

Smaller Languages: the Slavic Languages. «The Bearable Heaviness of Czech»

INTRODUCTION

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With this issue we have attempted to give continuity to the idea of presenting several minority languages, the idea already initiated with the number of Goedele De Sterck and Anna Vermeulen (2016/2), dedicated to Dutch. Therefore, we have dedicated this edition of the journal to Slavic languages, in particular to Czech (*čeština*, *český jazyk*). The Czech language has been the official language of the European Union since May 1, 2004, and it is the mother tongue of approximately 10.6 million speakers. Czech is a language that belongs to, together with Slovak, Polish, Kashubian, Pomeranian, and Sorbian, the group of Western Slavic languages. Its linguistic system, different from other European languages, and its complicated phonological system, with the free syntactic word order due to the rich morphology of the cases, was one of the many

causes of insufficient communication between the worlds that, in the second half of the twentieth century, would come to be separated by the iron curtain.

To this fact, we must add its position of a minority language. Currently, Czech is the official language of the Czech Republic, with almost 12 million inhabitants and Czech speakers in diaspora, and given its close proximity to Slovak, it is a language that is also understood by the inhabitants of Slovakia, the neighbouring country and linked with the Czech Republic through very strong historical and cultural ties. Despite the undisputed position of Czech as a minority language among other languages in the European Union, we maintain that Czech is a language of a long and significant linguistic-literary tradition. This has been testified since the existence of the Prague School of Linguistics, particularly by its research carried out in the field of translation theory (predominantly in the 1970s), and the enormous development of contrastive linguistics due to the elaboration and design of linguistic corpora, both monolingual and parallel.

The most emblematic notion of Prague linguistics is *function*, a concept reflected in literary, semiotic, and linguistic research, etc. Therefore it is not surprising that on the basis of *functionality* and *potentiality*, translation ideas emerged, which, due to the work of the Department of Translation at Charles University in Prague, have been reintroduced to the international audience through recent translations of the most outstanding works into the world languages (the work of Jiří Levý, translated and disseminated by Jana Králová and Miguel José Cuenca Drouhard, among others). Thus, among the enormous complexity of the issues related to Prague structuralism and in view of its contribution to Translation, the concept of *function of language*, which has a fundamental role in Translatology, is worth noting.

Therefore, this issue begins with an article on Jiří Levý, known internationally for his study *Translation as a Decision Process* (1967) and for the different versions of his book *Umění překladu* (1963; *The Art of Translation* 2011, *Die Literarische Übersetzung* 1969). The authors Kateřina Středová and Lukáš Klimeš, under the direction of Jana Králová (to whom to the «rediscovery» of Jiří Levý's ideas is due)¹, take advantage of Jiří Levý's reissued book *České teorie překladu* [Czech translation theories] not only to present the thoughts and decisions of the author which guided him to conceive his anthology but also to examine the role of anthologies in current translation research. In this way, through the observations on the selection of texts and peritexts, the authors postulate general questions about methodological aspects of the reissue and, consequently, of recontextualization, linked to the circumstantial changes and the objectives of the reissues as such.

The Prague concept of *function* is also referred to in the second article. Studies in the field of stylistics also have a very strong tradition within Czechoslovak

1. See especially Králová and Cuenca Drouhard (2013), Vega Cernuda (2011), and the monographic issue of *Mutatis mutandis* 2/9/2016, directed by Montoya, Králová and Pulido (2016).

structuralist-functional linguistics, inspired by the theories of Karl Bühler, a tradition that introduced *objective styles (estilos objetivos)* and *functional styles (estilos funcionales)*². This legacy is also developed in an article by Ondřej Molnár, in which, from a broader perspective, the author describes the evolution of stylistic concepts, which he compares with studies on register and genre. In addition, the article offers a genre analysis based on a concrete example, patient information leaflet, thus proposing a multi-perspective model with objectives of translation practice.

However, the contributions of Czech linguistics are related not only to the past but also to recent research in this area; namely, the design, methodology, and development of electronic tools, such as the different types of linguistic corpus or other CAT-type tools (e.g. Memsource), of appreciable quality. Michaela Martinková and Markéta Janebová present research based on the work with the most representative Czech parallel corpus, Intercorp. The authors take the case of a Czech particle, whose equivalences in other are very heterogeneous, to draw conclusions about the usefulness of the corpus in contrastive linguistics. Similarly, in his article, Ondřej Klabal aims, among other things, to present the use of the corpus to complement the limited lexicographical sources in translating specialized texts, especially legal texts, of minority languages. On the other hand, Vanda Obdržálková points out the series of obstacles that legal translation may entail, focusing on most common areas of difficulty faced by advanced translation students and professional translators.

Among the practical aspects, it is, for example, the status of translators and interpreters to and from Czech in present-day Europe with the predominant role of English that is worth mentioning. Thus, questions, such as the following, are raised: Is it worth training, even today, translators and interpreters of minority languages (particularly Czech)? What is their position among the translators / interpreters of the «top ten» languages in the EU institutions? What is the future of translation and interpretation of minority languages in the context of globalized Europe? What role do the linguistic corpora of minority languages play and what are their possibilities and limits? The answers to some of these questions can be found in the contribution by Ivana Čeříková, who focuses, among other things, on the presentation of the work of Czech interpreters in European institutions and the obstacles they deal with interpreting conferences from the Czech cabin.

The fact that a language belongs to a minority language as to the number of its speakers does not mean that it lacks world-famous literature – remember names such as Franz Kafka, Bohumil Hrabal, Jaroslav Seifert, Milan Kundera, Václav Havel, and many more. Nevertheless, as Miguel José Cuenca Drouhard fittingly points out in the introduction of his article in the present monographic issue, «*Czech language literature has had to follow winding paths sometimes to reach the foreign reader*».

2. The Prague legacy and modern studies on stylistics are collected in Chloupek and Ne-kvapil (1993).

Many articles have been written about under what circumstances they were translated into foreign languages; even so, much remains to be discovered. Therefore, the second part of the issue presents research on issues related to the literary field and its translation into Spanish from very varied perspectives. Luis Pegenaute presents the panorama of Czech literary production written after 1975 and translated not only to Spanish but also to Catalan and Basque. Moreover, Miguel José Cuenca Drouhard introduces the reader to historical contexts. He reflects on the geopolitical interests of Spain and Czechoslovakia and on the restrictions aimed at controlling public opinion. Then, following Karel Čapek's *Válka s mloky* [The War of Salamanders], he proceeds to research on the «fictitious translator» – a translator that appears on the back cover, but «*is not the one that appears and does not appear the one that is*».

This issue is concluded with Martina Halamová's review of the novel *Mezi pannou a babou* [Between Maiden and Grandam] by Eda Kriseová, understood as an invitation to the rich Czech literary tradition.

Last but not least, we wish to express our thanks to *Clina* journal for making it possible for this issue to come to existence. Undoubtedly, minority languages, among which the Czech language belongs, deserve to be remembered and considered among all existing languages, both among majority languages, as well as among the smaller ones. Without smaller languages, majority languages could not be designated as majority. On the contrary, without the majority ones, the minority ones would struggle even harder to find their «place under the sun», as evidenced by the many contributions in this issue, focusing on the varied aspects and issues related to a smaller language, the Czech language, and written in English or Spanish, the majority languages.

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