

The German Translators' Fund and the Framework Literary Translation

One of the goals of the German Translators' Fund (Deutscher Übersetzerfonds, DÜF) is to create a College of Literary Translation, an academy of the art of literary translation, which is not bound to one place but comprises a network of partner organizations (LCB, European Translators' College Straelen, Munich Literature House and others). We do not offer a university course and our seminars and workshops do not have an academic structure. What we offer instead is advanced education for different levels of professional experience that contribute to lifelong learning. This is why we can only make selective use of the Reference Framework.

LT1 and LT2

We have set up the Hieronymus program for beginners and newcomers to the field. We see the competences required on the Framework's level LT1 as a prerequisite. Attendees must have excellent knowledge, as well as speaking and reading skills in their source language, but we support them in mastering the competences on LT2: They are introduced to practices in the German publishing industry (C. 8: Professional Competence) and are assigned mentors to discuss translation strategies (C. 1: Translating Competence) These tutors sometimes help beginners to find publishers for their first translation projects.

Knowledge of the literary traditions of source as well as target cultures is not taught in any of the DÜF courses. We do however offer a grant that recipients often use to enlarge their knowledge of literature: the Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched Grant, which offers financial aid to further individual education.

LT3

Most of our seminars, workshops and courses will likely address level LT3: The discussion of the *differences* between translation strategies (C. 1) takes place in our seminars as well as the bilingual Viceversa workshops in which ideally half of the group translates from the mother-tongue of the other half as the name suggests. In these discussion groups, work in progress is presented and discussed. The aims here are to correct „professional myopia“, identify and replace encrusted formulations, adjust quality standards and broaden all participants' perspectives.

Competences in specific genres (C. 3: Textual Competence) are taught in seminars that address this issue – the participants have usually already translated fiction from a certain

genre. Over the years we have repeatedly had seminars on crime fiction, chick lit and other light fiction, historical novels, fantasy, poetry and comics.

The Framework at present lists the ability to produce target texts in different styles and to edit texts so that they are fit for publication on level LT4, the Professional. The DÜF categorizes these abilities under LT3. To my mind a translator should have the required abilities from the very start. Since no budding translator knows what style his or her very first source text is written in he or she should be able to reproduce it in the target language. We do offer a seminar on ‘how to edit one’s own work’ which is quite popular and takes place almost every year due to high demand.

In the Framework, familiarity with financial as well as legal aspects is covered by the sixth heading, Professional Competence. We cover these in all our seminars, workshops and discussion groups, sometimes inviting special speakers to talk about contract law, best practice concerning page rates, royalties, shares in subsidiary rights and so forth.

LT4

The ability to exercise translation criticism (C. 1) is practiced in all our seminars and workshops, but for years now we’ve been offering a seminar that crosses professional boundaries: we invite free-lance editors as well as their colleagues from publishing houses to discuss standards and criteria for judging and evaluating the quality of literary translations. To a lesser extent we have also worked with critics and reviewers to establish what constitutes a good literary translation. These two types of seminars are meant to educate in both directions: translators should know what editors and reviewers watch out for, and editors and critics should know what standards we have established in recent years or even decades.

The framework lists the involvement in translation debates and networking under (C. 6). These competences again form an integral part of all our seminars and workshops. The moment we get together and bend our heads over the texts we immediately start a translation debate. Usually the participants stay in contact after these seminars, form discussion groups on the Internet etc. We also encourage them to participate in regular translators’ meetings if they have one in their region.

LT5

In Utrecht I mentioned skeptically that the competences for what the Framework calls the expert set the bar so high that only Martin Luther would qualify. If we put things in

perspective, though, one could agree that our very best colleagues fulfill what the Framework specifies. They have reached their optimal creative abilities (C. 1), and they give courses for translators (C. 6). They are the ideal teachers for our seminars as they are usually able to employ appropriate forms of assessment and teaching methods. We also ‘export’ these experts to teach within academic institutions like the graduate courses and postgrad programs in Düsseldorf, Munich, Hildesheim and Leipzig to pass on their expertise. Among our funding tools we award the Johann Joachim Christoph Bode Grant, which supports a very successful mentoring model between an experienced translator and a younger colleague.

A new series of seminars – a kind of meta-seminar – concentrates on teaching the teachers: we try to assemble a group of translators who have conducted seminars, headed workshops and so on to exchange and improve teaching methods.

I’d like to elaborate on competence 5 and the aspect of the establishment of literary translation traditions. As some of you may know our academic projects include the August Wilhelm von Schlegel Guest Chair of Poetics of Translation initiated at the Freie Universität Berlin, the first such professorship in a German-speaking country. Recent chairs include the Shakespeare translator Frank Günther, Rosemarie Tietze who translated Tolstoy, and Susanne Lange, the translator of Cervantes’ *Don Quijote*, among others. The guiding principle and long-term goal is to establish an academy of the art of the German language, laying the ground for excellent translated literature in German. Our professors teach students by demonstrating that translating is the most intimate and precise way of reading; the academic study of language and literature is enriched by the study of translating processes. Our professors also do research in their own fields as well as in the theory and history of literary translation in Germany.

Ulrich Blumenbach, 20.3.2015