**ESLT 2021**

*From 7 to 10 September 2021, the ELV joined forces with the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT), the San Pellegrino Foundation and the PETRA-E Network to organise the fifth edition of the ESLT Summer School. Course participant Meritha Paul-van Voorden reports.*

When an invitation to register for the summer course organised by the European School of Literary Translation ([ESLT](https://traduzione-editoria.fusp.it/about-eslt_4.html)) arrived in my inbox, I didn’t hesitate for a moment. I was one of the lucky few who were able to take part last year. I’d been hoping that I would be invited back this year but wasn’t counting on it. So, I was very happy and pleasantly surprised when I learnt that my application had been successful a few months later. Four days of brainstorming with, listening to and learning from fellow translators, publishers, authors and lecturers. I was really looking forward to taking part again.

The ESLT Summer School normally takes place in Rome. But for obvious reasons, the event was being organised online for the second year in a row. Day 1 saw me sat behind my laptop, armed with a hot pot of tea under a floral tea cosy, at 08.15. I was feeling a bit sorry for myself because course participants outside the United Kingdom were able to get an hour’s extra sleep. I later found that my self-pity was unwarranted: the course had attracted participants from all over the world, including someone from California whose day was starting at 03.15!

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Duncan Large (Academic Director of the BCLT), who would be our host all week, welcomed us and talked us through the programme. This was followed by a round of introductions. There were 20 course participants plus a number of representatives from the organising bodies. Besides the BCLT, these were the Centre of Expertise for Literary Translation, the San Pellegrino Foundation and the PETRA-E Network. Some course participants had a little more teaching experience, others more translation experience. Some were experienced professionals, others were just starting out in their careers. It seemed to me that my fellow course participants were not just very diverse but very interesting as well. I knew then that it was going to be another interesting week.

Canan Marasligil was the guest speaker on Day 1. I was particularly impressed by this versatile feminist, who, amongst other things, works as a literary translator, writer, editor and curator and speaks five languages fluently. Marasligil’s versatility enabled her to share her vision with us on many subjects and make a number of salient statements. I enjoyed what she had to say about the City in Translation project, for example She presented us with photos showing how she had explored language in urban spaces, to find out how they relate to language diversity and how people in those cities interact with this diversity.

After the break, we headed off to break-out rooms to share our best practices and tips & tricks with each other in small, mixed-language groups. Each group then presented their own nuggets of wisdom in the main session.

I returned to my laptop feeling rested on Day 2. With a pot of tea, of course. The theme for the day was Diversifying Literary Translation, with guest speakers Olivia Hellewell (University of Nottingham) and Gitanjali Patel (co-founder of Shadow Heroes) in the morning and a panel discussion with Daniel Hahn as the moderator in the afternoon.

*“What constitutes a ‘less translated language’ and from whose point of view?”*

Olivia Hellewell talked to us about ‘less translated’ languages, using the Slovenian language to explain the implications this has. Her key question: “What constitutes a ‘less translated language’ and from whose point of view?” Olivia also touched on the consequences that the size of a country has for its language. The translation market is largely determined by supply, which cannot be increased without money. She discusses how this works in practice in her classes.

Gitanjali Patel’s presentation was fascinating and gave me food for thought. In 2016, she co-founded Shadow Heroes, a wonderful educational initiative in which creative translation workshops make young people aware of their mother tongues and cultural heritage and encourages them to be proud of both. I wondered how an initiative like this would have influenced my perception of my cultural background when I was younger.

So, the morning programme gave us a lot to think about and I was glad that we had a few hours to process everything before the afternoon session started. My ears had also started to feel a little tender from the constant pressure of my headphones. I was ready for a break.

The afternoon’s panel discussion ([which you can watch here](https://literairvertalen.org/nieuws/terugkijken-panelgesprek-diversifying-literary-translation-eslt-summer-school-2021)) was also open to non-course participants. There were four speakers, Canan Marasligil, Gitanjali Patel, B.J. Epstein (University of East Anglia), and, as already mentioned, Daniel Hahn (an author, editor and translator) as the moderator. Daniel did a very good job, keeping a close eye on what was being said and, because of his extensive experience, responding appropriately and following up each answer with a follow-up question for the panel. For example, further to what Olivia was talking about earlier in the day, he asked, “Why are some languages privileged?” Patel replied that translation is a political process and imitates colonial patterns as it were. Just as Patel had done in her lecture, Epstein stressed the importance of mastering a second language. Day 2 ended with a fascinating discussion.

*“It was refreshing to hear and see once again how we can use the Framework in our own classes.”*

Day 3 of the summer course was devoted entirely to the PETRA-E Framework of Reference and how the Framework for Literary Translation can be applied when educating and training literary translators. On that day, the speakers were Roberta Fabbri (Director of SSLM San Pellegrino), Katarzyna Tryczyńska (University of Wroclaw), Dana Percec (West University of Timișoara) and Loredana Pungặ (West University of Timișoara ). It was refreshing to hear and see once again how we can use the Framework in our own classes. Attention also turned to the legal and ethical issues that translators may encounter. The practical examples, learning objectives, applications, tools and student feedback inspired us to design our own ‘ideal class’ in break-out rooms.

The groups were language-based this time. I have to admit that I really enjoyed being able to brainstorm with other people in Dutch. It gave us the opportunity to express ourselves in nuances that we might not have been able to achieve in another language. We ultimately decided to structure our class on the basis of level LT3 of the Framework and chose two very different excerpts from Multatuli’s Max Havelaar to use in the class. We took the competencies and descriptors from the Framework for Literary Translation as our starting point. Back in the main session, each group presented its own ideal class, which was particularly valuable because of the new and sometimes surprising insights the class generated (for example, I’d never thought about using moving elements in PowerPoint slides when training translators! Although content is key, the creative approach used by some presenters were met with great interest).

On Friday, we started half an hour later, which was great. Despite this, I was still at my desk at 08.30 local time and used the extra half hour to refamiliarise myself with the flow of information from the past three days. You guessed it: with a cup of tea in hand.

An international panel of publishers took the floor on the fourth and last day. Edoardo Brugnatelli (Mondadori, Italy), Helga Frese-Resch (Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Germany) and Daria Saprykina (AST, Russia) gave us a look behind the scenes in their companies. We learnt that not all publishers work the same and have their own reasons for choosing to work with new, unknown translators. However, they did all agree that networking is key. It’s all about knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time. It’s important to do your homework as well. Immerse yourself in the publishing world and be aware of the genres and publications a publisher has in its portfolio.

*“What a wonderful experience; inspiring, informative and fascinating from start to finish.”*

In the afternoon, each course participant gave a short presentation about this year’s edition of the ESLT Summer School. For example, what it had taught them, how they expected to put what they had learnt into practice and what they thought of the speakers. We were allowed to decide on the subjects of our presentations ourselves and whether we wanted to support them with slides or other visual aids. For want of a better choice, I used a wicker basket as a hat, which I took off while thanking Duncan for his excellent services as moderator and host (on behalf of the organisers) and for his excellent pronunciation of all the complicated foreign names. I also thanked all the organisers, who had worked so hard in front of and behind the scenes to make the event a success. All in all, I learnt a lot from this summer course again. What a wonderful experience; inspiring, instructive and fascinating from start to finish. The WhatsApp group created afterwards is a bonus too, as are the plans to meet up in person at some point in the near future.