

Literary translation competence measurement

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ELV (Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen) competence model (2014)

- translating competence
- linguistic competence
- textual competence
- heuristic competence
- literary-cultural competence
- professional competence
- evaluative competence
- research competence

Five step scheme for competence measurement

- naming the competence and sub-competencies
- defining the competence and sub-competencies
- describing the competence and sub-competencies (competence descriptors / can-do statements)
- behavioral indicators (objectively observable and dichotomously scorable / the expected behavior is observable or not)
- development of reliable and valid measuring instruments

Reliability

A test is *reliable* if it produces the same results, again and again, when measuring the same thing.

Example reliability

Two different evaluators give the same score to a translation.

Validity

A test is *valid* if it measures what it claims to measure.

Example validity

An instrument that measures linguistic competence should not measure at the same time literary-cultural competence.

Reliability and validity

Reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity.

Competence measurement and translation product evaluation

- Competence measurement is person-, subject-bound.
→ What does the translator know (knowledge), can (skills) and which attitude should she/he adopt (attitude)?
- Translation product evaluation (target text evaluation) is product-bound.
- Relationship between competence and product? (Does a competent translator make good translation products? This question cannot be answered.)

Practical proposal for a literary translation competence test

- Disappointing results of other competence projects (legal translators, social translators)
- One test taken in 80 minutes (8 x 10 minutes)
- 10 minutes per competence
- The validity of the test can become compromised, if the test is too long. (The test will measure endurance and resistance to fatigue rather than literary translation competence.)
- Literary translation competence test French → English

Model question for translating competence

Une copie, si belle qu'elle soit, ne peut jamais remplacer l'original.

→ The copy is so beautiful that it can never replace the original.

The English translation is

correct

incorrect

Model question for linguistic competence

Il faut arriver avant qu'il ne fasse trop chaud.

The 'ne' in this sentence is a

- causative 'ne'
- concessive 'ne'
- expletive 'ne'
- negative 'ne'

Model question for textual competence

André vient de ranger l'armoire de l'auberge d'Amélie. Il est sale.

The pronoun 'il' refers to

- Amélie
- André
- armoire
- auberge

Model question for heuristic competence

Zola, E. (1998). *The Ladies' Paradise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

On the basis of this bibliographical reference, we can conclude that Zola was the author of the English original.

correct

incorrect

Model question for literary-cultural competence

Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas. J'ai reçu un télégramme de l'asile : « Mère décédée. Enterrement demain. Sentiments distingués. » Cela ne veut rien dire. C'était peut-être hier.

These sentences are the first sentences of

- La nausée* (Jean-Paul Sartre)
- La vie immédiate* (Paul Eluard)
- L'étranger* (Albert Camus)
- L'invitée* (Simone de Beauvoir)

Model question for professional competence

A literary translator can become a member of

- ATLF (Association des Traducteurs Littéraires de France)
- CFTL (Collège Français des Traducteurs Littéraires)
- FTLF (Fédération des Traducteurs Littéraires de France)
- SFTL (Société Française des Traducteurs Littéraires)

Model question for evaluative competence

Le petit hôtel est agréable. Le propriétaire est un excellent hôte, très serviable.

→ The small hotel is nice. The owner is an excellent, very helpful guest.

'Guest' is a

- grammatical error
- interpretation error
- spelling error
- style error

Model question for research competence

'Rebuilding the Bridge at Bommel. Notes on the Limits of Translatability' is an article written by

- James S. Holmes
- Roman Jakobson
- Jiří Levý
- Gideon Toury