The PERTA-E Framework serves several goals; the main target groups are institutions and organizations offering programmes in literary translation. For learners, the Framework is intended as a useful didactic tool to determine their level of proficiency and to plan their learning career; the Framework enhances their understanding of literary translation by describing their competences in an analytical model.

Goals of the Framework

The PERTA-E Framework is aimed at evaluating the level of proficiency of literary translators at a specific moment in their training. The translator is responsible for his or her own career path. Translators can use the Framework to help them define a career path and to design their curricula – i.e. the content of their training and education, normally interwoven systematically, let alone ways in which these skills are required to translate a book, and each will give you a different answer. There is one thing, however, that all of them agree on: their profession involves many different skills.

A Framework with an open structure

Which skills exactly has never been mapped out systematically, let alone ways in which these skills may be developed or passed on. This is what the PERTA-E Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators (in short, PERTA-E Framework) set out to do. It is apparent that the discussion on training for both the translators and their trainers to gain more insight into the process of learning and training.

The PERTA-E Framework gives trainers a handle on how to customise their programme, translators can use it to assess their proficiency and determine competences to work on as to enhance their professionalism. It is important to note, however, that the PERTA-E Framework describes possibilities, not necessities. It is not meant as something to impose on translation, it doesn’t aim for standardisation. It can be used for self-assessment or as a reference test for universities, trainers and schools, though it can also serve other purposes, such as providing translators with arguments to negotiate better remuneration. Indeed, the Framework helps users to gain insight into the complexity of translating, which can in turn help to raise the status of the profession.

The PERTA-E Framework offers an open, diverse and multi-levelled structure, accommodating various, sometimes even divergent opinions on how to become a literary translator. It should not be used as an instrument for inclusion or exclusion.

An analytical model

The PETRA-E Framework contains a competence model, a learning line, and (implicitly) qualification criteria or assessment criteria for translators in which competences are to be tested. As a competence model, it enumerates the required skills and qualities – a literary translator might possess in order to be called a literary translator. As a learning line, the Framework shows the steps the literary translator starts at the more advanced competences. At the other end of the spectrum the ability to competences. ‘Competence’ refers to the proven ability to apply knowledge and skills; all that a literary translator is capable of doing. The Framework does not distinguish subcompetences are defined by means of descriptors, i.e. the elements of which a subcompetence consists.

A competence is therefore a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude. In this respect, the PETRA-E Framework is open to change: new subcompetences might be added to the existing ones when they appear necessary for a certain competence profile. Whether a competence is seen as a core competence or an additional competence depends on the institutional setting in which it is implemented and on views about the requirements a literary translator should fulfill.

Descriptors are used to define the competences for the different levels. These descriptors encapsulate all the things a literary translator should know and be able to do at a particular level. The more specific the descriptors, the easier it is to put them into practice. An attempt has been made to keep the number of descriptors to a minimum, also with a view to keeping assessments (if any) practicable. The PETRA-E Framework distinguishes eight subcompetences that together make up the overall competence of a literary translator. The various subcompetences are defined by means of descriptors, i.e. the elements of which a subcompetence consists.

Introduction

No one becomes a literary translator overnight, it takes years of schooling and maturation. You have to acquire different kinds of knowledge, gain insight, acquire yourself with methods and techniques, and train your skills. Developing an attitude that enables you to persevere and pursue your ideals is part of the maturation process. Obviously, every career takes a different course – so many translators, so many minds.

The road to becoming a literary translator is circuitous and highly varied. It extends to achieve LT5.

The various subcompetences are emerging in the non-academic as well as in the academic arena workshops, courses, summer schools, long-term programmes, bachelor and master degree programmes in literary translation. No doubt, this will lead to better equipped, better-instructed and better-educated translators in the future. The PERTA-E Framework aims to help overcome traditional boundaries between the academic and non-academic, between theory and practice. Viewed in the context of vocational competences to be reached are the same for all translators in Europe, the ways and means to reach them are, by nature and tradition, different. If one would describe the career of a literary translator, it would be ‘unpredictable’. Not many translators start translating while still at school, where they generally take language courses. Some of them don’t remember where their interests (perhaps even their talents) to until much later. That is when the search for an appropriate course starts. Fortunately, there is nowadays an incredibly diverse range of options.

Obviously, an analytical model like the PETRA-E Framework cannot do justice to the individual careers of literary translators, but it may help to provide an overview, both for training programme and course providers.

The Framework is not intended as some kind of must-have, size-fits-all model, but aims at a much as currently exists in the field of literary translation. The Framework should allow various users to discover how it can speak to them in particular. Possible scenarios, differing in level, could for example look like this: LT2 would be a translator just emerging from a university formation; she or he has a first degree in modern foreign languages, but has just completed an MA in literary translation and is now planning next steps in getting started on a professional career. An LT3 translator did not take the academic route (s/he has a bilingual or other literary translation by correspondence) but has already published and is looking for continuing professional development (typically a participant in a summer school or translation workshops in a non-academic institution). LT4 would describe an experienced translator who has become a trainer and/or is planning a course, and who is also a polyvalent reader who decides to turn options into rules.

The PETRA-E Framework does not aim at standardisation, on the contrary, it wants to open up the discussion about the qualities of literary translators by describing their competences in an analytical model.

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