Media Interpretation Challenges
Obstacles and Pitfalls

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Abstract

The paper highlights the challenges of media interpreting within the interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistics, interpreting and the *Skopos* theory. It is mainly an analysis of linguistic difficulties in media conference interpreting, based on the *Skopos* theory as applied to some selected samples of broadcast conferences. It tackles the linguistic aspects imbued with the cognitive ones. It tackles the interplay of the interdisciplinary approach within the various disciplines. Moreover, it focuses on the implications of linguistic issues within the interpretational process. Difficulties cannot be reduced to a specific branch of linguistics. They exist in the various sub-branches. Media interpreter has to be acquainted with all these ramifications to surmount the challenges in such a fierce battle of interpreting-related phenomena. The issues comprise the linguistic aspect of the phenomena of body language and body-part idioms, neology, texture, intertextuality, taboos, metaphor, collocation, gender, hermeneutical significance, ambiguity, garden-Path sentences, humour, pragmatic differences, prevalence, hedges, euphemism, genre, register, cohesion and coherence. Scrutiny and accuracy enhance the quality of the interpreting process in media. Expressing the nuances of the unsaid is a formidable task. Finally, it explores the linguistic issues within the domain of media under the wing of the interdisciplinary approach.

Kew Words: Media interpreting, interdisciplinary approach, linguistic challenges, functional approach.

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This paper seeks to highlight special linguistic difficulties in the domain of media interpreting in the mode of simultaneous conference interpreting (SCI) with reference to the *Skopos* theory as a functional approach or a purposeful activity in the interpretational process. Media jargon is a specialized discourse in a sensitive area. The rigorous approach reflects the meticulous nature of the field under discussion. Exercising accuracy minimizes over-diagnosis and under-diagnosis of misinterpretations.

Linguistically speaking, there is a slight difference between *interpreting* and *interpretation*. According to Bancroft (2005: 36), *interpreting* "emphasizes process rather than product". Interpreting denotes the process itself or act of facilitating communication from one language form into its equivalent, or approximate equivalent, in another language form. On the other hand, interpretation denotes the actual product of this work, that is, the message as thus rendered into speech, or other language form. This linguistic nuance should be observed to avoid confusion.

There are some samples of applications, applied to some broadcast media conferences and important interviews. They are critically analyzed, suggesting novel perspectives and solutions, shedding light on misinterpretations, errors and miscues within the frame of the interdisciplinary approach. It divulges linguistic

ignorance and linguistic overlooking in various cases. The rigorous approach reflects the meticulous nature of the field under discussion. Exercising accuracy minimizes over-diagnosis and under-diagnosis of misinterpretations.

The more the interpreter penetrates the interdisciplinary approach, going deep into its strategic depth, the better he enhances his performance. From this perspective, outlooks on empirical research should be broadened to bridge the gap. The rapidly changing landscape of interpreting practice is accompanied by the latest developments in the domain of the interdisciplinary framework. Separate disciplines combine and unite together, addressing specific issues in linguistics and interpreting within the frame of the *Skopos* theory, with the aim of shaping the newly-born discipline with respect to contemporary practice and research.

Strategies are indispensable tools in the interpreter's kit, which urges him to hone time and effort management. Disfluency of the interpreter is regarded as a symptom of speech impairment that affects the interpretational process, due to the fact that SI is a time-honored discipline.

The researcher calls for the inclusion of the pragmatic aspect as an integral part of simultaneous interpreters training programs of media as well as specialized dictionaries. Moreover, I hope the

paper will become a wake-up call for all media conference interpreters to master these linguistic intricacies in such a sensitive arena, based on the theoretical-practical foundations.

The rigorous empirical research paves the way for accurate, detailed exploration of linguistic challenges at the crossroads of interpreting. It parallels the anatomy of thorny issues to properly extract the possible solutions.

There are various linguistic difficulties in the political and diplomatic domain of conference interpreting. The challenges that encounter interpreters in the interpretational process vary according to their level of difficulty and seriousness. They are investigated within the scope of linguistics and its sub-branches. They are some selected samples in the domain of semiotics, pragmatics, semantics, syntax, grammar, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, stylistics, phonetics, phonology, and discourse analysis. The researcher explores the difficulties, suggesting some solutions to their thorny problems, relying on the foundation of the *Skopos* theory.

Very little has been written about problem-solving norms and rules in interpreting; therefore, this study may contribute to highlight the neglected area and may act as an avenue for intensive linguistic issues and their solutions within the field. To some extent, the topic of practical linguistic issues or difficulties in the domain of interpreting has been very marginal. These

linguistic complexities depend on the realm of context. They constrain the spontaneous flow in the interpretational process. The dynamics of the skilled interpreter control the quality of interpretation.

Here are some instances in the domain of media interpreting:

1.1. The Interdisciplinary Issue of Ideological Bias in the Interpretational Process

According to van Dijk (2006: 729), ideology refers to "specific, fundamental beliefs of groups of people… the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group". Faithful rendition should be deprived of ideological bias. Neutrality is a parameter in the prerequisites of quality. Moreover, it is regarded as a remarkable achievement. It is added to the interpreter's impressive record of achievement. Ideological bumps pose thorny problems in the face of interpreters. Therefore, the interpretational process is encumbered by various hindrances.

Ideology is related to *narration theory* and skopos theory as well. Projections of conflicting narratives reveal the ideological identity of the interpreter. Interpreters and editors have a great impact on the political and diplomatic news and how to shape peoples' point of views. Even the choice of words can actually matter and change the context or the idea perceived from the text. Traces of ideology have a purpose. Therefore, polarization is a prominent feature of ideology.

In the news, we frequently hear 'Hebron, the divided city' ،الخليل/ المدينة المقسمة/ in the West bank, though it is not divided. It is a re-narration in disguise. This is the embodiment of ideology and bias. The purpose behind infusing the ideological traces in the interpretational process is to affect the public opinion. This is the relationship between power and ideology. It is not permissible to murder the innocence of meanings in the interpretational process. Twisting the neck of the intended meaning via the vehicle of information in favour of one of the parties is a blatant violation of the ethics in interpreting.

Inverting facts is a dominant motif in the political and diplomatic discourse. The purpose is to falsify the collective awareness. Consider the following instance:

"212 People, including 61 children, **have died** in Gaza."

"12 people, including 2 children, **have been killed** in Israel."

BBC anchor, Jane Hill, is under fire for reporting that Israelis were "killed", while Palestinians "died" during a news bulletin on Israel's bombardment of Gaza (TRT Word).

The British Broadcasting Corporation adopts the policy of double standards. Jane Hill reverses facts due to her ideological bias. There should be an international body of censorship to control these blatant violations. Media Charter of Honour is a missing word in her dictionary. Faithfulness to the original message is a necessity. Projections of narratives reveal the ideological identity of anchors, editors and interpreters. Linguistic

maneuvering via distortion of message is a strategic device in fake reporting and misleading delivery as well.

There are many pieces of evidence of the interpreter's intervention or mediation. The interpreter's choice is indicative of his hidden identity. Manifestations of ideology represent a scandalous behaviour that distorts the interpreter's image. Submerged ideologies are disclosed. This act of involvement is pejorative and against the Code of Ethics. Therefore, Interpreters should not be entrapped in the ideological tug-of-war. The contest is not easy; they should not take the bait, otherwise, they will be under fire. It is the disastrous fire of bitter criticism.

The term of ideology is very pervasive in trauma-informed interpreting (TII). According to Bancroft (2017: 195), trauma-informed interpreting (TII) denotes: "specialization of interpreting that integrates research on trauma into the professional practice of interpreters. TII involves interpreting for survivors of any violent crime or traumatic event, such as child abuse, gender-based violence, trafficking, torture, war trauma and mass disasters". It is related to the ideological sphere in the interpretational process. Ideology is affected. The interpreter himself may become a victim due to the fact that trauma is of vicarious nature. It penetrates the affection of interpreters. It is experienced in the imagination through the feelings or actions of another person. He shares it with the survivor.

A significant finding was the degree to which interpreters often suffer in this field. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of surveyed interpreters stated that they had been emotionally impacted by interpreting for survivors, a situation which self-evidently affects their impartiality (Ibid, 2017: 209).

There is some kind of *infection*. Are emotions in simultaneous interpreting contagious? Burnout of interpreters in the stressed situations of TII has many manifestations. The symptoms comprise many disturbances, such as vomiting, dizziness, fainting, shivering, broken sleep and psychological haunting, to say nothing of disgust. Register as a stylistic variety greatly differs in such circumstances. It depends on the morale, audience and the purpose of the message.

As a researcher, I am of the point of view that there are two categories of empathy:

    a. positive

    b. negative

The positive empathy occurs in normal situations of interpreting, while the negative type lies in situations of trauma-informed interpreting. The interpreter has to be careful. If the interpreter is completely confident of his capabilities and tightly controls his emotions, it is preferable to display empathy in the conditions of TII. There are individual differences among interpreters in dealing with such stressful events. It necessitates

nerves of steel to work in such a high-pressure job. To achieve equilibrium is a formidable task.

1.2. The Interdisciplinary Issue of Travelling Concepts in Migrating Contexts in Interpreting Studies

According to (Bachmann-Medick, 119), travelling concepts are "global passageways of knowledge". The metaphorical meaning of 'travelling concepts' reflects the significant shades of meaning. There is analogy between the term of *travelling concepts* and the term of *migrating contexts*. In other words, there is some kind of parallelism. The claim of travelling or migration cannot be denied. This is the reclamation of the historical context of a concept. Moreover, it is the interaction between philosophy and culture in a linguistic way.

According to (Sweet, ix), there are "comparative literature, cross-cultural or comparative religions, and intercultural or global ethics, in which it seems that we are dealing with the same or a similar phenomenon". Linguistically speaking, this is universality. There is a common area among cultural environments due to commercial relations and globalization. Concepts disseminate and move across countries, cultures and languages. Some terms historically travel across various periods and then, they are culturally fertilized, emerging as a new version in the waves of phases. Roots and origins develop, acquiring various facets. They embrace fresh perspectives. Moreover, the term may undergo the phase of hybridity during its historical journey.

On the other hand, the idea of borrowing and lending in languages, as the case in exporting and importing, has emerged out due to cross-culturalism. Therefore, cultural turns as well as cultural detours have broadened the scope of interpreting. The socio-pragmatic aspect highlights the politics of interpreting. According to (Hoffman, 227), texts are regarded as "open-textured in that what counts as a text evolves over time and there is no closed definition". A word or a phrase may acquire fresh shades of meaning. There is a room for capaciousness or scope of meaning. This is the interaction of pragmatics and interpreting studies. Consider the following instance:

When tensions inflame between Egypt's Al-Ahly club and the head of Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority, Turki Al-Sheikh, Al-Ahly fans have indirectly insulted Turki Al-Sheikh, shouting:

"Turki Al-Sheikh is long-lived!"

Although the literal meaning denotes asking Allah to prolong his life, it turns into swearing and insulting in an oblique way. The functional approach of pragmatics and sociolinguistics breeds a novel perspective of meaning, which connotes the opposite of meaning, to say nothing of the bluntness of one of the worst insults that can be thrown at somebody. Sociolinguistics has the upper hand in twisting the necks of words to shelter new, latent layers of meaning.

This is the embodiment of interdisciplinarity. The new facet of meaning has been quickly circulated across the waves of sarcasm from one country to another. It highlights disarming the denotational meaning as well as the customary connotational meaning of a concept or a phrase, emerging in a different hat. This reflects the mobility and plasticity of expressions within viral contextualization. When an interpreter is exposed to such a context, he should convey the embedded sense of humour. Tracing the bad consequences of the newly-acquired shades of meaning easily echoes the impact of sociolinguistics on interpreting studies.

The phrase 'long-lived' as a taboo has migrated or travelled from the Egyptian context to the Tunisian, Libyan, Qatari, Iraqi and Omani context, like wildfire. This is the power of language. Linguistic norms should be taken into account. In light of interpretationability, the interpreter should strive to harness his pragmatic aptitude in order to easily find out the proper interpretational commensurability. This, in turn, is an embryonic or nascent approach to decipher the code of the intended message via theoretical and practical resonance, with no doubt.

Here is another example of the concept "anchoring":

According to (the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 26), the word *anchor* means:

1: a heavy metal device attached to a ship that catches hold of the bottom and holds the ship in place

2: something that serves to hold an object firmly

("Anchor")

According to (Manning and Kendall, 34-35), anchoring in the intelligence discourse means "bias of relying too heavily on a single piece of information". In Arabic, it is as follows:

"الإرساء: ميل للاعتماد بشكل أكثر مما ينبغي على معلومة واحدة (في الاستخبارات)."

On the other hand, the concept of 'anchoring' has undergone a new phase in the field of human development. It has acquired a novel perspective. The term has migrated, travelling from one context to another. It is embedded in many sub-fields of knowledge. The historical context has been reclaimed. Then, it has become a commonly used term. Its equivalent in Arabic is "الترسيخ".

The overview of exploring the various angles of meaning echoes the semantic and pragmatic change over time. Texts are not static, but dynamic. Therefore, interpreters should be acquainted with the nature of the travelling concepts in migrating contexts, to say nothing of the gradual and drastic changes of meanings within the course of time. Meaning differs from one domain to another, according to context. *Anchoring* embraces many shades of meanings that could interpreted by the researcher as follow:

- الإرساء
- الترسيخ/الرسوخ

- التثبيت
- الاعتماد/ميل للاعتماد
- الارتكاز/المرتكز/الركيزة
- المناط
- الملاذ/المَأمَن/المَنجَى
- المرفأ
- مربط (الفرس)
- رمانة الميزان
- الارتساء
- التقويم (كشريط تقويم الأسنان)
- الإرباض/الربض (مأوى الصواريخ والدواب)

Meaning will be selected in the interpretational process according to context. The political and diplomatic jargon abounds with travelling concepts in migrating contexts, such as the word 'flies' in 'electronic flies, which means "الذباب الإلكتروني". Therefore, integrating theoretical research on CI into practice is a necessity.

1.3. The Pragmatic Aspect of Body Language and Body-Part Idioms as a Linguistic Issue

The pragmatic aspect of body language and body-part idioms constitute a linguistic issue in the interpretational process of conference interpreting. It dramatically challenges interpreters. Hidden nuances of body language should be conveyed as part of

the message in the interpretational process. Linguistic nuances, of the interdisciplinary nature, are imbued with semiotics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics and comparative linguistics. The peculiarity of culture-specifics, correspondent equivalence and contrastive rhetoric should be the objective goal of interpreters in the domain of such a difficulty. Functionality is the intended purpose.

Helena Marković (2017:7) states that "nonverbal communication is made up of various types, most simply classified as: paralinguistic (speech quality), proxemics (use of space), haptics (use of touch), chronemics (use of time), physical appearance (features and clothing), and kinesics 'body posture and movement' ". Interpreters should convey the message as far as they can, adopting compensatory strategies. This accurate classification of non-verbal communication may burden the shoulder of interpreters, leading to inevitable loss in some cases.

Consider another example, represented in Clara Sinclair's photo (2019), which needs no comment:

Fig. 6 (Clara Sinclair's photo, 2019)

The press conference at the White House between the US president, Donald Trump, and the Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, on October 16th has gone viral, due to the magical influence of body language. The indicative look of denial and astonishment of the Italian interpreter, Elisabetta Savigni Ullmann, sums up the dilemma of interpreting in such a critical situation, as Trump says President *Mozzarella* instead of Mattarella for the Italian President. The context has become more complex when he has remarked to Mattarella that in Syria: "They've got a lot of sand over there. So there's a lot of sand they can play with". She has been at risk of trauma.

She has been at a loss. She has thought whether to be a neutral professional interpreter par excellence, delivering what he has exactly said, refraining from being terrified by his speech, or euphemistically mitigate the effects of his harsh words. Therefore, body language and body part idioms constitute a stumbling stone in the face of interpreters. This represents how hidden emotions are exposed.

As a researcher in interpreting studies, I am of the point that she should stick to the criteria of the code of ethics via following the parameters of neutrality and invisibility, to say nothing of transparency. She should interpret the exact words of Trump without any alteration. Her facial expressions and emotions are a kind of intrusion, violating the maxim of *invisibility*. She has been entrapped in the snare of bias, though Trump has been mistaken. On the other hand, she might feel afraid of being legally held accountable for sarcasm if she delivered "Mozzarella". Wiegand (2000: 217) asserts that "what matters is that the truth must be told". As is known, the one who transfers blasphemy in interpreting is not a disbeliever.

Generally speaking, the functionality of paralinguistic elements interacts with semiotics, pragmatics and the *Skopos* theory under the wing of the interdisciplinary approach. The interpreter should pay great attention to the complex relationship to hit the target.

1.4. The Pragmatic Aspect of Neology as a Linguistic Issue

According to Yeskindirova and Alshinbayeva (2017: 206), "New words and expressions are constantly appeared in any language, and their interpretation, a passage to the other language sometimes demands a considerable linguistic ingenuity". As a universal phenomenon, the change is sudden due to scientific discoveries and inventions. Language container is flexible. Its orbit absorbs more and more vocabularies. The repository is deep enough. Therefore, language is equipped with the ability to incubate the newly-born babies of words. The interpreter should keep up with the societal changes that mainly emerge from the latest developments. To keep updating is a necessity. Etymology and the philosophy of the origins of words are of immense value in the interpretational process. The process of coinage marks the footprints of time.

There is a surge of interest to curb time factor as it is a sword hanging over the necks of interpreters. Therefore, if the interpreter is surprised by a neologism and he does not know its meaning, he feels at loss. Consider the following instance:

"**Ping-pong diplomacy**"

Ping-pong diplomacy refers to the exchange of table tennis (ping-pong) players between the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC) in the early 1970s, the event marked a

thaw in Sino-American relations that paved the way to a visit to Beijing by President Richard Nixon (Andrews)

The United States viewed the People's Republic of China as an aggressor nation and enforced an economic containment policy including an embargo on the PRC, following its entry into the Korean War in 1950. After approximately 20 years of neither diplomatic nor economic relations, both countries finally saw an advantage in opening up to each other: China viewed closer relations with the United States as a beneficial counter to its increasingly tense relationship with the Soviet Union, which had seen the outbreak of a series of bloody border incidents, while the U.S. sought closer relations with China as leverage in its peace negotiations with North Vietnam. The thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships, held in Nagoya, Japan, provided an opportunity for both China and the United States (Jiaqi and Gao, 1996:433).

The inexperienced simultaneous conference interpreter may interpret the neology "*ping pong diplomacy*" as " دبلوماسية كرة الطاولة". The interpretation is funny and inappropriate. He has ignored the pragmatic overtone of the linguistic term. Enani (2000:40) states that adopting "a pragmatic approach to this category is inevitable, that is to say, the function not the semantic aspect". This is where pragmatics meets with interpreting and the *Skopos*. Shades of meaning are part and parcel of the

interpretational process; this is one of the most hotly debated issues in SCI. Kurz (2001: 395) quotes Herbert (1952: 82-83), who says:

"It is quite clear that in a diplomatic conference the greatest attention should be paid to all the nuances of words".

The researcher suggests interpreting the neologism as:

- دبلوماسية إنهاء القطيعة أو

- دبلوماسية توليد التقارب أو

- دبلوماسية استعادة دفء العلاقات أو

- دبلوماسية كسر الحواجز / إذابة الجليد

Guestage, as a newly-born word during Kuwait invasion, sets a good example. According to the seminal work of Tulloch entitled *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words: A Popular Guide to Words in the News* (1991: 337), the neologism of guestage as a "noun in Politics refers to:

A foreign national held as a hostage (but called a 'guest') in Iraq or Kuwait during the period following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990.

Etymology: Formed by telescoping guest and hostage to make a blend.

History and Usage: This is a name which the hostages themselves invented in about September 1990. It remained in use until after they were allowed to return home in December 1990, but did not gain the enthusiastic support from the media that such words might usually enjoy, and is unlikely to survive in the language(except, perhaps, in historical accounts of the Gulf War) now that the motivation for it no longer exists.

In his second television appearance with the 'guestages', as they had come to be known, he [Saddam Hussein] had not bargained for a forthright English woman''.

The word under discussion denotes membership of a team, organization, or political party. *Guestages* can be interpreted as:

رهائن أجنبية (محتجزة)

(N.B. Rendering is mine.)

Here are many examples:

Shell Corporation: مؤسسة وهمية/مقنعة

Ghost voting: التصويت الغيابي (في الانتخابات)

Burn bag: كيس الأمن - صندوق/حقيبة احتراق – (الوثائق الحساسة) كيس/حقيبة حرق

Guestages: رهائن محتجزة – محتجزون كرهائن – رهائن أجانب

Hot button: قضية ساخنة – مسألة حساسة

Nanny state: دولة الحكم القهري – دولة عضوض – دولة جبرية – دولة سلطوية

Cyberpunks: الذباب الإلكتروني

Covidiots: سفهاء كورونا/مخابيل!

Lip service: التشدق

(Nota Bene: Rendering is mine.)

1.5. The Pragmatic Aspect of Texture in the Interpretational Process as a Linguistic Issue

Texture is the fabric of text, rather its flesh and blood. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 2) state that "texture is meant the qualities that cause a stretch of language to be read as a text rather than as an unordered and unorganized jumble of linguistic items". It is the nucleus of organic unity within the text, represented in cohesion, coherence, devices, and etc. The prominence of texture in CI indicates that the interpreter is versed. It mirrors his vivid presence. The audience can easily smell the aura of the interpreter's failure when the fabric of the text falls beyond his capacity. Therefore, it is one of the most important parameters of assessing the interpreting process.

Hatim and Mason (2005: 38) stress the fact that "experienced interpreters use all kinds of anticipation strategies which enable them to formulate in advance plausible hypotheses". Of course, it is tentative; the textural clues resolve the situation, either by approval or disapproval. The interpreter has no opportunity to redraft his output. Due to the complex and covert nature of interpretation, interpreters resort to inferring interpretations. Good anticipation, vigilance and scrutiny on the part of interpreters are vital factors in the interpreting process. These factors should be interwoven and embroidered with the spirit of the text. The emerging texture in delivery must maintain sense and should be consistent.

On the other hand, Robbins (1996:7) classifies texture into "inner texture, intertexture, ideological texture and sacred texture". Inner texture concerns "the features in the language of the text itself". He sheds light on the patterns of repetition, progression, narration and argumentation. He (ibid: 40) defines the intertexture as "entering the interactive world of a text". He highlights the cultural, social and historical perspectives. As for the "ideological" texture, he moves the focus beyond the text and its world to readers and their diverse perspectives. This reflects the beliefs and views shared by groups.

In short, Robbins (ibid: 120) regards the "sacred" texture as "the ways the text speaks about God, or talks about realms of religious life". He sheds light on the sensitive nature of the relation between the categories of texture and the interpreter's delivery.

Consider the mistake committed in the interpretational process by Professor/ Hammood Khalid Obaid of the University of Manchester, the Syrian famous interpreter, in the following rendition in the press diplomatic conference of the Ecuador's current Ambassador to the United States, Ivonne A-Baki, on her book entitled "My Destiny":

- (The original): أهوال الحرب وطموحات السلام

- Horrors of war and aspirations **for** peace

It should be delivered into:

Horrors of war and aspirations **of** peace

Professor/ Hammood, the Syrian interpreter, ignores or does not pay attention to the textural clue of the pragmatic function of the use of preposition within the context under discussion. Skopos theory looms over the texture in the interpretational process. The nuanced differentiation is as follows:

Horrors of war and aspirations <u>for</u> peace:

<div dir="rtl">

أهوال الحرب وطموحات لإحلال السلام

أو أهوال الحرب وطموحات إحلالا للسلام.

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The aesthetic function of the use of the preposition "of" is different from the use of the preposition "for". Accuracy is a necessity in the quality criteria of interpreting.

To conclude, the paper highlights the various linguistic difficulties in the political and diplomatic domain of conference interpreting. It tackles the challenges that encounter interpreters in the interpretational process. They are investigated within the scope of linguistics and its sub-branches that comprise semiotics, pragmatics, semantics, syntax, grammar, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, stylistics, phonetics, phonology, rhetoric and discourse analysis. The researcher explores the linguistic difficulties, suggesting some solutions to their thorny problems, relying on the foundation of the *Skopos* theory.

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