**ESLT 2020**

*From 8 to 11 September 2020, the ELV joined forces with the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT), the Italian Link Campus University and the San Pellegrino Foundation to organise the fourth edition of the ESLT Summer School; it was the first of these summer courses on translation education to be held fully online. Course participant Dorette Zwaans reports.*

#### By Dorette Zwaans

As a translator of novels, literary non-fiction, youth literature and picture books (from Italian, English and Spanish into Dutch) and as an editor of children’s books, I feel I have a role to play in helping students to enjoy reading and improve their reading skills. It’s especially important for translators like me to learn to read texts very carefully. Literary translators are trained with an emphasis on close reading. Which is why I’d been toying with the idea of organising ‘translation’ workshops for secondary schools students for a while. However, despite having a Master’s degree in Translation Studies, I did feel that my knowledge of teaching literary translation could be improved a little. Then, as if by fate, I came across the summer course of the European School of Literary Translation (ESLT). I jumped at the opportunity and sent off a letter of motivation.

Unfortunately, the ESLT Summer School 2020 was an online event, which meant no trip to Rome for me. Too bad about Rome, but a great solution that would bring me in contact with lecturers and students from all over the world: including England, the Netherlands, Italy, Iceland, Russia and Hungary. There was even a Chinese-English translator, who logged in at 04.00 local time from Chile every day! The disappointment of missing out on a trip to Rome was more than made up for by the glimpse we were able to get of each other’s bookcases in the background and the introduction to each other’s cats ... in the foreground (Who knew? Translators are cat people!).

The ESLT involved four full days of lectures, pragmatic class examples and workshops in which course participants were put to work. There was an interesting mix of different elements every day.

Chairman and moderator Duncan Large (Academic Director of the BCLT in Norwich) kicked off the event with his lecture on the question of whether or not to explicitly teach translation theories and whether this depends if you are teaching academic or non-academic students. The conclusion of the lecture and group discussion was that there absolutely is added value in including explicit instruction on the translation theory appropriate for a specific class, even when teaching non-academics. This gives students the tools they need to decide on a suitable translation strategy and the terminology necessary to justify their translation choices, an important aspect of literary translation competencies.

Lectures were alternated with practical components in which small groups were able to work on assignments in separate ‘Zoom rooms’. Group work started on the first afternoon, when we shared our best tips and tricks with each other and then presented a number of them in a plenary session.

Day 2 began with two interactive lectures. Gandolfo Cascio (a lecturer in Italian literature and Translation at Utrecht University) asked us to think about and discuss heterogeneous and multicultural translation classes. What if a translation assignment contains elements that might be of a sensitive nature for course participants or that they might interpret differently because of their political views or age, for example? The lecturer must be alert to this possibility. Gandolfo illustrated the importance of the above on the basis of the word ‘fair’ in the translation of My Fair Ladyand the word ‘black’ in the Song of Songs and Gone with the Wind. For example, in their new, 2020 Italian translation of Gone with the Wind, translators Annamaria Biavasco and Valentina Guani reduced use of the ‘n word’ from 104 to 50. After the lecture, a lively debate ensued about the translation of the ‘n word’ into different languages.

Franca Cavagnoli, a literary English-Italian translator of authors including J.M. Coetzee and a lecturer at various translation institutes, gave us many examples of how to translate Creole language and pidgin in postcolonial literature in a way that retains their otherness without reducing the characters in question to caricatures. After all, they are speaking their own, unmarked language. The second part of Cavagnoli’s lecture focused on the words that authors invent themselves. We as a group were given the opportunity to consider possible translations of a number of examples from Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981): “all this writing-shiting”, “beauteous!”, “with her down-to-earthery”, “on these Padmaless nights” and “Ganesh-nosed as I”. It became clear that native speakers don’t always interpret a source text the same either because did Rushdie’s character shout out the word “beauteous!” because of his broken English, was he deliberately using an archaic word or was it a form of Indian English? Each of these interpretations leads to a different translation solution.

After a leisurely, two-hour Italian break, we attended a public event with more than 100 other listeners: a one-on-one dialogue between translation lecturers and Italian-English translators Jenny McPhee (who has translated works by Elsa Morante, among others) and Ann Goldstein (who has translated works by Elsa Morante and Elena Ferrante, among others) about translating, co-translating and teaching. Click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDOhS3OkSaQ) to rewatch it.

Day 3 was devoted entirely to the Framework for Literary Translation (PETRA-E). After an explanation of the framework by Roberta Fabbri (Director of SSLM San Pellegrino) and Motoko Akashi (Postdoctoral Research Assistant for the PETRA-E Framework) and a whole range of practical and inspiring class ideas from Katarzyna Tryszyńska (Assistant Professor at the University of Wroclaw) and Louisa Desilla (Head of Translation and Intercultural Sciences in Thessaloníki), we set to work ourselves in groups again. Each group designed a model class based on a number of competencies and descriptors from the Framework for Literary Translation. The outcome was five beautiful, ready-made classes on subjects including the translation of an English translation of Toon Tellegen’s poem Doodgaan?? Nooit van gehoord!, back into Dutch, the translation of comics and a phonetic ‘translation’ of the Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme into proper French..

Still feeling a little tired and with square eyes from looking at their screens for so long, everyone was back online again at 09.30 on Friday to listen to Alexandra Borisenko, a translator and a lecturer at Moscow State University, and Victor Sonkin, a translator and researcher. They reported on a project they worked on over the years with changing, new students of English-Russian literary translation. ‘Translation is research’ is their credo. And what better way to conduct research than by translating a good detective story? In the classes, students were set to work translating standard English detective stories, sourced from various anthologies. Borisenko and Sonkin have now collected together the most beautiful stories and the best translations in new Russian anthologies (see the image below).

One problem was the old Russian translation tradition of aiming for 100% naturalisation because Borisenko and Sonkin wanted to preserve the British essence of the stories. What could be done to make the translations understandable? Because English concepts like ‘round pistol’, ‘handsome cab’ and ‘commoner’s gown’ are all completely alien to Russians. The result was three long stories, with detailed, encyclopaedic notes and atmospheric old illustrations at the end of each. This set all of us off on a search for Russian web shops where we could order copies of these gems for our own bookcases. And maybe even create our own versions of them? However, most course participants commented that extensive notes like these (see the second image below) will not be popular with many publishers in their countries.

Before concluding a successful course week on Friday 11 September 2020 with a bring-your-own drink and a chat about the course via the chat box - which had now become more of a cat box - there was one last thing for course participants to do: present their own classes, which they had submitted before Summer School started and then modified on the basis of the insights they had gained. Although a tense moment for most, it led to a Dropbox full of useful ideas.

Armed with a wealth of ideas and plans for the future and an address book filled with the e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of talented and passionate colleagues, it really was a very successful week.