awarded the annual The Ryochi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Research Grant of the Tokyo Foundation, the Sylff. His doctorate was published in the series “Studien zur Translation” of the renowned German publishing company Stauffenburg. He is also the author of “An Introduction to General Translation. A Functional Approach […]”, published as an e-book in Greek. His publications extend within a range of fields and sub-fields, including Intercultural Communication, Translation Studies, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Localization, Terminology, Greek and German literature, Foreign Language Teaching. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Language and Translation (Greek/German) at the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting of The Ionian University of Corfu, Greece. As a translator, his working languages are German, Greek and English. He was awarded the 2020 EST Translation Prize for his German-Greek translation of Hans J. Vermeers and Katharina Reiß’ seminal monograph “Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie”.