

PETRA-E

Defining competences and
describing descriptors
Moving between a Competence
Model and a Learning Line

PETRA –E

Misano Meeting 19-20.3.2015

Henri Bloemen, KU Leuven

PETRA-E

Framework LT

- The framework in its present shape is a combination of:
 - a competence model and
 - a learning line

The competence model is a list of competences that we believe a competent literary translator must have.

The learning line is a track a learner must go through to achieve these competences.

PETRA-E

Competences

- A competence is a constellation of:
 - Knowledge
 - Skills
 - Attitudes

Competences

- competences can be defined synthetically and analytically.

Synthetically:

- Translation competence consists of the knowledge and the skills needed to translate texts in the main language at a required level. It comprises the ability to recognize problems of textual understanding and text production and the ability to solve these problems in an appropriate way and to account for the final result.

PETRA-E

Competences

- Analytically a competence is defined by the descriptors that together make up this competence.
- In the actual version 28 descriptors make up the (definition of) the subcompetence 'translating competence'.
- 'Literary translation' can then be defined analytically by the 8 subcompetences that together make up 'literary translation competence' but depending on the kind of translator someone wants to be
- In the actual version 60 descriptors make up the (definition) of the competence 'literary translating competence'.

Competences

- In order for a learner to have a certain competence he/she must show behavioural indicators that correspond to all descriptors of a subcompetence cq. a competence.
- Behavioural indicators must be visible ('objectively observable') and testable ('dichotomously scorable'); they must apply to the descriptor or (sub-)competence in question.
- Someone who shows all the behavioural indicators of the overall competence 'literary translation competency' is a competent translator.

Definitions

- As the descriptors define the competence analytically, is it still needed or useful to define the descriptors separately?
- Shouldn't the descriptors 'speak for themselves'?
- The definition of a competence becomes more complex when there are a great number of descriptors .
- As a consequence the applicability of a model becomes more difficult.

PETRA-E

Competences

- Competences are strictly dichotomous: you have them or you don't have them.
- You can't be 'more or less' competent, 'a little bit competent', or 'very competent'.
- Tension between a dichotomous 'competence model' and a gradual 'learning line'.

PETRA-E

Competence Model / Learning line

- Tension between the vertical (competence) line and the horizontal (learning) line.
- Competences don't have levels
- A learning line has levels (f.e. 5)

PETRA-E

Competence Model / Learning Line

- **‘Can understand source texts’ (LT 1)**

‘This descriptor points to a more abstract skill of mastering principles of textual understanding and the different ways and modes of text explanation. Attention should be paid to the several layers that build up, as a complex, the meaning of a text. It concerns lexical and grammatical elements, stylistic features, social and cultural conditions of meaning. The texts studied needn’t necessarily be literary texts, although the contrast between literary and non-literary texts should be a basic distinction in all learning activities. Therefore working with not all too complex literary and non-literary texts (f.e. advertising, discursive texts) may be useful. Theoretical insights should be accompanied by practical applications.’

PETRA-E

Competence Model / Learning Line

- **Can understand literary source text (LT 2)**

'In addition to the knowledge and skills acquired in LT1 attention should be paid to the 'symbolic' meaning of literary texts and to the dynamic (social and cultural) circumstances that produce literary meaning.

It is useful to learn the possibilities and restrictions of the several methods of reading, f.e. the limitations of close reading and the exclusion of extra-textual elements. Also the tension between a purely functional approach to translation and the autonomous tendency of literature can be made fruitful. Or the difference between more relativistic and more absolute approaches to literature.'

PETRA-E

Competence Model / Learning Line

- **‘Can understand literary source texts in a detailed way’**
- What means ‘in a detailed way’?

PETRA-E

Competence Model / Learning Line

- Is there a way to combine the dichotomous character of a competence model and the use of gradations in a learning line?
- Should we distinguish between descriptors in a strict sense of the concept (i.e.: to which correspond visible and testable behavioural indicators) and other 'conclusions' (like 'optimal creative ability', LT 5)

PETRA-E

Descriptors / 'Conclusions'

- Shouldn't we reduce the number of descriptors in a strict sense: only descriptors that can be combined with objectively observable and dichotomously scorable behavioural indicators?
- The other 'conclusions' may still be part of the framework, but as they are not reliably and validly testable, they don't belong to the competence model.