

Summer School of Translation

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An impulse to thinking in the direction indicated in the title of our contribution is in the first place the thirtieth anniversary of the Summer School of Translation, or its thirtieth year. Even though the length of duration itself has a certain testimonial value, the quality or the impact of individual undertakings and their overall effect on the object of interest, in our case on Slovak translation in its whole diversity, tend to have a more important value.

Intensive work in the field of practical translation activities after World War II, which initiated the establishment of theoretical thinking about translation, led to the opening of the gate of the first summer school of translation, "... at the beginning balancing on the borderline among science, journalism and belles-lettres", as J. Ferencík states in his book *Kontexty prekladu* (Contexts of Translation, 1982, p. 11). His statement apparently reflects the situation in Slovak translation of that period, as he was an active translator and worked as a publishing editor, and even though he himself had never been a big advocate of scientism, he induced the need for theoretical elaboration of the issue of translation, even as an aid to Slovak translation studies, which would by means of a conceptual and terminological apparatus contribute to more precise and more consistent criticism of translation and, at the same time, would head towards elaboration of both methodology and didactics of education of young but also of older translators.

That does not mean at all that during the first Czechoslovak Republic, thus from 1918, no translation activity would take place in Slovakia, or that translation would not be considered as a specific kind of literary activity. However, a fact is that the ratio of translated works from this period and works from the period after 1945 is substantially higher, which indicates that before there did not exist such distinct pre-requisites for the emergence of systematic theoretical thinking about translation. On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge honestly that already in the interwar period Slovak literary criticism understood the theory of translation to be part of literary studies that had an impact on socio-cultural practice.

These facts allow us to express more thoughts or theses on thinking about translation after 1945, and thus about the happenings that led to the foundation of the institution of the Summer School of Translation. If we attempt at formulating them in a smallish number, we will list, above all, the following:

1. In the after-war period we notice a qualitative boom of translation activity that does not have any other analogy in our history. We are gaining on the lost by making world literary legacy of whole centuries available to Slovak readers.

2. The qualitative boom of translation activity and the speed of the gaining on the lost inevitably had to be reflected in the quality of translation, to which opinions of individual translators – or theoreticians of translation, or discussions about translations (as for example the discussion about the Slovak translation of *The Quiet Don* (Sholokhov)) testify.

3. Attention has gradually turned to questions of the theoretical processing, appreciation of the issue of translation in its whole breadth. At the beginning, it was primarily the solving of linguistic problems that was concerned, especially between Russian and Slovak. Later, the interest had been shifted to text and its stylistic values. Theory of translation, or the science about translation began to be perceived as an aid to Slovak translation studies.

4. Naturally, translations of high quality could be provided only by high-quality translators, or in other words, attention is paid also to praxeological questions, to the statute of a translator and then also to the statute of a critic of translation. This process led to significant institutional steps. Within the Slovak Literary Fund, the Headquarters of Slovak Translators was established, which ran a number of educational programs, introduced a register and registration of translators and provided a number of creative impulses in the process of translating individual works. Care for translators on part of the state had increased by a considerable degree.

5. A historically significant event in 1970 was the foundation of the Institute of Translation Studies and Interpreting at the University of 17th November in Bratislava, which was supposed to take care of education of a new, both linguistically and theoretically prepared, generation of Slovak translators. The aims were: 1) to ensure education of fully qualified translators and interpreters from world languages on a scientific basis; 2) to get rid of the acute lack of translators of artistic literature; 3) to ensure post-gradual study for translators from practice; 4) to ensure education of critics and theoreticians of translation and to develop scientific research of the translation process and translation literature.

As we can see, the 1970s were characterized by a maximal effort in increasing the quality of translation practice; both in the form of its theoretical generalization, and through educational-instructional activities. On an institutional level it was taken care of by the above-mentioned Institute of Translation Studies and Interpreting, which was later transformed into the Department of Translation Studies and Interpreting at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. Along with this institutionalized pedagogical activity also theoretical-critical reflection of translation gained ground in a form of scientific seminars, conferences and activities going on in various circles. As the first undertaking of this kind we can recall the one-semester long course for young critics of translation and translators of Russian literature at the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra in 1973. Outcomes of such oriented training showed themselves in translation practice **and** in theoretical-critical activities of the middle and younger generation of translators. Into this group we usually include J. Šimonovič, H. Bacigalová, M. Heveši, K. Slivková, J. Zambor and others. All this ac-

tivity showed that within extracurricular activities it was necessary to change the forms of education of translators to more systematic and more regular training, which would also substitute a little bit for post-gradual study that was lacking at universities and is missing there up to now. For such a form the **Summer School of Interpretation of the Original and Translated Text** in Nitra was chosen.

The founder of summer schools of translation was A. Popovič who at that time worked in the Division of Literary Communication and Experimental Methodology at the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra. If we quote his words from the Bratislava evening paper Večerník (1976) now, we will learn first hand what led him to the foundation of a tradition of this undertaking: “The idea about organizing a summer school of translation emerged from everyday needs in educating the young literary-scientific and journalistic generation as well as from the awareness of the increasing importance of translation in the life of our society. Our intention was supported also by the lack of qualified critics of translation and theoreticians of translation in the situation when translation practice has achieved a good standard, even in its top spheres; especially in poetry, it represents the so-called new school. The lack of qualified expert criticism and the theory of translation in this situation was especially urgent.” Even though the theory of translation was not accepted with enthusiasm by older active translators, the aim was, above all, that young translators and the most talented students of translation studies armed both linguistically and theoretically would be able to solve concrete problems of translation practice, criticism and theory on an adequate socio-cultural and expert level.

The first **Summer School of Translation** took place from 18th August to 5th September 1975. It was a summer school, indeed, and it was almost three weeks long, or in other words it was a real school, or a post-gradual course, in which the first graduates in the study of translation-interpreting participated. The program was characterized by a unified methodological base that connected the theory of translation with translation practice, which was determined by the research conducted at the Division of Literary Communication and Experimental Methodology at the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra. The school was run on the basis of lectures. In comparison to other summer schools, there were not many lectures there, only five, and follow-up seminars in which original and translated texts were interpreted, homework was assigned and those were evaluated on the following day, so it was indeed done in the same way as at school, in a systematic way.

The above-mentioned methodological foundation of the first summer schools was based on the understanding of the translation process as a literary communication based on the author’s and translator’s communication strategy, in which a very demanding and delicate act of acceptance, acquiring or confronting of a cultural value of one linguistic and socio-historical sphere with another with its own tradition and topical needs is intermediated. The unifying principle was the terminology of literary communication of the original and the translated text (later *Original/Translation – interpretative terminology*), with which the participants worked on an everyday basis and in a critical way. Based on this guide, the participants, divided into three seminar groups in accordance with their linguistic specialization, Russian, English, German, learned to compare original with translation.

The starting point in the analysis of translation was the original text. Stylistic, thematic, aesthetic and other elements of the text were revealed when interpreting particular works of poetry and prose. In principle, it was the determination of invariant characteristics of a work which got transposed into translation. From the period documents it is obvious that in the first summer schools in Nitra emphasis was not so much on translators, but rather on young critics of translation who would oppose translations denoted as substandard at that time. This can be derived from the fact that by the end of the training every participant had to hand in a review of a translation from the book production in that respective year. These studies or reviews of translations represented, for many participants, the beginning of their publication activities in Slovak magazines: *Romboid*, *Slavica Slovaca*, *Slovenské pohľady* or *Revue svetovej literatúry*.

Immediately after the first summer school of translation was finished, A. Popovič let himself be heard in the above-mentioned interview in the Bratislava evening paper *Večerník* that he did not perceive the school as a one-shot undertaking but as a long term intention, which was then also carried out.

In Nitra at the Pedagogical Faculty in cooperation with the Slovak Literary Fund and under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture altogether seven undertakings were realized, seven meetings of the summer school of translation. The first six bore the name “Summer school of interpretation of the original and the translated text”; the last one, the seventh, in 1981 only “Summer school of translation”.

The 3rd Summer School of Translation

In tune with what we have said so far, the first two undertakings had the following central theme: *Critical Interpretation of Original and Translation*. Thus, they were directly aimed at criticism of translation.

The third one focused exclusively on translation of poetic texts.

The culmination of the effort to enforce understanding of translation as an integral phenomenon became the fourth summer school, because attention was paid to artistic (especially dramatic), scientific and technical texts and to interpreting.

In the fifth SST, for example in the division of artistic translation, interest was for the first time focused on questions of interpretation of the original and translated text from literature for children and the youth; in the division for technical or expert translation on texts from natural sciences and in the division for interpreting problems of theoretical and practical training of interpreters were discussed.

In the sixth school, within the division for artistic translation attention was paid to the theory and criticism of artistic translation, in the division for expert translation to texts from the field of social sciences and in the division for interpreting to questions of individual types of interpreting: consecutive and simultaneous.

The seventh school had a common theme for all divisions: Translation production as part of the development of the Slovak socialistic culture.

This spirit of dividing the school into three divisions was continued to the eighth school of translation which, however, was organized already in 1982 by the Headquarters of Slovak Translators in Kamenný Mlyn. Since that year the annual cycle had changed to biannual and within that other four summer schools of translation took place, running to the 1980s.

Even though the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh SST were not divided in accordance with genres into divisions and, actually, since then the undertaking had acquired a character of lectures exclusively, even though the form of seminars began to disappear already from the previous meetings, their organization without the participation of the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra did not bring an utter discontinuance of the fruitful cooperation with the research center of literary communication and experimental methodology in the field of the theory of translation and interpretation of text. The first eleven summer schools of translation had in essence a unified conception based on research activity and works by members and cooperators of this division. From this conception also their aim followed: to become a place for evaluation of theoretical and critical efforts in the field of translation for the past one, later two, year period.

From the aspect of organization, a principle of five year long cycles was introduced. These were divided into years in accordance with genres. In artistic translation into prose, poetry, drama, theory and criticism, children's literature, etc., and in scientific and expert or technical translation into social sciences, natural sciences, technology, textbooks and popular-educational literature. Following this conception a greater emphasis was placed on seminars, which were run by prominent translators with necessary theoretical knowledge and pedagogical prerequisites. From that follows that within the individual years the participants changed but the team of lecturers was stabilized for a longer period of time. Lecturers came essentially from three branches. First, they included especially workers and coworkers of the above-mentioned Division of Literary Communication and Experimental Methodology in Nitra. Among them it is important to remember, above all, A. Popovič, F. Miko, J. Kopal, P. Plutko, F. Koliha, T. Zsilka, P. Zajac, P. Liba and others.

The department of the theory of translation and interpreting at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava represented another source of lecturers who were involved in pedagogical work in the field of translation directly at the individual departments of the Faculty and, apart from that, participated both organizationally and as lecturers in the summer schools, which holds true for some of them up to now. Important Slovak translators and interpreters, literary theoreticians and linguistics belonged and still belong to the third group of lecturers. During the total of twenty nine summer schools of translations 191 lecturers have delivered 462 lectures, mostly thirty minutes in length, and more than 1,800 participants took part; we are not aware of the number of auditing participants.

Committees of Translation Divisions of the Literary Fund and the Slovak Literary Translators' Society and also translators of technical literature are organizers of summer schools of translation since the 12th year in 1990, and the undertaking takes place, up to now, in Budmerice, an aristocratic country mansion. However, again the annual cycle of summer schools is re-established and every year their focus comes out of the needs of social and translation practice. Based on that, the organizers set a central unifying theme for the school, so that representatives of individual kinds of translation could express their opinions on that from the position of their specialization.

On the other hand, in the same way as the original length of the summer school

was gradually shortened from three weeks to one week, five days, and then to present three days, the undertaking has also changed its face, content and focus. It has lost its training and educational purpose, even though many participants would wish to restore that. The unifying methodological conception was abandoned, the contact with the publishing practice was discontinued and we can say that even the situation in translation practice is not being mapped continuously.

Despite the fact that summer schools have always kept a qualitatively high standard, it was, however, as if disappearing in the sphere of the direct influence on the practical translation activity. We can assign this to the fact that many things have changed in the field of translation nowadays. Individual or individualistic approach operates everywhere. It is difficult to interfere into that because an effort to interfere is often accepted with misunderstanding and in a disapproving way. However, gradually, it begins to be shown that also in the sphere of translation focusing again on a common attempt at achieving higher quality will not be amiss. The SST has obviously gained a professional character. These days, almost exclusively equal partners and people from that “business” meet there, be them lecturers or participants who live by translation and are in everyday contact with it in their profession. There they exchange knowledge and experience from their own theoretical and practical field. These are especially practicing translators, publishing editors, who also translate, as well as theoreticians or teachers of translation.

A separate chapter is made up of students but even those have to fulfill, if only partially, requirements for the category of translators, even though with an attribute of “beginning”. Because only applications of those students are accepted who have taken part and, moreover, proved themselves within Translators’ Universiade, which presently, even though in a different form, represents the above-mentioned superstructure level in gaining practical translational education, which is in a certain way an entrance of a student into a practical contact with editors and translators and which means an opportunity to take part in a further form of improving their qualities as translators at summer school of translation. Responsibly, we can say that many of the participants of the Translators’ Universiade and consequently of the SST had their transition from the academia to the environment of the demanding practice easier and they have also got accommodated there better. In this sense the SST has remained faithful to its original message. On the basis of practical translation activity and common theoretical mycelium, there at least partially exists something like continuity of opinion in the form of handing in of practical and theoretical experience and knowledge of the older generation to the younger one.

If we have mentioned that the qualitatively high standard of contemporary summer schools in the sphere of influence on everyday translators’ activities melts in a tapering way, in the sphere of the theory of translation or translatology it is, however, utterly evident. seizable. On the grounds of this traditional translators’ undertaking not only the majority of the prominent Slovak (at the beginning also of Czech) theoreticians of translation, linguists, literary scholars and translators took turns in the lecture activity and in running the seminars, but also editors and editors of translation literature as well as theoreticians and practitioners of interpreting. As we have mentioned already, from the lectures and seminar works of the participants emerged stud-

ies and reviews which were published in Slovak magazines. However, some of them have for sure become motivation for the emergence of striking monographs about translation, in which they found their place. For example, J. Ferenčík: *Kontexty prekladu* (Contexts of Translation, 1982), J. Vilikovský: *Preklad ako tvorba* (Translation as Creation), 1984, B. Hochel: *Preklad ako komunikácia* (Translation as Communication), 1990, J. Zambor: *Preklad ako umenie* (Translation as Art), 2000, E. Gromová: *Teória a didaktika prekladu* (Theory and Didactics of Translation, 2003), V. Makarová: *Tlmočenie - hraničná oblasť medzi vedou, skúsenosťou a umením možného* (Interpreting – the Borderline Sphere Between Science, Experience and Art of the Possible, 2004), J. Rakšányiová: *Preklad ako interkultúrna komunikácia* (Translation as Intercultural Communication, 2005), L. Šimon: *Úvod do teórie a praxe prekladu* (Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation, 2005), M. Kusá: *Preklad ako súčasť dejín kultúrneho priestoru* (Translation as Part of the History of a Cultural Space, 2005), A. Keníž: *Preklad ako hra na invariant a ekvivalenciu* (Translation as a Game of Invariant and Equivalency, 2008). (See the bibliography section in this issue).

The present situation in the field of translation in Slovakia since the change of the system in 1989 has clear features. We are witnesses of a huge production of translations especially from English, not only in the literary sphere but also in the sphere of purpose-built texts. However, their attendant feature is, unfortunately, insufficient, even weak quality, despite the fact that translation and interpreting is taught apart from Bratislava also at three more universities - in Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Prešov. Criticism of translation in all spheres is missing, but the theory is doing well. As everything, even this condition has objective and subjective causes. To the objective ones belong socio-cultural, praxeological causes, because a translator is determined and formed by the total of all social relations that determine his place and value on the labor market. To the subjective ones belong especially responsible attitude to translation work as a very demanding human activity and assessment of one's abilities, evaluating if they fulfill desired requirements.

What role in this constellation should be played by the SST in its further functioning (which, naturally, depends on many factors, especially on whether the Literary Fund will continue its existence, for it covers to a substantial degree the cost of the SST's organization, which becomes higher and higher)? Often we pose the question to ourselves if the Summer School of Translation has, indeed, got to the awareness of the translators' public so deep as a unique cultural phenomenon that they would consider its liquidation something unthinkable and unforgivable and would be willing to bear the costs for its further operation in disproportionately higher financial relations.

The aim of further efforts within summer schools of translation would become, above all, the subjective side of translators' work and the focus on the increase of the quality of the translation process. Perhaps it would be profitable to divide the program into certain genre spheres again and devote more time to interpretation of the original and translated text, to assess in a critical way the most significant translations, to initiate discussions about them, and thus create an impact on the translators' community and practice. In this sense it is very important to renew the contact with publishing editors and other editors (also TV redactors), to invite them to these undertakings for translators more and regularly, to inform them about the outcomes

which are reached in the discussions. This means to make a greater promotion for summer schools and their activity, so that people would learn and talk about them.

Also the above-mentioned orientation to the students of translation studies and beginning translators is very important. The SST should offer the most talented young translators, who proved to be such during its undertakings or in the Translators' Universiade, directly to publishing houses. Apparently, it would not be out of scope if also they were invited to the SST, so that the above mentioned discussion would heat up a little bit, given that young people do not lack enthusiasm for doing so. Outwardly, the SST should keep presenting itself in the form of proceedings (naturally, if money for that is available), the aim of which being, apart from other things, also to record precisely what is going on during the individual summer schools of translation, to be their evidence.

In a backward glance at the twenty nine years of summer schools of translation, they have clearly proved to have had an important impact on translation in Slovakia. Above all, they have markedly influenced constitution of the Slovak theory of translation and its gradual penetration to the awareness of the translators' community and, at the same time, provided it with a methodological conception of interpretation of the original text and of the text of the translation based on the expressional system of style. The focus of these seminars contributed to the society-wide recognition of various genres of translation as well as to the increased theoretical activity in various spheres of translation. Each year space was provided for theoretical and critical discussions in which the theory was enriched by practice and vice versa. Central themes of summer schools have recently been chosen always in such a way that they would respond to current problems or orientation of translation in Slovakia.

As a conclusion we take the liberty of pronouncing an optimistic wish that the years following the thirty year anniversary would by their content and resulting influence at least partially contribute to the standardization of the translators' activity and to an increase in readers' culture in Slovak.

Selected and shortened by Libuša Vajdová

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LETNÁ ŠKOLA PREKLADU

Letná škola prekladu. Kabinet literárnej komunikácie a experimentálnej metodiky v Nitre. 30 rokov trvania. Prednášky a praktické semináre. Výchova študentov a mladých prekladateľov. Prekladateľská prax. Dejiny, teória a kritika prekladu. Súčasnosť slovenskej translatológie. Slovenská škola prekladu.

Článok Alojza Keníža je rekapituláciou, analýzou a zhodnotením pravidelných seminárov slovenských prekladateľov, známych ako Letná škola prekladu, pri príležitosti 30. výročia od jej založenia. Toto podujatie vzniklo r. 1975 z iniciatívy A. Popoviča na pôde Kabinetu literárnej komunikácie a experimentálnej metodiky na Pedagogickej fakulte v Nitre pod názvom Letná škola interpretácie originálneho a prekladového textu. Od tých čias prebiehalo každoročne, hoci jeho program a dĺžka trvania sa menili. Cieľom bola výchova mladej literárnovedeckej a publicistickej generácie, ako aj rozvoj prekladateľskej praxe, dejín, teórie a kritiky prekladu.

Počas viac než tridsiatich ročníkov Letnej školy prekladu na nej spolupracovala väčšina súčasných prekladateľov i teoretikov a kritikov buď ako prednášatelia alebo poslucháči a diskutéri. Dnes má Letná škola prekladu prevažne prednáškový charakter, trvá kratšie (tri dni), ale stále si uchováva vysokú úroveň, a je zjavné, že výrazne zasiahla do konštituovania Slovenskej školy prekladu. Jediné, čo sa Letnej škole prekladu nepodarilo vytvoriť, je podľa autora kvalitná prekladová kritika, ktorá na Slovensku stále chýba. Článok bol spracovaný podľa knihy A. Keníža 30 rokov letnej školy prekladu 1975–2008 (2008).

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