

# **Literary Translator Competence from the Iranian Teachers’ Perspective: A Qualitative Approach**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Translation teaching in Iranian universities has a history spanning several decades. One of the courses included in the bachelor's curriculum of translation and English language and literature is entitled “Literary Translation”. Despite the existence of such courses, literary translation as an independent genre and type of translation has received relatively little attention from Iranian researchers. It is necessary to examine the views of the stake-holders active in this field, including teachers of literary translation, about the goals of teaching this course. The purpose of the present research is to describe and analyze the perspectives of literary translation teachers in Iran's high-ranking universities about literary-translator competence. To this end, the views of 39 teachers of literary translation were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, and the subcompetences that teachers considered for literary translation competence were described and categorized. By analyzing the teachers' interviews, a total of 6 subcompetences and 22 components of literary translator competence were identified. The results of the thematic analysis showed that the classification obtained in this research includes most of the subcompetences described in previous models of translation competence, and it also reveals some special subcompetences needed by literary translators in the context of the Iranian literary translation market, such as familiarity with translation tradition, flexibility, inborn talent, literary habit, and emotional competence.

**KEYWORDS:** literary translator, competence, subcompetence, translation teachers

## **1. Introduction**

Translation teaching in Iranian universities has a history spanning across several decades. One of the first steps in the expansion of translation education in Iran was the establishment of a Translation University in the early 1970s. The purpose of this university was to train expert translators working between Farsi, Arabic and European languages. After the victory of the political revolution in Iran in 1979, the University of Translation was merged with the University Complex of Literature and Humanities (Kafi, Khoshsaligheh and Hashemi, 2018).

The English translation program in Iran was accordingly formed more than four decades ago at the undergraduate level. The four-year bachelor's program in translation focused more on learning to translate between Farsi and English. This course improved the four main language skills and related subjects such as linguistics, literature and translation. The English language translation curriculum was designed more than twenty years ago and was criticized for not paying enough attention to the needs of translation students and the requirements of the translation market (for example, Ghazizadeh and Jamalimanesh, 2010). In 2014, the bachelor's curriculum for English language translation was revised, and course titles such as “Translation Market”, “Translation Practicum” and “Technology in Translation” were added to compensate for some of the shortcomings of the previous curriculum.

The curriculum of the bachelor program in English Translation includes the “Translation of Literature” course. Two related courses are also included in the “English Language and Literature” curriculum. Considering the needs of teaching and practice of literary translation (LT), it is necessary to study the points of view of stake-holders in this field, including academic LT teachers, academic and non-academic LT learners, publishers, reviewers, critics and readers about the goals of teaching LT in universities. So far, many studies have been conducted on the objectives of teaching translation (Yazdanparast, 2012; Rastegar Moghaddam, Khoshsaligheh, and Pishghadam, 2020), the subjects required in teaching translation (Zahmatkesh, 2009; Okhravi, 2015; Varmaziari, 2017) and the methods of translation teaching (Sadeghieh, 2008; Majlesifard, 2010) in Iran. Although these studies have considered the needs of translation teaching in Iranian universities, limited research has been conducted on the views of literary translation teachers on literary-translation (LT) competence. Therefore, examining their views will provide valuable information for teachers and designers of translation curriculum.

The purpose of this research is to describe and analyze the views of university teachers of literary translation about the subcompetences of LT and their components. Another goal of this study is to compare the subcompetences desired by the LT teachers with the previous models of translation competence, so that the similarities and differences between the view of academic teachers of literary translation and the previous academic models can be understood. In addition, the current study seeks to find the specific subcompetences of LT in Iran, which may be different from the subcompetences proposed in previous models.

The special importance of this study is that it provides us with valuable insights about the target subcompetences in teaching LT in Iranian universities. The present study is significant due to its focus on a specific field and genre of translation and also because of the analysis of the views of university teachers based on a qualitative approach. The present article will therefore help to generate new knowledge and expand previous knowledge about the objectives of teaching LT in Iranian universities. Also, this research will have practical implications for teachers of literary translation and compilers of LT textbooks.

The academic translation-education system in Iran has not been successful in training professional translators for various reasons, and this weakness is most evident in the field of literary translation. Few university graduates have been present in the professional literary translation market, and most well-known and successful literary translators did not study translation at university. Emam (2021), as both an academic trainer and literary translator, believes that four factors are more involved than others in the relative failure of the translation-education system to respond to society's need for literary translation services: general and specific policies in the field of translation education at the undergraduate and graduate levels; an inefficient student admission mechanism; the dominance of non-specialized professors unrelated to the English translation field over translation education; and some content flaws in the English translation curriculum. Although Emam's findings are related to translation education in general, they can be relevant to literary translation in particular, as the aim of literary translation courses is to train professional literary translators.

This study specifically draws attention to the content flaws in the English translation curriculum and focuses on the required competences and subcompetences missing in the current LT teaching courses. As LT teachers are at the frontiers of LT training in Iranian universities and have been involved in training activities, their views can give us insights on

competences that need to be incorporated in LT teaching courses to prepare learners to make a successful contribution in the LT market. Improving the efficacy of LT teaching would in turn lead to improving the quality of translators' products and the employability of translation graduates.

As literary translators are the other important stakeholders involved in LT market whose views need to be considered, we will discuss the findings of the present study in light of our pioneer study in Iran (Fatollahi and Hashemi, 2023) that explored LT competences from literary translators' perspectives. Putting together the teachers and translators' perspectives will yield a clearer insight into the current shortcomings of academic LT teaching in Iran.

### *1.1 Theoretical Framework*

In this study, we will use six well-known models of translation competence and compare the similarities and differences of these six models with the views of university teachers in Iran. These six models are: the model proposed by the EMT specialized group (2009), the PACTE group model (2003), and the Göpferich model (cited by Kiraly, 2013), Schäffner (2000), Nord (2005), Fox (in Schäffner, 2000), and PETRA (2017). A brief description of the six models of translation competence is given in the literature review. Another model that specifically focuses on the competence of literary translation, which we have used in the current research is, once again, the PETRA model (2017). This model and its subcompetences are also briefly explained in the Review of Literature.

### *1.2 Research Questions*

In the current research, we set out to answer the following questions:

- (1) What subcompetences do Iranian LT teachers consider necessary for literary translators? And why?
- (2) What are the similarities and differences between the subcompetences proposed by Iranian LT teachers and the subcompetences of previous models of translation competence?

- (3) According to the description of the LT teachers, what are the special competences and subcompetences of literary translators in Iran?

This research was conducted based on the concept of translation competence, which is one of the fundamental concepts of academic translation education, and the findings of the interviews are analyzed in line with previous models of translation competence and the literary translator competence model of Kiraly (2013). A full understanding of the weaknesses of academic literary translation education in Iran would require a consideration of the opinions of readers of literary works, which is beyond the scope of this article and the means of the authors. Of course, the same topic has already been researched in Iran. Bolouri and Jalali (2023) explored Iranian readers' expectations and perceptions of literary translation into Persian. The results showed that Iranian readers prefer a translation that is fluent and readable and is free from the textual and linguistic anomalies specific to the structure of the source language. The results of translation expectations also showed that readers accept methods and approaches that faithfully reflect the meaning, style, tone, context, and cultural elements of the source text in the translation. Regarding the paratexts of the translation, readers expect an introduction or critique of the work to be included in it and they consider a good translator to be someone who has linguistic knowledge, spelling ability, and a good understanding of the source text.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### *2.1 Translation Competence*

So far, many researchers have tried to identify and categorize the components of translation competence. In the meantime, several models have been proposed. Six of the most well-known ones are briefly described below:

- (1) Nord (2005), in her functionalist model of translation ability, has distinguished nine subcompetences: professional subcompetences (awareness of the different functions of translation in different contexts of the target language), meta-communicative

subcompetences (awareness of the effects of the target culture on the selection of linguistic signs in translation), intercultural subcompetences (recognizing sensitive issues in translation that may lead to conflict between cultures), distributional subcompetences (knowing that language structures follow different rules in the source and target societies) writing skills (for example, rewriting a weak source text in the form of an acceptable target text), media skills (knowing how to use traditional and modern translation tools), research skills (knowing how to compensate for the lack of knowledge), stress resistance skills (the ability to work quickly and accurately in high-stress conditions) and self-confidence (awareness of the value of one's own translation). In addition to the functional nature of translation, Nord's model also considers some mental and psychological abilities related to translation.

(2) EMT expert group (2009) classified translation subcompetences into six categories: translation service provision competence (marketing, negotiating, and budgeting), language competence (e.g., paraphrasing or summarizing), intercultural competence (awareness of cultural presuppositions and implied meanings), data-mining competence (how to search and use databases), technological competence (using Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools), and thematic competence (subject-specific knowledge). EMT model involves not only linguistic, cultural, and subject knowledge but also research and technological skills as its subcompetences.

(3) PACTE group (2003) proposed six subcompetences for translation: bilingual subcompetence (mastery of two languages), extralinguistic subcompetence (knowledge of the source and target languages' cultural norms), strategic subcompetence (knowing the appropriate strategies for managing projects and solving problems), instrumental subcompetence (knowing how to use translation tools in a professional career), knowledge about translation subcompetence (knowledge of translation theories and procedures), and psycho-physiological competence (having the required physiological and psychological conditions for performing and translation project) (also see PACTE, 2005). PACTE model is based on the assumption that translation is a project-based career working in a professional setting.

- (4) Göpferich (cited by Kiraly, 2013) described translation subcompetences and classified them into two categories: translation competence and professional competence. The first category encompasses domain competence (subject-specific knowledge), psychomotor competence (mental ability to do translation), translation routine activation competence (familiarity with the routine activities in a translation task), tools and research competence (knowledge of searching tools and their applications), communicative competence in source and target languages, and strategic competence (knowing how to deal with and resolve translation problems). On the other hand, subcompetences of professional competence are familiarity with translation norms, professional ethos, and psycho-physical disposition. Göpferich's model is centered on mental aspects of translation competence e.g., problem-solving.
- (5) Schäffner (2000) recognized six subcompetences for translation: linguistic subcompetences (mastery of the source and target languages), cultural subcompetences (familiarity with the cultural and political subtleties of the source and target countries), textual subcompetences (knowledge of various texts, genres and conventions), domain/subject specific subcompetences (knowledge of the subject of texts), research subcompetences (knowledge of using research tools to solve translation problems), and transfer subcompetences (ability to produce translation texts to meet the requirements of the translation project). Schäffner's classification mainly focuses on linguistic and cultural knowledge and strategies used in the translation process.
- (6) Fox (in Schäffner, 2000) identified five subcompetences for translation: communication subcompetences (negotiating with clients to understand their wishes and expectations), socio-cultural subcompetences (awareness of socio-cultural environments) in which the source and target texts are formed), linguistic and cultural subcompetences (awareness of the mechanism of language and how meaning is formed and transferred), familiarity with the way of learning (awareness of available resources and how to use them to achieve the goals of the translation process),

problem-solving subcompetences, and instrumental subcompetences (familiarity with problems and solving them). Fox's model includes the knowledge and skills that translators need to continue their career as translators.

## *2.2 Literary-Translation Competence*

The above models have examined translation competence without considering a specific genre or text type. One of the few models that have identified and categorized the subcompetences of literary translation is the PETRA model (2017) with eight subcompetences as follows:

- (1) Transfer subcompetences include the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to translate texts into the target language at the required level. This competence includes the ability to recognize problems in understanding the text, the ability to solve these problems appropriately, and to accept responsibility for the final produced translation.
- (2) Language subcompetences refer to the translator's mastery over the grammatical, stylistic and semantic aspects of the source and target texts, especially in terms of reading and writing.
- (3) Textual subcompetences include the knowledge of literary genres and styles and the ability to use this knowledge in analyzing the source text and producing the target text.
- (4) Heuristic subcompetences include the ability to gather the linguistic and subject knowledge needed for translation, the ability to develop strategies for effective use of digital information resources, and the ability to critique texts and distinguish different text versions.

- (5) Literary-cultural subcompetences refer to the ability to use the knowledge related to the culture and literature of the source and target societies in the process of producing literary translation, as well as the ability to manage cultural differences and the ability to recognize literary movements, schools and styles.
- (6) Professional subcompetences include the ability to gather knowledge about one's field of work and show the appropriate and expected attitude of the practitioners of that field of work.
- (7) Evaluative subcompetences refer to the ability to measure and evaluate translations, the skill of translators and the translation process.
- (8) Research subcompetences refer to the ability to conduct methodical research to improve the quality of translation.

In Iran, many studies have been conducted on translation competence. Some of these studies have explored the effect of different strategies of translation teaching on the development of translation competence (e.g., Alavi, Nemati and Ghaemi, 2014; Oraki and Tajvidi, 2020). Some others have analyzed the effectiveness of university courses in the development of students' translation competence (Ahmadi-Safa and Amraei, 2013; Davari, Noorzadeh, Firozianpour Esfahani, and Hasani, 2014). Despite this, Iranian researchers have rarely identified and described the target competences and subcompetences of translation in general and literary translation in particular. One relevant study is Khoshsaligheh (2013). In a qualitative study, he asked the opinions of English translation teachers in Iran's top universities about the shortcomings of the translation training program. These shortcomings were identified following the publication of numerous studies that identified the low competence of translation graduates to participate in the literary translation market (e.g. Mirza Ibrahim Tehrani, 2003; Ghazizadeh and Jamalimanesh, 2010; Salari and Khazaeefar, 2015). The results of the data analysis using grounded theory showed that the translation

teachers emphasized the need to make major changes in the content of the said training course and demanded the addition of training courses for translator-assistant software programs, qualitative and quantitative improvement of translation skills courses that are related to the needs of the labor market, changing the content of foreign language courses and applied linguistics, etc. A relevant classification of literary-translation competence was proposed by Khazaeefar (2022: pp. 5-6) including wide range of vocabulary, creativity in selection and combination of words, and consistency in translation approach. These subcompetences fall under language competence (mastery of source and target languages) and translational competence (mastery of translation methods and techniques).

### **3. Research Methodology**

In this article, we set out to analyze and categorize the views of university teachers of literary translation about the competence of literary translators. This section explains the research sample, sampling method, data collection and analysis.

#### *3.1 Research Sample and Sampling Method*

The statistical population for this study includes all the people who taught the “Literary Translation” or “Translation of Literature” courses in the English language departments of the relevant Iranian universities at the undergraduate level. Due to the large number of universities in Iran that offer translation courses and English language and literature at the undergraduate level, and in order to get a better picture of these universities, the statistical sample of the research was selected from among the high-ranking universities. In this regard, all undergraduate teachers and learners who had taught/learnt literary translation at rank one (international), rank two (national) and rank three (regional) public universities (according to the ranking of 2016 by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology) and non-governmental universities of the eight large Iranian cosmopolitan cities with a population of over one million people (Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Karaj, Shiraz, Tabriz, Qom and Ahvaz) were included in the research sample. As a result, after removing the universities that did not offer the translation of literary texts, 35 public universities and 18 non-governmental universities were selected as the research sample.

By referring to the websites of the English language departments of the target universities, the researcher obtained the list of names and e-mail addresses of the teachers and invited them to participate in the study if they had LT teaching experience, by sending an email to their e-mail addresses. A total of 547 emails were sent to the teachers. A total of 171 teachers declared that they had not taught the course or they were not able to participate in the research. In the first stage, 62 teachers declared their readiness to participate in the research, and finally 39 lecturers from 30 universities of the country (21 public universities and 9 non-governmental universities) participated in the study.

### *3.2 Methods and Tools of Data Collection*

In this context, we used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. The interviewees answered the questions in their chosen and desired way: some of them participated in a telephone interview, some of them sent their answers in the form of a recorded audio file, some of them answered in writing while others answered the questions through the Google Form link. The interviewees were asked to answer the following question.

1) What competences should LT teachers develop in their learners?

After asking the general question, the interviewer gave details and examples to the interviewees to ensure that they understood the meaning of the question correctly. Usually, after the interviewees' answers, the interviewer discussed the answer with them by posing follow-up or probing questions to clarify the details of the interviewees' points of view.

### *3.3 Data Analysis Method*

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a method used to find and analyze themes in qualitative data (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). The thematic analysis of the data was done in the following steps:

Step 1: The researcher got acquainted with the data. He read the text of the interviews several times to find the basic ideas that appear in the texts.

Step 2: The interesting features of the data were identified as “codes” and the data related to each code was specified.

Step 3: Codes were combined to form themes.

Step 4: It was checked whether the emerging themes could explain all the relevant codes and data in the texts. Finally, a map of all emerged themes was drawn.

Step 5: The specific features of each theme were determined, and the themes were defined and named.

Step 6: A useful and relevant summary of the data was found, analyzed and discussed in relation to the research questions and literature related to the research. Finally, a report of thematic analysis was presented.

First, the PDF files of the interviews of teachers of literary translation were downloaded and saved. Then the qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA) was installed and the interview files were loaded into the software. In the following step, the researcher carefully studied the text of the interviews and searched for statements related to the LT competence. All the sentences that the interviewees expressed explicitly or implicitly about the competences needed by literary translators were identified and coded.

### *3.4 Trustworthiness of the Research Model*

In this context, we used the inter-subjective verification method to ensure trustworthiness of the research model. For this purpose, the initial research model was reviewed by eight translation education experts, and some of these experts' points of view regarding the arrangement, components, and categorization of sub-competences were applied to the initial model to obtain the final model.

### *3.5 Limitations of the Study*

This study, like any other research, has faced limitations. These limitations are mainly related to the scope of the study. It should be mentioned that the competences proposed in this study reflect the views of a sample of LT teachers at Iranian universities and do not necessarily show the views of the other LT stakeholders such as LT practitioners, publishers, etc. On the other hand, findings of this study have been found in the Iranian academic context and may not be generalizable to LT teaching in the other countries. The LT subcompetences found in our study are also subject to idiosyncrasies. So, LT teachers can customize the model proposed in this study to develop a toolkit for their LT classes.

## **4. Results**

In the present study, the views of 39 teachers of literary translation about the LT competence were collected, described and categorized using semi-structured interviews. In total, 113 parts of the interviews related to the topic of LT competence were coded. By thematic analysis of the views of literary-translation teachers, we found 6 subcompetences and 22 components. In the following, the target subcompetences in literary translation obtained from the data are explained along with their components and examples of teachers' comments about each of the subcompetences. The order of presentation of subcompetences in the next section is random.

### *The Competences of Literary Translation from the Teachers' Point of View*

In the first question of the interview, we asked the teachers of literary translation to describe their LT competences. The subcompetences described by the teachers of literary translation are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The subcompetences of literary translation from the point of view of LT teachers

Subcompetence Number	Subcompetence	Total Frequency	Subcompetences and their components
1	Linguistic-Cultural	107	Source language proficiency, target language proficiency, linguistics knowledge, intercultural knowledge
2	Emotional	30	Interest in literature, interest in literary translation
3	Personality	11	Innate talent, literary habit
4	Literary	28	Familiarity with literary topics, familiarity with local literature, familiarity with foreign literature
5	Transfer	32	Familiarity with translation theories, familiarity with translation methods, familiarity with principles of editing
6	Professional	23	Technological skills, interaction skills, adaptation skills, familiarity with the translation market, familiarity with the tradition of translation, criticism skills, compliance with ethical principles, effort and resilience

As we can see from Table 1, the first subcompetence of literary translation from the teachers' point of view is linguistic-cultural subcompetence. This competence means the translator's mastery of the source and target language and culture, and has four components which are described below.

The first component of linguistic-cultural subcompetence is proficiency of source language, which means the translator's mastery of the potential and actual possibilities of the English

language: “The most important thing I think I should do in the classroom is to help them learn the source language and understand the English text well” (Teacher 1<sup>1</sup>); “The literary translator must have complete mastery of the source language and understand it completely (Teacher 17); “One of the goals I pursue in class is to develop the ability to understand English literary text through participation and group work” (Teacher 30).

The second component of linguistic-cultural subcompetence is the proficiency of the target language, which means the translator's mastery of the potential and actual possibilities of the Persian language: “The first is that the scope of Persian literary vocabulary of the students should be increased. Many students use colloquial words in translating poetry, which is not correct” (Teacher 8); “Persian language should be like a soft dough for a literary translator. He must have read literary texts and literary translations of the past” (Teacher 2); “From the very first session, I encourage students to read authentic and good Persian texts” (Teacher 1).

The third component of linguistic-cultural subcompetence is linguistic subcompetence, which means the translator's familiarity with linguistic topics such as morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, etc. “They should pay attention to the fact that these words can have different translations” (Teacher 9); “Comparative analysis of the text is very important. It is necessary to find the correct equivalents and learn new words in the context in which they are used” (Teacher 31); “I dedicate about half an hour of the session to analyzing the vocabulary, structure and style of the source text” (Teacher 3).

The fourth component of linguistic-cultural subcompetence is intercultural knowledge which means the translator's familiarity with source and target cultures and their similarities and differences: “Students must be fluent in both languages and be familiar with both cultures and their historical memories” (Teacher 14); “The translator must be able to recognize the cultural aspects of the work and the implicit meanings of the original text and transfer it to the target language” (Teacher 15); “The literary translator must explain the cultural dimensions of the work to the readers who are not familiar with those specific cultural aspects” (Teacher 17).

As we can see from Table 1, the second subcompetence of literary translation from the teachers' point of view is the emotional subcompetence. This subcompetence means the

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<sup>1</sup> As the original interviews were in Persian, the authors transcribed and translated the responses into English as accurately as possible.

translator's emotional attachment to literature and has two components which are described below.

The first component of emotional subcompetence is interest in literature: “A literary translator must be very interested in literature and have a lot of experience in reading authored and translated literary texts” (Teacher 35); “Literature should be the teacher's field of interest and he should see a connection between himself and literature” (Teacher 3).

The second component of emotional subcompetence is interest in literary translation: “Literary translation is a kind of love to read more and understand the subtleties of literary translation such as the tone of speech” (Teacher 11); “The teacher himself must be fascinated by this path and must spend a lot of time to expand his or her knowledge in the field of literature” (Teacher 11).

The third subcompetence of literary translation is personality subcompetence. This subcompetence refers to the personality traits that enable a literary translator to fulfill his or her task as a literary translator and has two components which are described below.

The first component of personality subcompetence is innate talent: “Literary translation is a mixture of skill, knowledge and art. Of course, part of his or her ability is inherent and in the nature of the individual” (Teacher 7); “Talent is also very important in literary translation because maybe we can translate scientific texts with software, but this is not the case in literary texts” (Teacher 11); “My teaching experience shows that success in this field, especially in poetry translation, is inherent and not everyone should have this inherent ability” (Teacher 2).

The second component of personality subcompetence is literary habit: “The translator should be familiar with literary works and should never abandon the study of literature” (Teacher 21); “A literary translator must be interested in literature and his or her<sup>2</sup> regular habit be to read literary works of both languages” (Teacher 35); “I am familiar with reading old and new literary works and novels and I like to get acquainted with different literary styles and genres” (Teacher 23).

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase was not in the main transcript but has been added to observe gender neutrality

The fourth subcompetence of literary translation is literary subcompetence. This subcompetence refers to the literary translator's knowledge of literature and has three components which are described below.

The first component of literary subcompetence is familiarity with literary topics such as anthology, literary criticism, literary devices, and literary schools: "He or she must have full knowledge of two languages and have a deep understanding of the literary tradition of both countries" (Teacher 10); "A literary translator must be familiar with genres, styles, industries and literary movements" (Teacher 16); "The translator must be familiar with the literature and literary system of the source and target languages" (Teacher 18).

The second component of literary subcompetence is familiarity with local literature and its poetry and prose texts: "A literary translator must be completely familiar with Iranian literature and know the style of Iranian literary writers" (Teacher 4); "The translator must also be a serious reader of literary texts. He or she should study literary works of two languages widely" (Teacher 7); "The translator must have a long experience in studying literary works of both languages" (Teacher 35).

The third component of literary subcompetence is familiarity with foreign literature and its poetry and prose texts: "Students should have good knowledge of general language and be familiar with English literature" (Teacher 28); "Familiarity with English literature is very important; Familiarity with authors and their various works" (Teacher 8); "Literary translator must be familiar with world literature and the publishing market of literary works" (Teacher 28).

The fifth subcompetence of literary translation is transfer subcompetence which means the skill of rendering a text from the source text to the target text and has three components which are described below.

The first component of transfer subcompetence is familiarity with translation theories: "A literary translator must be aware of the abilities needed by a literary translator and the theories and strategies of translation" (Teacher 18); "A literary translator must be aware of the general theoretical issues related to translation, especially literary translation, and know the difference between literary translation and the translation of other texts" (Teacher 23);

“Students should acquire theoretical knowledge about literary translation and understand its challenges correctly” (Teacher 12).

The second component of transfer subcompetence is familiarity with translation method:

“The translator must be familiar with the principles and methods of translating literary texts and understand the lexical, grammatical and semantic complexities of the original text”

(Teacher 21); “The aim of the literary translation classes is to familiarize the student with the basic methods and techniques of translating texts from English to Persian” (Teacher 23);

“Students should be familiar with different methods and strategies of translating literary texts in the literary translation class” (Teacher 34).

The third component of transfer subcompetence is familiarity with principles of editing:

“Topics of editing are also discussed in class. Students should be familiar with the types of editing and its application” (Teacher 9); “Students should review and edit the initial version

several times and see what other interpretations can be used” (Teacher 8); “Students must have the ability to analyze text and context, as well as the ability to edit their translation and the translation of others” (Teacher 20).

The sixth subcompetence of literary translation is professional subcompetence which means the abilities needed for successful presence in the LT market. This subcompetence has eight components as described below.

The first component of professional subcompetence is technological skills which refers to the ability of using technology in translation: “In addition to the above, it is worth mentioning the ability to translate all kinds of texts and the ability to use translation software” (Teacher 9);

“Literary translators should be familiar with different translation tools and technologies” (Teacher 34); “The translator must be familiar with different translation tools and be able to work with different types of texts” (Teacher 34).

The second component of professional subcompetence is interaction skills which means the ability to have successful interaction with the agents involved in translation process:

“Students should know that they are going to enter this field professionally and should use the experiences of experts in this field” (Teacher 6); “The translator should be able to negotiate with the publisher on the draft contract and reach an agreement” (Teacher 7);

“Students should learn how to interact with each other and offer a translation to the professional translation market by working together” (Teacher 34).

The third component of professional subcompetence is adaptation skills which means adaptability to demands of different market agents such as publishers, critiques and auditors: “Student translators might even sometimes be asked to work for relatively low pay, while a more senior / experienced translator, who has checked and possibly edited their work, is credited with the publication<sup>3</sup>” (Teacher 30); “Students must learn to cope with urgent work deadlines and adapt to the requirements of different texts” (Teacher 34).

The fourth component of professional subcompetence is familiarity with the translation market and its needs: “I tell my students what book to choose and how and by what criteria should they choose the work” (Teacher 7); “Students should be familiar with well-known literary publishers and publishing agents of literary works” (Teacher 18); “A literary translator must be professionally familiar with the translated literature and the literary translation market” (Teacher 18).

The fifth component of professional subcompetence is familiarity with the tradition of translation or the rules and norms agreed upon by the literary translators’ community: “A literary translator must be professionally familiar with the translated literature and the literary translation market” (Teacher 18); “He or she should know the style of the translators of Iranian literature and be completely familiar with the history of Iranian literary translation” (Teacher 4); “We compare the Persian translations of literary works with their originals, especially the translation of literary masterpieces so that students get to know the tradition of translation in Iran” (Teacher 18).

The sixth component of professional subcompetence is critical skill which refers to the ability to evaluate and detect the positive and negative points of translations: “A literary translator must have the ability to evaluate previous translations and recognize the weaknesses of these translations” (Teacher 15); “Students should be able to compare and evaluate different

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<sup>3</sup> This comment from a LT teacher who has been active in the publishing market makes sense. Novice literary translators in Iran have a hard time opening their way into the literary translation market. Well-reputed literary publishers rarely trust novice translators and often refuse to invest directly in their translations. Further, most of the novice translators cannot afford to publish their works independently without publishers’ support. That is why, they need to co-author their first works with well-known translators so that they gain enough social capital to publish their next works independently.

translations of literary works in order to get acquainted with creative writing” (Teacher 23); “Students should have the ability to criticize the printed translations available in the market and discuss the quality of the translations in a group” (Teacher 30).

The seventh component of professional subcompetence is compliance with ethical principles in their career: “The literary translator must remain loyal to the author and the work in the structural, stylistic and thematic dimensions” (Teacher 33); “I must treat the text as if I were its author. I must try to respect all the aesthetic, thematic, stylistic and linguistic bases of the original text” (Teacher 33); “Students should learn to respect the ethical standards in translation and respect the author's intention and his or her cultural sensitivities” (Teacher 39).

The eighth component of professional subcompetence is effort and resilience. It means the translator's readiness to spend time and energy on his or her path to becoming a successful LT translator: “Literary translation requires continuous and endless study because the language is always changing and transforming” (Teacher 17); “I talk to my students about the challenges of literary translation and the difficulty of becoming a translator” (Teacher 30); “A literary translator must have read literary texts and literary translations of the past. One should not enter this field first and expect success. This work requires practice” (Teacher 2).

## **5. Discussion**

In the present study, the views of 39 teachers of literary translation about LT competence were collected, described and categorized using semi-structured interviews. In total, 731 parts of the interviews related to the topic of literary translation competence were coded. By thematic analysis of the views of the LT teachers, we found 6 subcompetences and 22 components.

As we can see in Table 1, in their interviews, the LT teachers emphasized linguistic-cultural subcompetence (107 cases), transfer subcompetence (32 cases) and emotional subcompetence (30 cases), respectively. The teachers of literary translation have emphasized above all the importance of language and cultural knowledge and ability in the LT competence. Linguistic-cultural competence includes source language proficiency, target language proficiency, linguistic knowledge, and intercultural knowledge. Linguistic-cultural competence in this

research corresponds to the language competence in the LT competence model of PETRA (2009), which means the translator's mastery of grammatical, stylistic and semantic aspects of the source and target texts, especially in the fields of reading and writing.

The second most frequent competence that LT teachers have emphasized is the transfer subcompetence, which means familiarity with the translation theories, translation method, and editing principles. The transfer subcompetence in this research corresponds to the transfer competence in the PETRA model. In the mentioned model, the transfer competence includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to translate texts into the target language at the required level. This competence includes the ability to recognize problems in understanding the text, the ability to solve these problems appropriately, and to accept responsibility for the final produced translation.

The third most frequent subcompetence that LT teachers have emphasized is emotional subcompetence. This subcompetence means the translator's emotional attachment to literature. This subcompetence has no corresponding competence in PETRA model. This difference might be attributed to the different perspectives of European and Iranian societies towards the essence of literary translation and its motives. Due to the long history of devotion to literature and poetry in Iranian society, literary translation for Iranian translators and teachers is a matter of emotion and devotion that cannot be pursued effectively without internal interest in literature.

Table 2. Comparison of the model of literary translator competence with the previous models

LT Competence Model	PACTE (2005)	EMT (2022)	Schäffner (2000)	Nord (2005)	Fox (in Schäffner, 2000)	Göpferich (2013)	PETRA (2017)
Linguistic-cultural	Bilingual	Language and cultural	Language	Writing	Linguistic-cultural	Translation routine activation	Language
Professional	Instrumental-strategic	Translation service provision,	Research, cultural	Professional	Communicative, instrumental	Instrumental,	Professional

		technological				professional ethics	
Emotional	Psychophysiological	Personal and interpersonal	.....	Self-assurance	Problem-solving	Psychomotor	....
Personality	.....	Personal and interpersonal	.....	Self-assurance	.....	.....	Psychophysiological
Literary	.....	.....	.....	Specific field/area	Specific field	Domain	Literary-cultural
Transfer	Strategic	Translational	Transfer	Distribution	Linguistic-cultural	Translation routine activation	Transfer

As we can see in Table 2, the subcompetences described in the present study have total or partial correspondence with the ones described in the previous competence models.

Components of the personality competence (innate talent and literary habit) have no corresponding components in the previous models. This is due to the essential difference between literary translation and the other genres. In literary translation, personal talent and familiarity with the language of literature is crucial. Literary subcompetence is another factor in the present study that is missing in some of the previous competence models because the previous models were not focused on the literary genre in particular.

In response to the first question of the research, the results of the study showed that the participating teachers mentioned a total of 6 subcompetences and 22 components. These competences and subcompetences are listed in Table 1.

In response to the second question of the research, the findings of the study showed that the classification obtained from the current research (Table 1) includes most of the subcompetences proposed in previous models, although some subcompetences are named with different titles in different models (for example, the communicative subcompetence in the Göpferich model is equivalent to the interaction component in our research model).

In response to the third question of the research, our findings showed that some of the subcompetences described in the current research were not included in the previous models of translation competence. For example, flexibility competence, innate talent, literary habit, and emotional competence. One of the possible reasons for this is that most of these subcompetences or components (especially flexibility component, emotional subcompetence) play a key role in the LT competence, but they may not be very important in the translation of other types of texts. One of the other reasons for obtaining the mentioned subcompetences in the current research was the source of data collection. The previous models of translation competence were obtained by asking the views of LT teachers and translators, while the current research model was derived only from the views of LT teachers.

As to comprehensiveness and applicability of the competences and subcompetences proposed in the present study, it should be mentioned that the competences reflect the views of a sample of LT teachers at Iranian universities and do not necessarily show the views of the other LT stakeholders such as LT practitioners, publishers, etc. Comparison of the present research findings with those of our pioneer study on Iranian literary translators shows that although literary translators had proposed almost the same competences, they had emphasized the importance of professional and emotional subcompetences which have low weight in the view of academic teachers.

On the other hand, findings of this study were found in the Iranian academic context and may not be generalizable to LT teaching in the other countries. In the model of the present research, emotional subcompetence emerges while the same subcompetence is not seen in the previous translation competence models developed around the world. On the other hand, personality subcompetence and literary subcompetence have different components from those of the previous models.

The LT subcompetences found in our study are also subject to idiosyncrasies. For example, one of the interviewees who is an expert in CAT tools and corpora strongly emphasized technological competence and recommended using the same tools in literary translation while the other teachers did not consider familiarity with corpora and CAT tools to be so useful for literary translators. Another example is the importance of innate talent that was emphasized by three of the interviewees while was not mentioned by the others.

The competences and subcompetences proposed in this study do not have equal weightings. The linguistic-cultural subcompetence has the highest weighting. This makes sense as translation is a linguistic transfer ability in the first place. The personal subcompetence holds the least weight which indicates that individual talent and acquired habits have the least important role in LT competence, and LT is a skill that should be acquired through training. The other subcompetences have almost the same weighting. Although teachers and learners need to consider all of the subcompetences in Table 1, some are considered by LT teachers to be more important.

One of the main concerns in designing syllabi and lesson plans for LT is the arrangement of the skills and subcompetences to be acquired. Based on the interview results, personality subcompetence is related to the natural talent that is either inborn or acquired during life in the environment. This subcompetence precedes training and is effective in recognizing talented LT learners: “My teaching experience shows that success in this field, especially in poetry translation, is innate and not everyone should have this innate ability” (Teacher 2); “A translator must have an innate talent and innate ability, which is manifested in poetry translation” (Teacher 15). Previous studies have also highlighted the role of personality in literary translation competence. Shadman, Khoshsaligeh and Steca (2022) explored the personality profile of Iranian literary translators through a qualitative study and reported that Introversion, Emotionality, Perseverance, Self-confidence and Disorganization are among the main personality features of literary translators.

One basic subcompetence of LT is the linguistic-cultural subcompetence that needs to be acquired through passing the basic general English courses offered in the initial semesters. In fact, most of the respondents presupposed that LT learners have already mastered their general English skills before taking LT lessons: “One part of the learner’s ability in literary translation is general language: If a student is weak in grammar, he or she will not be able to do literary translation” (Teacher 5); “A person who wants to enter the field of literary translation will not be able to do it without knowledge of English, and of course, this is not enough” (Teacher 2).

According to the respondents, literary subcompetence needs to be improved in the very beginning sessions of the course. Learners’ exposure to interesting literary works will in turn enhance their interest in literature and LT: “Literary translation is a kind of love for reading

more and understanding the subtleties of literary translation, such as the tone of the words” (Teacher 11); “A literary translator must have a great interest in literature and have a lot of experience in reading written and translated literary texts” (Teacher 35). Of course, translation learners in Iran often pass several courses on literature including poetry, prose, and drama before taking LT courses.

Transfer subcompetence is the next ability to be developed in LT courses. It is a basic subcompetence involved in all genres of translation and in LT as well: “A literary translator must be able to correctly select the appropriate strategy for translating a literary text” (Teacher 19); “A translator must be familiar with the principles and methods of translating literary texts and understand the lexical, grammatical, and semantic complexities of the original text” (Teacher 21).

Finally, professional subcompetence is the key to entering LT market. This is the complement to the previous subcompetences and the missing link in the LT training courses in Iran: “A translator must be familiar with different translation tools and be able to work with different types of texts” (Teacher 34); “A translator must be able to negotiate and reach an agreement with the publisher on a draft contract” (Teacher 7); “Students must learn to cope with urgent work deadlines and adapt themselves to the requirements of different texts” (Teacher 34); “I tell my students to choose what books, and by what criteria” (Teacher 7); “A literary translator must remain faithful to the author and the work in structural, stylistic and thematic dimensions” (Teacher 33).

In respect to the above discussion, the following presumptive flowchart can be depicted for LT courses at Iranian universities. Again, it is worth mentioning that this flowchart merely reflects the views of Iranian academic LT teachers but it can still inform LT teachers in arranging their course materials. This arrangement reflects the chronological order of competences and not their importance.

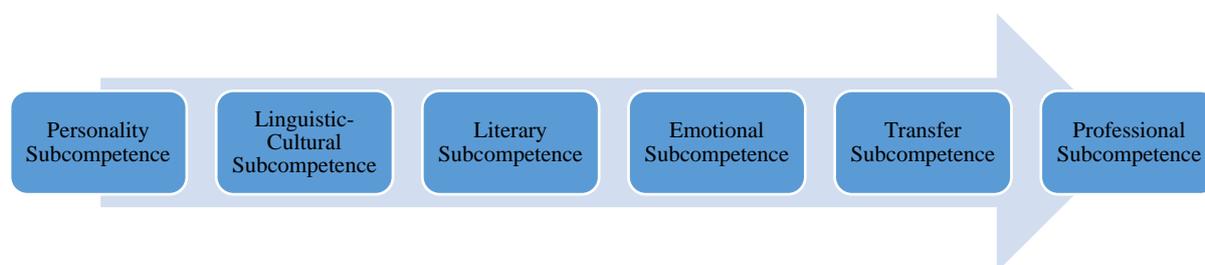


Figure 1. LT course flowchart

Comparison of the subcompetences found in this study with those of our pioneer study exploring professional literary translators' views (Fatollahi and Hashemi, 2023) reveals that the subcompetences arising from both studies are almost the same. However, Iranian LT teachers and practitioners have highlighted different subcompetences. While LT teachers have mostly focused on language subcompetence and transfer subcompetence, professional literary translators have highlighted professional, emotional, and literary subcompetences which are pivotal for succeeding in the professional market. In other words, the subcompetences highlighted by the Iranian LT teachers are not aligned with real-life market demands.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the present study, the subcompetences involved in the translation of literary texts were described and categorized by analyzing group interviews of teachers of literary translation. The results of the research showed that, according to the LT teachers, a total of 6 subcompetences and 22 components are involved in literary translation.

The results of the study indicated that the classification obtained in this research includes most of the subcompetences described in previous models of translation competence like language subcompetence, transfer subcompetence, professional subcompetence, and personality subcompetence. It also reveals some special subcompetences needed by literary translators in the context of the Iranian literary translation market, such as familiarity with translation tradition, flexibility, inborn talent, literary habit, and emotional competence. On the other hand, some of the subcompetences described in previous models were not highlighted by Iranian LT teachers, such as technological subcompetence, team-working, and strategic subcompetence. This is mainly due to the essence of literary translation activity which is mostly regarded as an individual activity in Iran.

The views of Iranian LT teachers are somehow different from those of the Iranian professional literary translators explored in the authors' pioneer study. The teachers highlighted language and transfer subcompetences, two aspects mostly covered in university classes. On the other hand, literary translators highlighted emotional and professional

subcompetences. To them, literary translation is a matter of emotion, love and devotion. Literary translators have accordingly highlighted the skills needed for successful presence in the publishing market such as coping with censorship and cooperating with editors. These aspects are not covered in university classes as the teachers are not professional literary translators themselves.

Comparison of our results with the PETRA model revealed that literary translation might be perceived differently in Iran and western countries. The emotional subcompetence in our model is missing in the PETRA model. It seems that Iranian translators are mainly motivated by literary enjoyment and are devoted to their career. The PETRA model has highlighted the professional aspect of literary translation and the skills needed for activity in the market. So, it is predicted that conducting the same research in different countries might yield different subcompetences and different weightings.

The findings of this research will be useful for literary translators and academic and non-academic learners of literary translation in Iran and will familiarize them with the wide range of subcompetences required to enter the profession of literary translation. In addition, the results of the current research will be a guide for educational policy makers in compiling and revising the content of courses related to literary translation in English language translation curriculum. Due to the fact that there is no evidence of the difference in the LT competence from different languages (such as Arabic, English, French, etc.) into Persian in Iranian society, the results of this research can be useful for the readers of other educational groups (other than English). Considering that the current research is the first research of this kind on LT competence in Iranian society, this research provides readers with the views of Iranian LT teachers in the form of a broad classification.

The current research has mainly focused on the views of teachers of literary translation. Future researchers can also check the views of the other actors involved literary translation such as professional translators, publishers, etc. On the other hand, our study has focused on the LT teachers of English language departments in a number of public and private universities. Collecting the views of the teachers from other universities and foreign language departments will help to deepen and expand the classification of the current research.

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