

Translation Studies at Comenius University in Bratislava: Facts and Figures

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TRADITIONS OF TEACHING TRANSLATION STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF ARTS, COMENIUS UNIVERSITY

The notion of tradition is relative: a phenomenon does not need to last for centuries and despite that fact it is possible to speak about emergence, development and results that have influenced hundreds of individuals and probably also the national culture. Translation Studies is a new field of study everywhere in the world, and that is also why the period of 35 years of systematic teaching of translation and interpreting at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava was sufficient for the building of a solid foundation and a stable academic house where future translators and interpreters are educated. Objectively, we can state that this academic workplace is a symbolic cradle of teaching of translation studies in Slovakia. Because the Faculty of Arts CU began, as the first one in our country, offering not only a field of study oriented on teaching and science but also an independent program in translation studies to prospective students of foreign philologies.

Because nothing can emerge from vacuum, also this activity was a follow-up to a short existence of the University of 17th November in Bratislava, its Faculty of Social Sciences, which was a subsidiary of the University of 17th November in Prague. The headquarters in the capital of the former Czechoslovakia educated, apart from others, also translators and interpreters. However, in the vortex of political happenings

and their administrative consequences, this academic institution was closed and the field of translation was moved to the Faculty of Arts CU, the leading institution of the Slovak humane studies oriented university education. Also 1st October 1974 is a historical day for us because at that time students, teachers, and their symbolic translational bag moved to Gondova Street.

The relocation of the translation studies program from the historical palace in Zelená Street to the building in Gondova Street was really difficult because we were unwelcome newcomers. Today this seems unbelievable but in 1974 linguists, literary theoreticians, historians treated translation studies as a purely practical matter and us, young enthusiasts, as intruders. Working in such atmosphere was, on the other hand, also a challenge for us because we needed to prove constantly that translatology was a science, that teaching translation studies and interpreting must be established on academic grounds, that we are equal partners to linguists and literary theoreticians and not only some applied craftsmen. Life has proved us right: nowadays there is a huge interest in the study of translation studies and the numbers of students **are saved by fields in which pedagogical and scientific branches of study suffer from a lack of prospective students.**

In the 1974/75 academic year there were, all of a sudden, all 5 years with about 200 undergraduates at the Faculty of Arts. Students from higher years of study came from the University of 17th November; other students were gradually admitted to study the field of Translation-Interpreting, the popular OPT. In the total of 35 years of duration there has not been any break, teaching of translation studies is going on continuously.

In 1975 the scientific standard of translation studies was raised to a significant degree by Professor Anton Popovič who succeeded in the above-mentioned hostile atmosphere in creating a Division of the Theory of Translation and Interpreting. It was an independent workplace with a research basis and an integrating scientific element for teachers who worked at the individual departments – of English studies, German studies, Romance studies, Russian studies, and the like – and up to then they lacked any unifying scientific-methodological line. The division was, however, closed after several years by an administrative intervention.

A turn in organization occurred in 2003 with the introduction of a Bachelor's and Master's program and the Faculty obtained accreditation for providing a complete three-degree study, thus also a doctoral study program for PhD in the field of translatology.

SUBJECTS OF STUDY

The conception of study subjects within the study of translatology has not changed in principle from the beginning because it has proven as a well prepared and acceptable from the viewpoint of the use in practice. Students of translation studies always study two subjects: at the beginning the FACU offered English Philology, German Philology, Romance Philology, Spanish and Russian Philology. Gradually, the offer has broadened by other languages. The name of the subject always consists of language and culture, for example, Spanish Language and Culture, and within that teaching of translation takes place. At the FACU it is possible to study the following Germanic

languages: English, German, Dutch, Swedish; Slavonic languages: Russian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Polish; Romance languages: French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian; from exotic languages the Arabian language. Apart from these thirteen subjects within translation studies, all of which are accredited, other subjects deal with teaching of translation at least partially: Latin, Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, and Chinese. Undergraduates can deepen their expertise also within selective subjects focused on related languages, for example Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Slovenian.

Within the valid legislation the study is organized in the same way as in all countries of the EU where undergraduates have to obtain a certain number of credits from compulsory and optional courses, by the end of their 6th semester they hand in their bachelor's work, they have to pass their final state exams and obtain the academic title of Bachelor. Up to now, most undergraduates go on to study in the Master's program and a few excellent students in the doctoral study program.

The study combinations undergo frequent changes, resulting in a slightly different offer each academic year. Demand highly surpasses the possible numbers of admitted applicants. In the first year of study in every academic year there are about one hundred undergraduates in approximately 10 – 15 combinations. After a certain dropout, we can count with about four hundred students of translation studies in all years of study. Up to now, after their Bachelor's studies a majority of students continues on the Master's level. In the third, Master's degree, there are about 20 doctoral candidates in the field of translation studies.

Successful graduates from the Master's study have translation studies and interpreting listed in their diploma, which means that they spent an equal amount of time working in the field of translation and simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. In translation it is technical translation that dominates, with a broad range of pragmatic, technical, economical, and legal texts. Artistic translation is in many fields an optional subject for a limited number of students interested.

PILLARS OF STUDY

The study stands on three pillars: these are two equal subjects, for example English Language and Culture and German Language and Culture, and the so-called common background. Within the common background students choose translational disciplines – Introduction to Translatology, Theory of Professional Translation, Theory of Interpreting, Criticism of Translation, Praxeology of Translation – and the emphasis is placed on the study of the Slovak language and Culture, thus on linguistic as well as literary subjects. A professional translator must have a command of cultivated Slovak and must be familiar with literary traditions. The common background includes also other humane disciplines, e.g. Philosophy.

The study of translology calls for a live contact with the socio-cultural environment of a given country, and therefore more than a half of students take part in educational stipend programs within programs like ERAZMUS, CEEPUS, DAAD and the like. They gain their professional experience during their fellowships in international organizations, in agencies, fairs, in the contest called Translators' Universiade, and the like. Real future professionals realize that to study translation calls for more than attending lectures and seminars.

TEACHING STAFF

The study programs offered by FACU went through a strict assessment by the accreditation board. Each of the above-listed fields has at least one associated professor with habilitation. At present the following professors work directly in the field of translator education: Miroslav Dudok, Mária Kusá, Michael Metzeltin, Marta Pančíková, Jana Rakšányiová, Eva Tandlichová. Ján Zambor. Professor Jozef Mlacek remains a superstar even though he does not work at the FACU any longer. Almost two tens of associate professors have a high professional reputation. They are leading personalities in translational research and translation activity as such. In the field of Slovak translation studies significant names are the following: Miroslav Bázlik, Katarína Bednárová, Branislav Hochel, Alojz Keníž, Taida Nováková, Paulína Šišmišová, Jana Truhlářová, Ján Vilikovský and others. All of them, like assistant professors, are also listed on the Faculty website. Publication activities of individual scholars are mentioned in the closing part within the bibliography of works in this issue. They can also be found at: http://alis.uniba.sk:8000/cgi-bin/gw_49_3_8/chameleon?skin=epc.

RESEARCH

The above-mentioned, highly qualified teachers are the authors not only of numerous monographs from the field of translology, but they have also published hundreds of scholarly studies, articles, critical studies, reviews, and translations. A summary would call for tens of pages of text, and that is why we refer to the website. The FACU has the right to award the academic title of PhD, to habilitate and inaugurate in the field of Translation Studies and Interpreting. This competence is an outcome of a rich research activity, participation in scientific programs, both abroad and in Slovakia, for example VEGA, KEGA and others.

VISIONS

Preparation of high quality translators for the 21st century is a great challenge. Since the situation in culture, book production, the need of translation of technical texts, documents, promotional-presentational materials, websites, and the demand for interpreters changes, we must also respond in a flexible way. The teaching program needs to be innovated constantly and we need to reflect the most topical trends in the transfer of texts. We can see that the society does not need philologists, but real professionals in intercultural communication who can be used in the field nowadays called language industry. This is not any pejorative term to name industrial production of linguistic products, but a broad space for creation of texts. A translator of the future will probably have a different space for his/her self-actualization and will need to work creatively in various phases of the creating and editing of (foreign) texts, and will have to be a sufficiently self-confident partner in cultural communication. And for this he/she needs to be well prepared.

PROFILES

Prof. PhDr. Jana Rakšányiová, CSc. teaches translation studies to students and professional translators deepening their education at the Department of German, Dutch, and Scandinavian Studies, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratis-

lava. She translates from German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. She has published almost 40 papers in academic journals and miscellanies. She authored the monograph *Preklad ako interkultúrna komunikácia* (Translation as Intercultural Communication, 2005) and together with E. Gromová co-authored *Translatologické reflexie* (Translatological Reflections, 2005).

Translated by M. Uhrová

TRANSLATOLÓGIA NA UNIVERZITE KOMENSKÉHO V BRATISLAVE: FAKTY A POSTAVY

Vyučovanie prekladateľstva na FiF UK. Bakalársky a magisterký program. Doktorandské štúdium. Prekladateľské odbory. Sociokultúrne prostredie cudzej krajiny. Výmenné programy. Výskumná činnosť. Interkultúrna komunikácia.

Na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave bolo zavedené vyučovanie prekladu a tlmočenia po zániku Fakulty spoločenských vied Univerzity 17. novembra (1974/1975). Organizačný obrat nastal v r. 2003 zavedením systému bakalárskeho a magisterskeho programu, kedy fakulta získala akreditáciu na poskytovanie trojstupňového štúdia v odbore translatológia (vrátne PhD.). Spočiatku ponúkala päť jazykových špecializácií, no výber sa rozšíril o ďalšie jazyky, ktoré vyučujú v trinástich prekladateľských odboroch. V súčasnosti študuje približne sto poslucháčov v desiatich až pätnástich kombináciách, pričom na magisterskom stupni sa pripravuje asi dvadsať doktorandov. Prekladateľské štúdium si však vyžaduje živý kontakt so sociokultúrnym prostredím danej krajiny, a preto sa študenti zúčastňujú na programoch ERAZMUS, CEEPUS, DAAD. Dnes prekladateľské odbory disponujú šiestimi prednášajúcimi. Ich publikačnú zachytáva záverečná bibliografia prác v tomto čísle a možno ju vyhľadať na stránke http://alis.uniba.sk:8000/cgi-bin/gw_49_3_8/chameleon?skin=epc. Popri pedagogickej činnosti sa venujú vedecko-výskumnej činnosti v rámci vedeckých programov (VEGA, KEGA) a participujú na domácich a zahraničných konferenciách. Vyučovací program sa neustále inovuje, aby mohol pripravovať skutočných odborníkov na interkultúrnú komunikáciu.

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