

Application of the FW to collective translations

Case study

In this case study I wish to investigate whether, and in which ways the Framework is applicable to a situation where literary translation is a collective process, therefore involving more than one individual. The basic question of therefore how the distribution up of the translation competences between two or more individuals influences the use of the framework.

An experimental translation project was set up in 2010 involving a group of students of Dutch from two Hungarian universities (ELTE and KGRE), two experienced teachers, who are also translators of Dutch (Orsolya Réthelyi and Anikó Daróczy), and Zsuzsa Rakovszky, the acclaimed contemporary Hungarian poet, novelist and literary translator (<https://sarkozyandco.wordpress.com/our-authors/zsuzsa-rakovszky/>). The goal was to 1.) make a high quality Hungarian verse translation of the Middle Dutch epic poem, the *Beatrijs*, which had previously not yet been translated into Hungarian and 2.) teach literary translation in all its complexity to a group of students.

Methodology

The two-step process involved first translating the Middle Dutch text into modern Hungarian prose. With this the poet and professional translator would then work to make the verse translation, on which the group would give feedback. In the terminology of Roman Jakobson the first step involved an interlingual transfer, the second step an intralingual transfer. The two step process was necessary, because two smaller languages were involved, Dutch and Hungarian, and none of the translators from Hungarian to Dutch active at the moment is also a translator of poetry. The fact that the source text was in Middle Dutch, a historical variant of modern Dutch, which differs from modern Dutch significantly was another reason for making a collective translation. Therefore the expertise necessary was distributed between the parties. On the source text side this included the two teachers with professional knowledge of Middle Dutch language and literature on the one hand. On the target text side it included the poet, Zsuzsa Rakovszky.

This splitting of translating competencies was given a further twist by combining it with a didactic university project, to teach literary translation – with focus on the literary translation of older texts – to advanced Hungarian students of Dutch. Therefore the students were actively involved in the first step of the process, by preparing the translation of a given number of lines every week, in a word by word translation, ensuring that they understood the meaning of the Middle Dutch text, and a second, more literary translation. This second translation could be in prose or verse, the students were encouraged to experiment with different forms. Every week the different translation options were discussed in class and a standard text – acceptable to all parties – was agreed upon and passed on to Zsuzsa Rakovszky. During the second semester a workshop was organised (with the support of the Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen), during which the group discussed the poetry translation of the first part of the poem with the poet and each other, as well as working further on the translation of the second part. The project resulted in 2012 in a volume of the Hungarian translation of the *Beatrijs*, but also including prefaces by the two teachers and a description of the project, mentioning the names of the students involved (Rakovszky Zsuzsa, Daróczy Anikó, Réthelyi Orsolya. *Beatrijs. Egy apáca története*. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2012).

Evaluation

Before I go into the analysis of the project in context of the FW I must emphasize that at the time of the project the FW was not available to us and therefore the evaluation is retrospective. I believe that the framework is a very useful tool for looking back at what types of competences were used, by which participating parties. The structure of the FW, with the detailed descriptions of the competences and the levels makes it possible to plot and break down the competences of the individual players, which was

summed up in the project. The collaborative translation requires a high level of communication in an extended period, but produces results, which are on a higher level than the competencies of the individual participants. Through regular discussion and feedback the translation problems and possible strategies are identified. The step-by-step approach makes all parties more aware of the process of literary translation, since it is broken down into segments. In this case the FW can function as a kind of map on which the different parties make clear what their roles in the translation process are, and facilitates discussion on the process of translation, by providing terminology and categories for this discussion. Since collective translation involves a higher level of discussion between the different parties it is very useful to have such an instrument as a basis of thinking about translation processes and levels.

Future plans

A very similar project has been set up for the 2015/2016 academic year at the ELTE, this time focusing on the Middle Dutch drama, *Elckerlijc* (source text of the English translation known as *Everyman*). This time the poet involved in the project is Anna Szabó T., acknowledged poet, author of children's literature and literary translator (<http://www.catranslation.org/content/fire-we-say>). In the previous semester I have worked with my students on the translation and have a prose translation of the first half of the text. The poet will start working on this text, while a new group of students will familiarize themselves with the first half of the translation and continue with the second half. Three times during the semester Anna Szabó T. will join the class and we will discuss the verse translation in progress. Again we plan to organise a workshop at the end and to publish the volume in the series 'Minde madár / Olla voogala' translations of older Dutch/Flemish literature series. In this second project we will use the FW from the beginning, as a tool to make both teachers and students aware of the multitude of competences necessary for producing a good translation.

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