

## **Students as co-producers of a publication comprising analysis and translation of six Persian short stories**

**Who is the author?** Claus Valling Pedersen, associate professor, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, Faculty of Humanities.

**Subject, course/other context, study level and number of students:** Persian, modern Persian literature (and translation), 5th and 6th semester students (Bachelor), 30 ECTS points, eight students.

**The motivation behind the activity:** A desire to introduce the students to, as well as involve them in the work with, modern Persian literature, which, like all literature, is the carrier of certain world views and value systems (ideologies, views of human nature, etc.). These views can be deduced through methodology-conscious text analyses, as the structure, narrative perspective, and setting and character depiction of the texts contribute to, and make possible, a representation of the world view etc. of these texts. For reference, see *World view in pre-revolutionary Iran, literary analysis of five Iranian authors in the context of the history of ideas* by Claus V. Pedersen, Harrassowitz 2002.

**Key learning outcomes, focussing on the way in which the activity is research-based:** The objective of the activity was to train the students in literary analysis and literary translation. The students got to delve far deeper into the texts than during normal lectures, text analyses in class, etc. and also gained better insight into and understanding of the Persian text, linguistically as well as culturally. Furthermore, the students went through the exact same process that I, as a teacher, have practiced and still practice in my research and production of paper and translations.

### **Description of the activity:**

*Process:* Six modern Persian short stories were translated based on a close reading and analysis as described in the publication referred to above. Translation as an interpretative tool, an expanded New Critical close reading of the text, was the focus of attention: How do you translate a Persian text into a Danish text which reproduces the individual words, sentences, paragraphs, and the text in its entirety, in a form that is true to the cultural and ideological content, structure and statements of the text, while at the same time ensuring a Danish text that is idiomatically correct? As the students were directly involved in the translation and therefore also in the teaching, student preparation and participation was high. And the follow-up, or the final reward, of the course module was the publication (see below) and an exam which took place in a familiar context that resembled the class sessions during the course module.

*Curriculum:* Six Persian short stories: Jamâlzâde, "Dard-e del-e Mollâ Qorbân 'Ali, Hedâyât, "Hâji Morâd", 'Alavi, "Gile-mard", Dâнешvar, "Be ki salâm konam?", Golshiri, "Ma'sum-e sevvom", Mandanipur, "Agar tâbut na-dâshthe bâshad?".

*Teaching format:* Two terms of class discussions about the translation and content of the six short stories. During these discussions, the students and the teacher were on an equal footing and shared equal responsibility for the translation process and interpretation of the text on the basis of a *close reading-translation* approach.

**Interplay between teaching and exam:** The examination format, which was anticipated in the teaching format, was a translation of an excerpt (two-thirds of a page) from a piece of Persian literature (one of the six texts from the curriculum), as well as an analysis of the entire short story. Translation in combination with (and, in fact, identical to) the literary analysis.

**The outcome of the activity for the students:** Translation skills combined with analytical skills (literary analysis), as well as a sense of pride and satisfaction in having contributed to the production of a book.

**The outcome for research:** Collective translation of six Persian short stories, which was published in 2010 as *Fortællinger fra Iran*, Kopi-service, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen (ed. Claus V. Pedersen).

**Strengths and weaknesses of the activity:** The main strength of the activity was that the students automatically became responsible for the class sessions and for their own learning. Furthermore, the teaching format very much reflected the exam format. Finally, the contributions from the students served to inspire me as the teacher in my own research and also led to an extra publication.

The weakness of the activity was that those students that were best at Persian dominated the sessions. However, this may be compensated for by involving students less fluent in Persian in the analytical work.

**Further information:** The literary methodology applied was primarily the New Critical methodology (e.g. see the classic *Theory of Literature* by Wellek, Rene, and Warren, Austin, NY, 1962, and the Danish, simplified introduction by Brandt-Pedersen, Finn and Rønn-Poulsen, Anni: *Metodebogen, analysemetoder til litterære tekster*, Specialpædagogisk Forlag, 1980, Part 1).

**Keywords:** Literary translation and analysis, Persian literature, research-based teaching, students as partners.