

Why is translation still a central issue in foreign language
teaching?

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A critical approach

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Magyar nyelvű összefoglaló

Dolgozatomban tulajdonképpen a fordítás gyakorlati szerepét kutatom, ezen belül is azt, hogy milyen szerepe van a fordításnak az idegennyelv-órán. Elsődleges módszer, alkalmazzák-e a tanárok, vagy inkább más módszerekre helyezik a hangsúlyt? Ezekre a kérdésekre próbálok meg választ adni.

Az elmúlt években a kommunikatív nyelvoktatás térhódításával egyre több, a fordítást ellenző hang jelent meg az idegennyelv-pedagógiában. Számos kutató azon a véleményen van, hogy a fordításnak nincs helye a nyelvórán: a mai elméletek inkább a fordítás ellen érvelnek, mintsem támogatnák azt. Úgy vélik, a fordítás inkább árt, mint használ: a beszédkésztséget háttérbe szorítja, egyoldalúvá teszi a nyelvtanulást, illetve nem tanulóközpontú. Mások a fordítást csupán írott módszerként emlegetik, amely során a folyékony kommunikatív nyelvhasználat teljesen háttérbe szorul, kizárva a szóbeli készségek fejlesztését. A fordítás idegennyelv-órán történő alkalmazásának egyik legnagyobb ellenzője Lado (1964), aki szerint a fordítás nem hasznos eszköze az idegennyelv-tanulásnak. Véleménye szerint azért nem, mivel a fordítás alkalmazása könnyen azt az érzetet keltheti a nyelvtanulóban, hogy az anyanyelve és a számára idegen nyelv között a teljes ekvivalencia esete áll fenn. Úgy gondolja, hogy egyrészt nagyon kevés ekvivalens szó van, legyen szó bármilyen nyelvpárról, másrészt, a szóról-szóra fordítás helytelen szerkezeteket fog eredményezni. Newson (1998) szintén a fordítás ellen emelt szót: szerinte a fordítás könnyen interferenciát okozhat, illetve a folyékony beszédkésztségének összeomlásához vezethet. Dolgozatomban azt próbálom meg bebizonyítani, hogy a fent említett állítások gyenge lábakon állnak, és nem állják meg a helyüket. A fordítás mellett kardoskodik Malmkjær (1998), aki könyvében felhívja a figyelmet arra, hogy a fordítás alkalmazása az egyik leghasznosabb és az egyik legkreatívabb módszer a nyelvórán. Lado meglátásaira reagálva, Malmkjær hangsúlyozza, hogy a nyelvtanuló a kontextus differenciájának segítségével bizonyosan rájön majd, hogy bizonyos kifejezések nem ekvivalensek a két nyelvben. Vermes (2010) Newson megállapítására reflektálva megállapítja, hogy interferencia bármely tanulási szituációban keletkezhet, tehát nem lehet csupán a fordítás számlájára írni az interferencia kialakulását. Épp ellenkezőleg, a fordítási feladatok a tanulói tudatosságot és az interferencia kialakulásának lehetőségét akadályozzák meg, tehát nyugodt szívvel alkalmazhatóak az idegennyelv-órán.

Mivel a tanáron és a diákokon kívül az írott tankönyv a legfontosabb médium az idegennyelv-órán, ezért dolgozatom második felében a kurrens nyelvkönyveket vizsgáltam

meg egy kicsit mélyrehatóbban. A fordítás szemszögéből próbáltam meg elemezni a manapság legtöbbet használt tankönyveket, pontosabban azt, hogy vannak-e ezekben a könyvekben fordítási feladatok. Ha vannak, akkor mi ezen feladatok célja, és mi a szerepük a könyv kontextusában? Ha nincsenek, akkor vajon miért állhat fenn ez a helyzet? Az analízis során a legnépszerűbb tankönyveket próbáltam meg górcső alá venni: a Traveller, a New English File, a Solutions és a To The Top sorozatok nagy népszerűségnek örvendenek az általános- és középiskolákban, ezért az elemzés során ezen könyvekre helyeztem a hangsúlyt. Érdekes kérdés, hogy az adott tankönyv mennyire segíti a nyelvtanár feladatát. Segíti-e egyáltalán? Az analízis eredményei vegyes képet mutatnak: igen, segíti, de nem a fordítást helyezi előtérbe. A vizsgált tankönyvek töredéke tartalmaz csak fordítási feladatokat, ami a kutatás szempontjából érdekes kérdéseket vet fel. A ma használatos tankönyvek a kommunikatív nyelvoktatás szellemében íródtak, és a fordításnak csak mellékszerepet szánnak. Az említett tankönyvek struktúrája egydimenziós tanulási stratégiákat tesz lehetővé, ahol a fordításnak nemigen van kiemelkedő szerepe. A könyvek nagy része egy meghatározott fonalat követ: a különböző fejezeteket a négy alapkészség (írás, olvasás, hallgatás, beszéd) szellemében próbálják összeállítani, azonban a fejezetekhez és a specifikus anyagokhoz tartozó feladatok nagyon is kiszámíthatóak és egysíkúak. Ezek között feleletválasztós, párosítós, illetve igaz-hamis feladatokat találunk, ami jellemző az elemzett könyvek nagy részére. Fordítási feladatok vagy egyáltalán nem, vagy csak elenyésző számban találhatók a könyvekben. Ahol találunk ilyen jellegű feladatokat, ott is rendszertelenül és nem szisztematikusan illeszkednek a könyv struktúrájába. A tanulói nyelvkönyvek mellett a tanári könyveket is górcső alá vettem, ezek eredményei még érdekesebb képet mutatnak. A tanári könyvek nagy része sem számít a fordításra, mint az eredményes és praktikus nyelvtanítás egyik módszerére, ezen felül, amelyik számít is, az is egyfajta addicionális, extra metódusként tekint a fordítási feladatokra. Érdekes látni, hogy a fordítás egy másodlagos, háttérbe szorított módszerré vált az elmúlt években, ráadásul mind a módszertani elméletek, mind a kurrens tankönyvek felépítése hűen tükrözi ezt aényt. Vajon miért lehet ez? Valóban így lenne ez a gyakorlatban is? Az idegennyelv-tanárok tényleg nem hívják segítségül a fordítást az órán? Ezekre a kérdésekre kerestem a választ dolgozatom harmadik részében, amihez egy általam készített angol nyelvű kérdőívet hívtam segítségül. A kutatás sarkalatos pontja a dolgozat ezen fejezete, ami érdekes eredményekkel szolgál.

A kérdőívet általános- és középiskolai, valamint főiskolai tanárok körében tölttettem ki, a válaszadás során kértem őket, hogy ha bármilyen észrevételük, megjegyzésük van a témával kapcsolatban, akkor nem kell a kérdőív nyújtotta kerethez ragaszkodni, nyugodtan fűzhetnek

hozzá kiegészítő információkat. Ez sok esetben meg is történt, ami a kutatás végkövetkeztetésének levonása szempontjából nagy segítséget nyújtott. A kérdőívben a pedagógus nyelvórán használt metódusaira voltam kíváncsi, a fordítás szemszögéből megközelítve a dolgokat. Húsz nyelvtanárral sikerült a kérdőívet kitölteni, ebből 10 válaszadó középiskolai, öt általános iskolai, a másik öt pedig főiskolai tanár. A kérdőív első kérdése a fordítás tanórai alkalmazására keresi a választ: használják-e a nyelvtanárok a fordítás módszerét a nyelvórán? A válaszadók fele, tíz pedagógus rendszeresen használja a fordítást a tanórán, hét tanár pedig néha alkalmazza azt. Senki nem válaszolt nemmel a kérdésre, tehát igenis sokszor hívják segítségül a fordítást a pedagógusok. A második kérdés az alkalmazott fordítás fajtájára utal: szóbeli vagy írásbeli fordítást alkalmaznak, vagy esetleg mindkettőt? Tizennégy válaszadó jelölte meg ez utóbbit, vagyis a tanárok megpróbálják mind a két fajta fordítást használni az órán. A kérdőív második része különböző aspektusokra koncentrál: szóba kerül a tanulók nyelvi szintje, az alkalmazott tankönyv felépítése, illetve a fordítás iránya is. Ezen kérdéseknél több választ is megjelölhettek a pedagógusok, és sokuk élt is ezzel a lehetőséggel. A kérdőív ezen részének összegzéseként elmondható, hogy a nyelvtanárok minden nyelvi szinten fontosnak és hasznosnak tartják a fordítás alkalmazását, igaz, más-más céllal. Mintegy megerősítésként, a pedagógusok zöme is azt tapasztalta, amit jómagam is a kutatás második fejezetében: a kurrens tankönyvek nem tartalmaznak fordítási feladatokat. Ami a fordítás irányát illeti, a pedagógusok túlnyomó többsége minkét irányban fontosnak tartja a fordítási feladatok alkalmazását. A kérdőív utolsó kérdése a legfontosabb a kutatás szempontjából: mi a tanárok által alkalmazott fordítási feladat célja? A szó jelentésének szemléltetése, az anyanyelvi és idegen nyelvi szerkezetek közti különbségek feltárása, a sikeres kommunikáció elérése, vagy a tanulók aktív és passzív idegen nyelvi tudásának ellenőrzése? Minden egyes alternatíva magas értéket kapott, két pedagógus pedig az összes lehetőséget bejelölte.

Az eredmények alapján elmondható, hogy a fordítás igenis jelen van a nyelvórán, sőt a pedagógusok egyik kedvenc metódusa még mindig. Egy megkérdezett tanár véleménye szerint a fordításnak kellene az ötödik alapkészségnek lennie. Ami bizonyos, hogy a fordítás szerepe megkérdőjelezhetetlen az idegennyelv-tanításban. Ha a szakmódszertani elméletek nem is beszélnek a fordítás hasznosságáról, a gyakorlatban még mindig ez az egyik leggyakrabban használt eszköz a pedagógusok körében.

1. General Introduction

The topic of my thesis was suggested by my interest in translation and its current position in foreign language teaching. The central theme of this paper was also motivated by a surprising discovery I made during my MA studies: the employment of translation has become outdated by many scholars and its position has been questioned in foreign language education. As far as foreign language teaching methodology is concerned, many theories and approaches do not consider translation as a possible option in the classroom. Translation is said to be an unnecessary and time-consuming process and it has become an outlaw in a world where communicative methods have come into prominence.

It has always been a question what the language teacher should teach and how he or she should teach it. In this paper, I aim at focusing on the latter aspect, which seems to be a more complicated issue. How can the teacher organise the lesson and what kinds of aids does he or she employ? This paper was written to give a critical orientation to those approaches which exclude translation from the language classroom. The analysis will attempt to justify the claim that translation is one of the most effective and useful techniques in the foreign language classroom for tackling those problems and difficulties which can occur during language learning. I will try to present several arguments to show that translation can still be used in an effective way in the foreign language classroom.

In the first section of this paper I will be presenting an outline of pros and cons as far as the employment of translation is concerned. I will also touch upon the basic milestones in the history of translation mainly concentrating on the use of translation for the purpose of language teaching. The main objections to using translation in foreign language classroom will be compared with supporting ideas as well. In this section I will rely on Vermees (2003 and 2010) discussing the usefulness of translation in the foreign language classroom. I will also refer to the ideas of Malmkjær (1998). This book presents a detailed analysis of the role of translation in foreign language teaching focusing on objections as well as supporting views. The critical ideas of Lado (1964) and Newson (1998) will be taken into consideration just as the supportive views of Stibbard (1998) and Duff (1989). In order to avoid misunderstanding, I aim at clarifying the notion of translation with the help of two taxonomies: the first one was introduced by Gile (1995) while the other one was elaborated by Klaudy (2003).

In the second section of my paper, I will concentrate on a specific approach to language teaching and on the role of translation. Since the course book is one of the most important elements in the language lesson, it will be interesting to examine how current books are structured and how they help the task of the language teacher. This analysis will be delivered

from a translational perspective, focusing on translation tasks and exercises in the books. The primary aim of this chapter is to answer the following questions: Do current course books offer translation tasks? If they do, what is the purpose of these tasks?

Finally, in the last section of this paper, I would like to concentrate on the practical side of this issue: the aim of the last chapter is to examine the current situation in Hungarian schools. Do language teachers consider translation as a vital phenomenon in the foreign language classroom? Do they use it at all? If they do, what is the purpose of a given translation task? In order to be able to answer these questions, I will rely on the results of a survey questionnaire in which pivotal questions will be included about the frequency, systematicity and the practicality of translation.

2. Theoretical background

In the past few years, several objections arose asserting that the employment of translation is an outdated technique because the success of communicative language teaching (CLT) made several other meaningful ways available. The classical Grammar – Translation Method has been replaced by such formulae which do not count translation as a useful phenomenon in the language classroom. In addition, several theorists completely exclude translation strategies in language learning emphasizing that it makes the learner think only in one language. Other scholars also seem reluctant because, as they say, in many cases translation is just a written activity where such crucial factors as learning new vocabulary or fluent communicative language use are completely left out. In this chapter I will try to show that translation is still a significant component in the foreign language classroom referring to several aspects in second language acquisition. The primary aim of this section is to demonstrate how translation may most effectively be employed as a useful teaching methodology in the foreign language classroom. Since translation is a special kind of communication, the subsidiary aim of this part is to prove that translation has a role in communicative situations and language learning as well.

2.1. The history of the employment of translation in the language classroom

As far as modern language teaching is concerned, Grammar-Translation Method was the pioneer application established in Prussia in the late 18th century. Although it was highly criticized, the method remained popular up until the middle of the 20th century. In the 19th century, Grammar-Translation method was the primary technique in schools concentrating on the level of the sentence only. More specifically, this method involved individual aspects of grammar which were later illustrated by sentences. The students were supposed to translate these sentences from the target language, mainly from classical texts, to their first language or vice versa. Translation was a vital component focusing on sample or “example” sentences; the language learner’s task was to translate them “into or out of the target language in writing” (Vermees 2010:85). The importance of the spoken language was not a primary concern in the Grammar-Translation Method. On the contrary, it aimed to analyse classical written texts concentrating on particular grammatical phenomena. The use of translation in language teaching was not a new invention since in the ancient Rome classical texts had already been used in classes. Students had been supposed to work with Greek and Latin texts as well as they had focused on the grammatical analysis of sentences. Grammar-Translation Method was similar to this literal approach and that’s why it has been criticized by many scholars. As they said, longer texts were not studied in the classroom and there was no verbal interaction

between the teacher and the student. Accuracy was in the focus and there was little consideration of the development of speaking skills.

The development of the Reform Movement or the Direct Method was an answer to the restrictions and shortcomings of the Grammar-Translation Method. Translation was excluded in favour of the communication between the student and the teacher, “relating the grammatical forms they were studying to objects and pictures, etc. in order to establish their meaning” (Harmer 2007: 63). Translation became an outlaw and the sole use of the target language was in a privileged position. The adherents of the Reform Movement aimed at establishing a rather speech-oriented approach where teacher – student interaction and oral classroom methodology had priority. In addition, they wished to get rid of excerpts and artificially created sentences: contextually connected texts have been brought to light concentrating on the target language only. As Malmkjær (1998:4) writes, “the use of isolated sentences for any purposes was [...] discouraged, and their use in translation exercises especially so, since translation was thought to lead to ‘cross associations’ between the two languages, which would actively hinder the development of the foreign language”. Lado (1964) also asserts that translation is not an appropriate technique in the language classroom due to the wrong assumption of full equivalence in two languages. He emphasizes that, on the one hand, there are very few equivalent words in any two languages and, on the other, believing that the expressions are equivalents, the student may incorrectly use the translation in the same situation as the original. Moreover, if the student is supposed to produce word-for-word translations, it will result in incorrect constructions. More recently, Newson (1998) is one of the biggest protesters of the employment of translation in the language classroom. In his short paper, he lists the main disadvantages of translation as a teaching method: transference into another language can cause interference; translation excludes spoken language fluency and this way of language learning is not learner-centred. The abovementioned objections suggest that the employment of translation in the language classroom may cause wrongly made solutions putting the language learner into a confusing situation. However, translation, as a special kind of communication, is an increasingly complex phenomenon involving various skills and cognitive components. Before the application of translation is completely excluded from foreign language teaching, the following questions should be examined first:

- (1) What is the purpose of the translation?
- (2) In what teaching context translation is used?
- (3) What kind of translation is used?

As the last question suggests translation is not a simple phenomenon. A detailed answer to the third question will be presented in the next section.

2.2. Two types of translation

According to Gile (1995:22) translation activity can be divided into two parts: interpretation and translation. As far as translation is concerned, it has several subtypes relating to its function and purpose. “Professional Translation” is carried out on request by the client and it is done for financial purposes. It is supposed to concentrate on the “Receiver [...] who is essentially interested in the Text in whatever message carries and/or in the Sender (author or speaker), not in the Translator or in the Translation process” (Gile 1995:22). Gile concludes that Professional Translation is a “professional act of communication” with professional rules relating to a particular communication situation.

Another instance of translation is the so-called “school translation” which is more important in the context of foreign language teaching. School translation is one of the most important types of translation and this paper tries to focus on this particular aspect of translation. School translation is very different from Professional Translation: Professional Translation focuses on the content of language while school translation concentrates on the language itself. More specifically, school translation aims at improving or testing “students’ passive and active knowledge of a foreign language” and also, it develops “writing ability in that language, or at least the ability to write foreign language texts following lexical and syntactic choices induced by the source language text” (Gile 1995:22). When students are supposed to translate from the foreign language, their understanding of foreign language lexical items and linguistic structures is tested.

Klaudy (2003:133) uses the term “pedagogical translation” and “real translation” and these are fundamentally different as far as “function, object and addressee” are concerned. In pedagogical translation, translation functions as a “tool”, while in the case of real translations the translated text is the primary goal of the process. Similarly to Gile’s distinction, Klaudy emphasizes that the main purpose of pedagogical translation is to develop the students’ language proficiency, while in real translations the aim is to improve translating skills. Pedagogical translation tries to raise consciousness, providing practice and “testing knowledge” (Klaudy 2003:133). As for the object of translation, Klaudy (2003:133) asserts that in real translation the translator transmits information about reality, while in pedagogical translation the translator (more specifically the student) shows his or her level of language competence and proficiency. As it has been mentioned translation can be distinguished on the basis of the addressee as well. In the case of real translation the primary target is the reader

who wishes to get information about reality, “unsuspecting and well-intended, not set to find mistakes” (Klaudy 2003:133), while in pedagogical translation the addressee is the tutor or the teacher. In the language classroom, the teacher may wish to test the proficiency of the student or find and correct the students’ mistakes.

Consequently, the teaching of translation for professional aims is very different from the employment of translation in the foreign language classroom. As Klaudy (2003:133) puts it: “real translation training starts where foreign language teaching ends”. In primary and secondary schools, we can speak of pedagogical translation, while real translation can only be observed in translation training institutions and interpreter programmes “designed specially for this purpose” (Klaudy 2003:133). This section has shown that the purpose and the type of translation is an increasingly important question showing that translation cannot be objected without examining the aim of the translation process.

2.3. The importance of translation in foreign language teaching

As we have seen there were many objections against the use of translation in foreign language teaching. Many of them consider translation as an independent phenomenon and it is very different from the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. This idea is based on the assumption that language competence is a matter of the four basic skills where translation has nothing to do with them. However, Malmkjær (1998:8) voices the opinion that translation is impossible without a good mastery of reading, writing, speaking and listening, it is “dependent on and inclusive of them” and students of a foreign language will be compelled to practice them during the translation process. On the other hand, if we assume that translation includes the other four skills and depends on them, it is a bit ambiguous to suggest that translation is a completely different phenomenon. Malmkjær (1998:8) asserts that translation is not a “time waster” in foreign language teaching, though it takes “more time than teaching by some other means”.

According to Lado (1964), translation should not be used in the language classroom because it makes the student believe that there is one-to-one correspondence between the expressions of the two languages. Quite firmly, Malmkjær (1998:8) claims that if translation takes place in the classroom, students will surely realize that there are many cases when “expressions in the two languages do not necessarily correspond one-to-one [...], and that even when they do, the contexts for the two texts may differ so radically that the TL expression which is usually considered the closest ‘equivalent’ of the SL expression is in fact unsuitable for TT”. In these situations students are compelled to develop their “focused

thinking” in the source language and the target language as well. In this way, foreign language students will become familiar with the most important features in both languages.

If we recall Newson’s (1998) main objection, it is said that it causes interference between the two languages. However, as Vermes (2010:89) points out, “interference [...] may occur in any language learning situation, whether or not translation is used as a teaching procedure”. Therefore this objection “cannot logically held to be a consequence of translation” and “translation exercises have the advantage that they encourage awareness and control of such phenomena” (Vermes 2010:89, cited in Malmkjær 1998:8).

Malmkjær (1998:9) also claims that protesters against school translation point out that translation is an inappropriate test of language skills. Vermes (2010:87) observes that it is not against the use of translation in the foreign language classroom: “it concerns its use in checking the results of language teaching”. Newson (1998:64) points out that using translation as a tool of testing language competence can cause “random translation problems”. It means that the student is expected to translate various types of texts in the target language implying that “the potential resources of the entire language are being tested”. This problem can be prevented if the texts are selected according to some features such as length, genre and subject matter. Malmkjær (1998:9) also contends that translation during a test would “test the students’ ability to apply all of the skills.

Finally, Newson also points out that the employment of translation in the foreign language classroom does not help students to achieve fluency in spoken language. Vermes (2010:87) insists that this objection is appropriate only if translation is considered to be “an exclusively written form of activity”. However, it is misleading to say that translation is only a written phenomenon because it can also be produced orally, and therefore it can be employed to improve fluency in spoken language. Stibbard (1998:74) also claims that spoken or oral translation can improve skills, “for the translator has to search for the most appropriate words to convey what is meant, gaining in flexibility, accuracy and clarity of expression”. Translation can be an effective tool improving communicative skills, spoken fluency and it also makes the learner use foreign language creatively.

A similar distinction was made in an earlier paper by Vermes (2003:58), in which he argues that, in connection with translation and foreign language education, the biggest problem was that translation has been approached as a “product-oriented” technique where the teacher only concentrated on error correction. It was not an appropriate method because it does not help the student recognize, consider and evaluate those phenomena which occur during the translation process. Translation should be “process-oriented” in order to encourage

the development of translation skills. Since one of the most popular forms of written exercise is translation, Vermes (2003:59), speaking in the Hungarian context, points out that translation, excluded from the means of communicative language teaching, is often considered as a “grammar-oriented” and “static” application, thus, it cannot be used to develop students’ foreign language (writing) skills. Vermes emphasizes that this assumption doesn’t seem well-founded due to the fact that the process of translation is “dynamic” and increasingly creative” in the foreign language classroom. The most pivotal point is how translation is used and for what purpose. Duff (1989:7) claims that “translation develops three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility”. Vermes (2003:59), emphasizing Duff’s ideas, claims that these qualities are the most important features in foreign language writing skills. As far as reading skills are concerned, Vermes (2003:59) asserts that translation is the best aid if the student wishes to read foreign texts appropriately. Translating from the foreign language into the mother tongue is the greatest reading method which teaches the student how to read properly in the foreign language. There are many cases when the reader realizes during the translation process, that she does not understand the text accurately. If the appropriate type of translation is used for appropriate purposes in the appropriate context, it is one of the best tools in the foreign language classroom.

As we have seen, the practicality of translation in foreign language teaching had been brought into question by many scholars and, even today, there is no agreement in this dilemma. Protesters argue that translation is only concerned with decontextualized language encouraging the learner to think only in one language. Supporters claim that if a foreign language learner wants to find a creative and dynamic method, translation is the best possible application improving accuracy and flexibility. Quite obviously, the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of translation is still a central issue in foreign language teaching and there are many debates whether translation has or has not a central role in the foreign language classroom. The further aim of this research is to examine the current situation in Hungarian schools. Do teachers use translation in the foreign language classroom? If they do what is the purpose of the employment of translation? What kind of translation do they use in what teaching context? What is the role of a translation task in the language classroom? In order to be able to address these issues, a detailed questionnaire will be carried out in the context of the application of translation in the foreign language classroom. In order to justify the assumption that translation is a useful pedagogical device, several other questions will have to be examined. A detailed discussion is needed about the level of language command on which

translation may be most effective or the types of translation tasks that might be practical in language teaching. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine the content of different practice books: do they suggest translation tasks? If they do, what is the purpose of these tasks? What is the role of the translation task in the context of the practice book? A more comprehensive discussion of these topics will have to be presented in the next chapters.

3. Analysis of current course books

As I have mentioned previously, the usefulness of translation in the foreign language classroom is still a dilemma and many experts emphasize that it is not an easy issue. There are protesters who emphasize that the employment of translation in foreign language teaching is rather one-sided: it encourages the learner to think only in one language while the other one is completely ignored. Supporters claim that it is just on the contrary: as a special kind of communication, the application of translation is the best way to improve foreign language creativity and flexibility.

Surely, in the language classroom there are two pivotal contributors: the teacher and the student. However, a very important medium helps them to work together effectively: it is the course book or the practice book. As far as the practice book is concerned, it is considered to be a vital aid in the foreign language classroom helping the student to develop his or her language proficiency. In most cases, the teacher makes a particular lesson plan according to the given unit of the course book. There are several different course books recently and the authors try to concentrate on various segments: most of them shine the spotlight on grammar tasks and gap-fillers and there are many vocabulary exercises in different topics. The most up-to-date books pay attention to the four basic skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Many scholars consider translation as the fifth basic skill and my aim is to analyze how translation and different translation tasks are included in a particular course book. Do these books offer translation activities or not? If they do, what is the purpose of these exercises? If there is a particular task, how does it function in the context of the book? What kind of translation do they suggest? Written or oral? To be able to answer these questions I aim at analyzing those course books which are frequently used in Hungarian elementary and secondary schools. These books are quite up-to-date media with modern illustrations and interactive teaching materials. All books are compiled in accordance with the Common European Framework. I will try to focus on different course book levels: elementary, intermediate and upper-intermediate. In addition, I will also attempt to find out whether teachers follow the course book units consistently or they give extra materials in order to make up the shortcomings of the practice book. In many cases, if there aren't any exercises which fit the teaching needs, teachers often try to compensate it with additional tasks or activities. How do they do that? I also aim at answering this question. As far as the books are concerned, I will examine the different editions of *To The Top* and *Traveller* by Mitchell

(2006, 2009), *New English File* by Oxenden & Latham-Koenig (2006), *New Round-Up* and *Enterprise* by Evans & Dooley (2011, 2000), and finally *Solutions* by Falla & Davies (2008).

3.1. Traveller

The first course book I would like to analyze is the latest of all as far as publication date is concerned. *Traveller* written by Mitchell (2009:2) has seven levels: the first one is available for beginners while the seventh one is a compilation for advanced language learners. The course provides more than just a student's book: the package contains a full colour workbook, a study companion, a teacher's book and workbook, two class CDs, a Test Audio CD and CD-ROM, a Placement Test CD and an Interactive Whiteboard Material.

The book follows a particular order containing modules with different subtopics. The modules are compiled according to the level of the book: at the elementary level, there are everyday topics such as "daily routine, events and adventures". At the pre-intermediate level, there are topics related to "sports, music, youth culture, travelling and money". All modules concentrate on the four basic skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Furthermore, each module provides a grammar and a vocabulary section with the appropriate tasks. As far as reading is concerned, magazine articles, short advertisements and interviews are included in the elementary and pre-intermediate books, however, there are no translation tasks at all. Interestingly, these texts are rather short ones and the task is almost the same in every module: the students are supposed to skim the text in order to get the essence of the reading material. The book makes the students answer some questions after the skimming and the next task is to read the text again, which provides a kind of scanning reading. The main purpose of scanning reading is to localize a particular piece of information in the text and the book offers it through different task types such as answering some questions about the text, multiple choice tests, gap-fillers, true or false tasks and matching exercises – all related to the text itself. Somewhat confusingly, there is a text-related "discuss" part at the end of each reading section although there is a separate "speaking" section in each module of the book. As for higher level books, texts are longer and more sophisticated on level B2 and C1, however, the tasks are completely the same. There are extracts from novels and plays, excerpts from brochures – all text-related tasks are identical to the ones included in the lower level versions. It is rather interesting that there are no translation tasks in the reading section of the *Traveller* series. The purpose of the tasks is to skim and scan the given text in order to be able to find useful pieces of information which are necessary to complete the given task. The main purpose is not to make students do some intensive reading: on the contrary, it is a special kind of "reading-for-purpose" technique where the text is just an aid for the different task types. Intensive reading

is a very useful technique especially in the Grammar Translation Method where the aim of the reading is to analyze the text structurally. This method makes the students separate the texts into smaller parts: the main purpose is to interpret and explain these segments or structures. As the task is not translation in the *Traveller* series, reading section tasks are rather grammar - and vocabulary – related exercises where translation is not an option. As far as listening section is concerned, everyday conversations are the most common ones with text-related questions and exercises again. The structure of the tasks is very similar to reading section exercises focusing on multiple choice activities, true or false exercises and gap-fillers. As for higher levels, TV, radio and job interviews are included in the listening section offering similar type of exercises. The listening section is frequently combined with reading and speaking tasks where the transcripts are given in advance. In these cases students are supposed to listen and read the text and they also have to answer some text-related questions orally. Again, the book doesn't offer translation tasks or any exercises related to translation. If we take speaking and writing section into consideration, the idea behind the structure of the tasks is almost the same: there are many prompts with key words and practical expressions where students are supposed to use these aids to complete the tasks. Somewhat shockingly, there are no translation tasks in the books at all. If we recall the reading section of the book, it is interesting to see that only a kind of scanning reading is required to do the text-related tasks. In his paper, Vermes (2003:59) emphasizes that the connection between reading and translation is pivotal in the context of foreign language teaching. In the case of a particular reading task, translation is one of the most effective techniques where translating from the foreign language into the mother tongue is a vital aid for the foreign language student. With the help of translation, the students can realize their own limits and can immediately correct their reading mistakes, not to speak about the interpretation of the text itself. As far as *Traveller* series are concerned, it tries to offer practical approaches by providing tangible situations with ordinary matters. As Mitchell (2009:2) asserts: “the main concern [...] has been to explicitly demonstrate how English is used in real-life situations, thus, enabling learners to use it in meaningful contexts”. The book is compiled to strengthen the students' ability to “communicate their ideas fluently, accurately and confidently”. It also attempts to develop students' autonomy, cultural awareness and critical thinking by providing culture sections and self-evaluation segments. From a translational point of view, *Traveller* is just a basic medium of communicative language teaching where translation has not a significant role. The main aim of the book is to develop students' communicative ability by making them read texts for specific (and restricted) purposes, listen to texts for a particular reason

(answering questions) speak and write with a special attention to the prompts and key words. Since translation is a creative activity, and often regarded as the fifth basic skill, *Traveller* provides a relatively schematic approach which doesn't really correlate to the essentials of translation. Those foreign language teachers who use *Traveller* in their lessons have to make a decision: they either follow the modular schema of the book precisely without adding extra (translation) tasks, or they use the texts and the tasks as mediums or tools for translation exercises. Teachers' choices and practical decisions will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.2. New English File

New English File compiled by Oxenden & Latham-Koenig (2006) is another seven-level course which takes students from beginner to advanced level. It is a relatively up-to-date compilation which also follows a particular pattern as far as the structure of the books is concerned. The books concentrate on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, however, they also try to focus on the four basic skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. Writing has a special role in the series as there is a separate writing section at the end of each unit. Every unit ends with a complex revision section called "What do you remember?" and "What can you do?" (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig 2006:14). One of the most interesting characteristic features of the series is the so-called "Practical English" (or "Colloquial English" in the higher level books) which provides everyday conversations and situations like "asking for a drink", "checking in a hotel" or "buying clothes". Just like in the case of the *Traveller* series, the structure of the tasks is similar on higher level: the only difference is that texts are longer and more comprehensive. The most interesting features of the series are the questions in each subtopics: students are supposed to answer an enormous number of questions in the reading, writing, listening and speaking sections! The books are full of drilling tasks with many text-related questions and exercises. Similarly to *Traveller*, there are gap-fillers, matching exercises, re-ordering tasks and multiple choice tests. The series focus on pronunciation tasks with complete alphabet charts and sound-pictures. As far as translation is concerned, there are no translation tasks in the series. Just like in the case of *Traveller*, there are texts to read, but the task is not translation: students are supposed to read the text for specific information. These pieces of information are necessary to complete different text-related tasks like answering questions or true or false exercises. Interestingly, there are many cases when some words are highlighted in the given text. In this task students are supposed to "guess the meaning of the highlighted words or phrases" (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig 2006:6). But what does that mean exactly? Does it mean to translate the highlighted words into the student's mother tongue and give the meaning of the word, or does it mean to paraphrase the

highlighted word in the target language without any translation? This kind of task seems to be quite vague: the book leaves the foreign language teacher to decide whether the student has to explain the meaning of the particular word in his or her mother tongue or in the target language. As far as the listening section is concerned, there is nothing new under the sun: students are supposed to complete tasks related to everyday conversations, interviews or surveys in higher level books. Again, there are no translation tasks: instead, students have to answer text-related questions or they are supposed to do true or false and matching exercises. Similarly to *Traveller*, there are some cases when tasks from a section are combined with tasks from another section. Reading sections often include introductory speaking exercises where students have to speak about a topic related to the reading itself. Each unit in *New English File* ends with a specific writing task where students are supposed to write informal or formal letters, descriptive essays and e-mails. Translation is not included in the writing section: students are expected to check their writings for “grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes”. As it is mentioned, the book provides drilling tasks with a lot of questions related to the topic of a particular section. *New English File* also pays attention to pair-work: there are many tasks where students are supposed to complete a task with a partner. At the end of each level, there is a “communication” section where student pairs can practice tasks related to the four basic skills. Each book ends with a “grammar, vocabulary and sound bank” (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig 2006:6). Just like in the case of *Traveller*, there are no translation tasks in the books. There are texts to read but the task is definitely not translation. The abovementioned task with the highlighted words makes the teacher decide whether he or she employs translation or not. The main aim of the series is to make students be able to answer questions in the target language, be able to communicate successfully and be able to pronounce target language words correctly. The *New English File* books are frequently used in Hungarian language schools and secondary schools as well. The book mainly concentrates on practical approaches of vocabulary and grammar as well. The purpose of the book is originated from communicative language teaching where students are supposed to encounter real sources and real situations. In this compilation translation is an excluded approach and the language teacher is the person to decide whether translation exercises should be added to the tasks offered by the book or not.

3.3. Solutions

Compiled by Falla & Davies (2008), *Solutions* is a five-level course for those secondary-school students who wish to take a language exam in the near future. This compilation is one of the most popular in Hungarian secondary schools in addition to the *Traveller* series. It is a

relatively up-to-date course with a lot of creative tasks, colorful illustrations and extra materials. Just like the previous two, *Solutions* follows a particular pattern as far as its structure is concerned: every course contains ten topic-related units and the authors tried to create “lesson-like” segments – one unit = one lesson. Similarly to the previous media, these books provide tasks according to the development of the four basic skills: what is new is the so-called “culture” (Falla & Davies 2008:2) section where students are supposed to read a particular text in a given subject area. Again, text types are the same: students are expected to do matching exercises or they have to decide whether the text-related sentences are true or false. Other tasks include: gap-fillers, sentence correction and answering text-related questions. Somewhat confusingly, all four skills are combined in the culture section, though there is a separate space for all of them in the book. The book offers a separate subsection called “Everyday English (Falla & Davies 2008:2) in which students can find everyday conversations and dialogues, however, exercises lack creativity again. As far as the other subsections are concerned, they are a bit confused: there are many cases when there are listening exercises in the writing section, speaking tasks in the listening section, etc. The whole book is quite incoherent as different tasks with different purposes are completely mixed together. As for the reading section, it is a more interesting issue: there are texts to read with the abovementioned text-related exercises. However, there are some cases when students have to underline and translate some expressions in the given text. Unfortunately, students have to translate only separate words (e.g. “first, then, a few minutes later, (Falla & Davies 2008: 63) classic, possibility” (Falla & Davies 2008: 75), etc.) not whole sentences or the whole text. On the other hand, the employment of the translation tasks is not systematic: in the whole five-level course, there are only three translation exercises in the reading section. The purpose of these tasks is to introduce word meaning and they don’t require the students to interpret or understand the whole text with the help of translation. Actually, the words are included in the text, however, the book leaves the language teacher to decide whether he or she makes the students translate the whole text as an extra task (since it is not a task in the book), or makes the students translate only these words without paying attention to the context and their exact position in the text. In sum, translation is included rarely and unsystematically in the *Solutions* series.

3.4. Other books

There are other series which are frequently used in Hungarian primary and secondary schools as well. One of the most common is the so-called “*To The Top*” series compiled by Mitchell (2005, 2006). Not surprisingly, there are many similarities with *Traveller*: modules have the

same structure containing the same subsections. Just like in the case of *Solutions*, there are few translation exercises in the book and the occurrence of these tasks is not systematic. In the whole *To The Top* series there are only two translation tasks where students are expected to translate phrases into their mother tongue. These phrases include: “What does this word mean?”, “Can you repeat that, please?” (Mitchell 2005:10). In the other case students are supposed to translate such adjectives as “selfish”, “friendly” or “clever” (Mitchell 2005:16). In both cases, the translation task refers to the material of the given section: in the first case, the topic is “Classroom Language” where these phrases can be heard; in the second case, the adjectives are included in a text of the reading section. These tasks are quite useful in the context of the book, however, the use of translation is not systematic: unfortunately, no other translation task occurs in the rest of the series. As far as the structure of the compilation is concerned, it is similar to the previous books: it concentrates on the four basic skills with gap-fillers, matching exercises and answering text- and topic-related questions.

New Round-Up is another popular course book especially in primary schools and schools for younger learners. It is a seven-level course compiled by Evans & Dooley (2010). Unlike the others, *New Round-Up* tries to concentrate on grammar from a different perspective. It attempts to combine games and songs with systematic grammar exercises where students can enjoy the book with the help of the full-coloured illustrations, crosswords, puzzles and other creative activities. Just like *Traveller* and *New English File*, these books don’t contain translation exercises at all: instead, it provides a lot of gap-filling exercises, drilling tasks and matching activities. All books include smaller units: each one focuses on a particular section of grammar. There are speaking and writing activities with key words and hints referring to the topic of the given unit.

Enterprise has been a very popular compilation among primary and secondary school students. It is a five-level course compiled by Evans & Dooley (2000). The lay-out of the series is very similar to the previously mentioned books: it follows a modular pattern with several units in which tasks are constructed according to the four basic skills. Besides, in the lower level books, there is a “communication” (Evans & Dooley 2000:3) section where students encounter real-life communicative situations and “meaningful exchanges”. However, tasks in this section are just the same: gap-filling and matching exercises. Interestingly, the books are full of such text-related exercises where students are supposed to “explain the words in bold”: just like in the case of *New English File*, it is not clear what the exact task is. Is it translation? Is it to translate those words into the students’ mother tongue or it is to paraphrase the words in the target language? Again, it is the language teachers’ decision

whether they try to illustrate word meaning or they just try to develop students' creative thinking by paraphrasing. There are no translation tasks in the *Enterprise* series and the structure of the book follows the same pattern.

As far as language exams are concerned, it is interesting to analyze those books which had been compiled to help the language learner prepare for a particular language exam. There is no consensus among the language examination and training centres, therefore language exam books offer different tasks for language students. There are monolingual and bilingual language exams in Hungary with diverse purposes and various structures. The most popular language exams are *ORIGO*, *TELC* (*The European Language Certificates*), *ECL* (*European Consortium for the Certificate of Attainment in Modern Languages*) and *EURO*. In the case of *TELC* and *ECL*, language exam books don't offer translation tasks at all: in these exams, they try to concentrate on communicative skills with comprehensive oral discussions and presentations. In the case of *ORIGO* and *EURO*, the situation is completely different: in the *ORIGO* language exam, students are expected to translate a particular text from their mother tongue into the target language and another one vice versa. *ORIGO* language exam books include these texts which are usually newspaper articles with authentic grammatical constructions and distinctive vocabulary. As for *EURO*, the situation is more interesting: on every level students have to complete a "mediation" (Hughes & Rádai 2010:9) section which has two types: first, students are expected to translate an informal letter or any kind of text into the target language. Second, the student listens to the discussion of a Hungarian and an English speaker and he or she has to "interpret" the dialogue in writing. On C1 level, students are supposed to do the first task from the target language into their mother tongue as well. In sum, such language exam books as *New Eurocity* (2010) or the *ORIGO* books offer translation exercises, however, their purpose is completely different from the abovementioned course books.

3.5. Conclusive remarks

Clearly, current course books and practice books don't make foreign language teachers' life easier as far as translation is concerned. During this chapter, my aim was to analyze those course books which are the most common in Hungarian primary and secondary schools. My experience is that *Traveller* and *Solutions* are still the most frequently used compilations in schools although their structure is a little bit one-dimensional. It means that the structure of the compilations lacks diversity and they make students complete similar tasks.

As far as teacher's books are concerned, the situation is a bit more interesting. All the mentioned compilations try to provide a comprehensive set with complete lesson plans, vocabulary sections and phonological or morphological explanations. They provide detailed and clear-cut instructions emphasizing the aims of the particular teaching section. On the other hand, they are compiled with additional teaching materials which can make foreign language lessons more flexible and more interactive. From a translational point of view, these aids are quite poor: they do not offer translation as a useful and creative option in the lesson plan. As for the *Traveller* series, teacher's editions try to make tasks a bit more diverse with additional notes and aims. However, none of the series recommends translation as a possible solution for students. Instead, the books advise the foreign language teacher to "elicit" or "explain" (Mitchell 2009:23) the words that students may don't know. Elicitation is a very popular technique in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and it is frequently used in language schools as well. In this way, the teacher indirectly tries to draw out specific ideas, thoughts or a particular piece of information from the students rather than give it to them directly. In the reading section of the *Traveller* series, it is written that the language teacher should "elicit answers and [...] "explain any unknown vocabulary in the text if necessary" (Mitchell 2009:23). What does it mean exactly? What does explanation mean? Paraphrase or translation? Or elicitation? According to Harmer (2007:204), there are several ways to explain something for the student: the sharpest ways of explaining include "showing", "miming" or "using gestures". The teacher can also use "description", "paraphrasing" or "translation" to make something crystal clear. Harmer asserts that translation is the only technique which makes meaning "absolutely clear" (2007:205) for a foreign language student. Then how is the teacher supposed to explain the meaning of something? Which method should he or she choose? These instructions are quite vague and weak: the book leaves the foreign language teacher to decide how he or she delivers this kind of exercise. *Traveller's* teacher books don't offer translation as a possible technique therefore the success of explanation seems to be doubtful.

As for the *Solutions* series, the situation is almost the same in the Teacher's Book. Task types are one-dimensional where the books advise the teacher to use elicitation and explain things. As far as *New English File* is concerned, Teacher's Books are quite detailed and comprehensive with many prompts and helpful teaching materials. There are many cases when the book advises the teacher to use elicitation, explanation or translation "if necessary" (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig with Brennan 2007:20). It means that the teacher should employ translation only if the understanding or the interpretation of the given task is a little bit

problematic. The inclusion of translation is not systematic: it is not the priority and the book doesn't offer it regularly. *Enterprise* is another compilation with teacher's edition where translation has a very tiny role. Teachers are advised to make students "explain/ elicit the meaning of any unknown words" (Evans & Dooley 2000:5). In the case of some text-related exercises, the book advises the teacher to make students "explain the meaning of the words in bold in their mother tongue". This kind of task is very rare and unsystematic in the book therefore translation is not in the focus. Translation is excluded in all the other practice books mentioned previously. *New Round-Up* focuses on grammar exercises and drilling tasks, *Top The Top* is very similar to the *Traveller* series with communicative structures and exercises.

All in all, translation has become a secondary technique and it is a kind of outlaw in course book publishers. Even if it is included in a lesson plan or in a course book unit, its role is very overshadowed and insignificant. The influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be seen in the structure of the current course books although there are some instances where the possibility of the employment of translation is in the teacher's hands. In the recent practice books, translation is just an additional technique and teachers are advised to apply it only if there is a "breakdown" in the lesson. It serves as a potential extra method. Why is it so? What can teachers do in this situation? What do language teachers do in real life? In the next chapter, I aim at answering these questions with the help of a detailed questionnaire.

4. The role of translation in the language classroom - what can teachers do?

As it has been mentioned previously, in this section I aim at collecting information from language teachers about their views and practices concerning the effectiveness of translation. In this study I would like to present the arguments for and against the use of translation in the foreign language classroom. Actually, my aim is to concentrate on the former one justifying this supporting idea with the help of a detailed survey questionnaire. In order to be able to do that, this questionnaire can be taken as a basis for further comments and further consequences.

As we have seen previously, translation has been pushed into the background and other techniques came into force in the language classroom. Furthermore, as it has been shown, foreign language course books and practice books do not really help the life of the language teacher. Most books do not offer translation tasks and translation has not a central role in the policy of these books. Interestingly, these media follow a similar pattern based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in which critical thinking and the development of the four basic skills are in the focus. Many scholars argue that translation should be seen as a separate (the fifth) skill, however, it is in its infancy as far as foreign language methodology is concerned. It seems clear that translation should be employed in the language classroom, but little effort had been made in practice.

In this particular chapter, I aim at discovering what is really going on in the foreign language classroom. Speaking in the Hungarian context, I would like to collect as many information as possible regarding the applied methods by the language teacher. Do teachers use translation in the language lesson? If they do, what is their purpose with a particular translation task? Do they use it systematically? As we have seen, course books do not really concentrate on translation tasks: in this respect, do teachers insist on the book's formula or do they apply additional or extra tasks? What can a foreign language teacher do?

4.1. Survey Questionnaire

As for the employment of translation, the best possible option is to survey foreign language teachers about their methods and applications. This anonymous survey is conducted with the help of a written questionnaire in which eleven questions are included. These questions are rather practical ones taking many segments of the lesson into consideration. On the other hand, different types of questions are included in the questionnaire making the respondent's decision easier. The survey was conducted on three levels: primary and secondary school teachers as well as college teachers have been asked to respond to the questions. Twenty

questionnaires have been filled in altogether: these include five college teachers, five primary school teachers and ten secondary school teachers.

The questions are constructed according to a particular schema: the questionnaire attempts to start with general questions and aims to end with specific issues related to translation. This approach is quite teacher-oriented: the “general-specific” pattern tries to make response easier. Furthermore, there are many questions where more than one answer is possible therefore the questions are rather flexible ones. In addition to this, respondents had been asked to feel free to add comments to any of the questions because any practical or useful remarks would be vital for the final conclusion of this research.

The very first question of the questionnaire is related to the use of translation in the foreign language lesson. More specifically, teachers are asked whether they employ translation or not. However, this question is not a simple one: if foreign language teachers do use translation tasks or exercises, how often do they do it? This particular question is rather closed-ended making the respondent give only one answer. Possible answers include the following: teachers employ translation “regularly”, “sometimes”, “rarely” or “never” (see Appendix). According to the results, ten out of the twenty respondents use translation regularly during the lesson. Seven respondents circled “sometimes” and three teachers chose “rarely”. As the result shows, a significant number of teachers use translation regularly which is quite interesting as far as my analysis is concerned. Translation tasks do occur in the language lesson even if the most up-to-date course books and modern theories do not consider translation as an effective technique in the language classroom. As far as levels are concerned, four out of five college teachers and three out of five primary school teachers use translation “regularly” and four out of ten secondary school teachers use it “sometimes”. Clearly, few language teachers use it “rarely” and nobody answered that he or she “never” uses translation in the language classroom. Since respondents were welcome to add any remarks or comments to the questions, the result of this score is more than clear: firstly, as the vast majority of teachers say, translation is (and should be) used regularly in the language lesson especially when the success of communication seems to be problematic. There are several cases when understanding is a complete failure and as a result the dynamism of the lesson comes to a halt. In this particular case, the employment of translation is an obvious choice and it is also a great help for the teacher and the student as well. Secondly, translation is also a must if it is a skill to be improved for a particular language exam. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are few language exams in Hungary which require the student to complete translation tasks. Consequently, most of the teachers employ translation tasks regularly even if it is not a

privileged technique theoretically. There are several cases when something goes wrong in the language lesson: when this happens, translation is a good option and teachers take the opportunity to assure the success of the lesson.

The second question of the questionnaire is an interesting one: it refers to the type of translation teachers may or (may not) use. More specifically, teachers had been asked whether they use “written” translation, “oral” translation or “both”. This question shows that translation in writing is not the sole version of translation in the broader sense. Somewhat confusingly, many scholars considered translation as a traditional written activity where the development of spoken skills and fluency are out of the question. This idea is not well-founded: translation is not a written form of operation; on the contrary, it can be performed orally as well, making the students improve their speaking skills. If we recall the ideas of Stibbard (1998) and Vermes (2010), employing oral translation is a useful way of improving communication skills, foreign language fluency and foreign language vocabulary as well. As for the results, fourteen out of the twenty respondents said that he or she uses both types in the foreign language classroom. The remaining six people circled the “oral” version. Interestingly, nobody answered that he or she uses only the written kind of translation. As far as levels are concerned, all college teachers and eight out of the ten secondary school teachers use both types, while four out of the five primary school teachers use only the oral type. During my teaching experience, it has been very popular that foreign language teachers make students translate a written text orally. Surely, it is the most effective way of understanding the whole text and this way, students can improve speaking skills as well. Translating oral sentences into the target language or vice versa is also common among language teachers especially when students are supposed to write a test in the following lesson. The purpose of oral translation is to make students translate a particular sentence orally and as a result, they will use it successfully in the written test as well. On the other hand, when teachers use translation in the foreign language lesson, they often make students translate a whole text in writing. Sometimes it is their homework or it can be an extra assignment which will be evaluated by the teacher.

The third question of the questionnaire is the first one where more than one answer is possible. This question refers to the level of the students on which teacher may use translation activities. There are some cases when a foreign language teacher has classes in the primary and in the secondary school as well. If that is the case, the student’s language proficiency and language command may be different. There can be differences even within one group or class, so it is an interesting question whether on which level the teacher prefers translation exercises.

As the results show, four out of the five college teachers and six out of the ten secondary school teachers use translation on every level of language proficiency. As for primary school teachers, three out of the five use it on all levels while the remaining two use it on elementary and pre-intermediate level. This question is definitely including another important aspect of language teaching: Is the purpose of translation the same on every level? The answer is obviously negative: at the initial stage of language learning, student's proficiency is rather rudimentary and the teacher should focus on the understanding of word meaning or the interpretation of smaller constructions. On a higher level, teachers shall apply translation as an aid of a more complex task: foreign language fluency and successful communication. In sum, teachers tend to use translation on every level with different aims. This particular question will be detailed later.

The fourth question is one of the most interesting of all: it refers to the course book or practice book foreign language teachers use in the classroom. This is the first open-ended question in the survey where there were no possible answers and language teachers were free to name some compilations on their own. Interestingly, eleven out of the twenty language teachers mentioned the *Traveller* series and it got the highest score. The second one was the *To The Top* series which was mentioned by six teachers. *Solutions* and *New English File* came third used by five teachers. As far as levels are concerned, *Traveller* and *Solutions* are the most popular among secondary school teachers while *To The Top* is frequently used among primary school teachers. As for college teachers, the situation is much more interesting: according to the results, almost all of them use the *New English File* series, however, they also use language books with specific purposes. They often use language exam books which help the students prepare for a particular language exam. Surely, the purpose of these lessons differs from primary school lessons. However, it is interesting to see that these books do not really offer translation tasks (see the previous chapter). If we take the previous answers into consideration, it is clear that teachers do not really insist on the exact pattern of a course book. They employ translation tasks even if it is not in the book. They often use creativity and bring such translation tasks that fit the topic of the lesson.

The fifth question of the questionnaire is closely related to the previous chapter in which I analysed the structure of the current practice books. I asked whether there are translation tasks in the course book they use or not. Actually, the result of the survey is identical with my course book research. This question had three possible answers: the first one is rather positive namely that the course book offers translation tasks systematically; the second option was that even if the practice book includes translation activities, it is irregular; the last possible answer

was that the course book does not contain translation tasks at all. The teacher's answers are overwhelmingly clear: seventeen out of the twenty language teachers replied that the course book they use does not offer translation tasks at all. Shockingly, only three teachers answered that some translation tasks are included in the book, but these are still irregular. These answers came from college teachers whose aim is to help students prepare for a particular language exam. As my analysis pointed it out, course books used in primary and secondary schools do not take translation as a useful teaching technique. In these cases, teachers do use translation as an additional activity as they try to make the lesson more diverse with the help of a translation exercise. It is relatively easy to find out which books include translation: those books which have specific purposes. Language exam books offer translation tasks only if students are supposed to do a particular translation during the language examination.

The sixth question of the questionnaire is probably the most interesting one as far as the thesis of this paper is concerned. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the last chapter, today's practice books do not make the teacher's life easier and they offer translation tasks very limitedly. The teachers had been asked whether they use translation tasks only if it is included in the practice book or they try to employ independently of the book. This result of this question is crystal clear: all teachers (twenty) replied that they use translation even if the book does not offer such tasks. Translation is still a central technique for foreign language teachers although it has become an outlaw theoretically. It would be interesting to analyse why translation became "the necessary evil" in foreign language methodology. Truly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has come into prominence with new goals and new objectives. The main concern of this approach is to make language learning as practical as possible, thus, enabling students to think, communicate and learn successfully. Today's course books follow this particular thread, however, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this organisation does not seem to be effective. There are several cases when tasks and exercises try to be "too communicative" making the student a little bit confused and superficial. The structure of the course book units, for example, does not seem varied enough: the purpose and the way of completing an exercise are one-dimensional.

The next question of the questionnaire refers to the direction of the employment of translation in the language lesson. Teachers had been asked whether they make students translate from the target language into their mother tongue or the other way round. The third possible answer was that they try to use both directions finding the balance between the two languages. Answers seem to be unanimous again: sixteen out of the twenty teachers try to employ both ones making the students aware of the characteristic features of both languages.

The remaining four answers are quite interesting: two teachers use only the translation from L1 (mother tongue) to L2 (target language) and the other two use the reversed one. Obviously, in this case the purpose of the translation task is a vital issue again. At the early stage, primary school teachers tend to apply L2-L1 translation, however, it is restricted to words and word meaning. According to my previous experience, L1-L2 translation is relatively rare on this early level and teachers try to concentrate on the translation of short lexical units. At higher levels, when student's language command is more developed, teachers focus on such translation exercises which provide both ways. Students are supposed to translate shorter or longer texts taking the context into consideration as well. In my opinion, using both directions is a possible way to encourage students to be able to recognize source language and target language structures.

The eighth question of the questionnaire is an interesting one where foreign language teachers were free to give more than one answer. This question is related to the organization of a particular translation activity. Teachers had been asked whether they make students do the task individually, in pairs or in groups. The fourth option was that the organization depends on the purpose of the given translation task. As the results show, seventeen out of the twenty teachers circled the last alternative emphasizing that the procedure of a translation task is dependent on the aim of the exercise. Six out of the twenty teachers replied that they make students translate individually. Not surprisingly, there are many cases when students are supposed to do a sentence-by-sentence translation individually: one sentence-one student. It is very common in primary and secondary schools where teachers focus on understanding the text and the sentence itself. In order to be able to interpret the whole text, context must be a crucial factor. As we have seen, today's practice books do not ask students to translate a particular text: a kind of skimming reading is required to run through the text and to be able to answer text-related questions. Again, this approach is rather superficial: the only purpose is to be able to the task and nothing else. All things considered, the application of translation should be systematic where the students are able to use both languages confidently and meticulously.

The next question is a rather methodological entry referring to the position of translation in the foreign language lesson. Teachers had been asked when they use translation exercises as far as their lesson plan is concerned. There were four alternatives: do they use it at the "presentation, practice or production" stage of the lesson? Again, the fourth possible answer was a rather universal option: the usage of translation depends on the purpose of the lesson. As for language lessons, several types of lessons can be distinguished: the lesson can be

introductory when the teacher aims at introducing a new topic or a new lexical or grammatical unit; the lesson can also be a practical one where the teacher, with the help of some exercises, tries to concentrate on all material discussed previously; the lesson can be revisory as well when the teacher and the students try to summarize the most important elements and constructions of the given unit by discussing or practicing them. The latter one is quite common before tests or presentations. As the survey shows, twelve out of the twenty teachers replied that the position of translation depends on the type of the lesson. Only six of them chose the practice stage which means that employing a particular translation activity is again very much dependent on the aim of the lesson. If the aim is introducing a new topic, translation can be a vital aid of understanding a new grammatical structure; if the aim is practical, translation can be a tool to confirm and practice those structures.

The tenth question of the questionnaire is definitely the most pivotal one in this research. It is not by chance that this is the very last question in this survey. Definitely, it is the most crucial one which can be related to all the other questions mentioned previously. In this entry, teachers had been asked about the purpose of a given translation exercise. Again, they were welcome to choose more than one answer from the four alternatives. These were the following: the purpose of the translation task is to “introduce word meaning”; “to help the students find the differences between source language structures and target language structures”; “to communicate successfully”; “to test the students’ passive and active knowledge of a foreign language”. The first one is quite clear: giving the English or the Hungarian equivalent of the lexical unit. The second one is more interesting: since the two languages are different therefore particular structures or constructions must be different in the two languages. If we recall the arguments of Lado (1964) and Newson (1998), they claimed that the employment of translation is one-dimensional making the students think only in one language. Quite firmly, Malmkjær (1998) and Vermes (2010) assert that these ideas do not seem well-founded because students will surely realize that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the two languages. Students will be aware of the most important features in both languages and they will be able to develop “focused thinking”. The third alternative seems to be firm and strong: as translation is a special kind of communication, the employment of an oral translation task would be effective for developing foreign language fluency and it also makes the student use the target language creatively and confidently. The fourth option says that translation is a useful way of checking the student’s development and language proficiency as well. Several students use the language superficially: translation is a useful technique to improve students’ “accuracy, clarity and flexibility” (Duff 1989:7). With

the help of a translation exercise, those elements which are in the students' passive knowledge can be transferred into the students' active knowledge. As far as the results are concerned, seventeen out of the twenty teachers replied that the primary purpose a given translation task is to encourage students to spot the differences between source language structures and target language structures. Since more than one answer had been possible in this question, there were a lot of teachers who circled more alternatives in addition two teachers circled all of them. Eight teachers chose the first option ("introduce word meaning"), six spotted the third one ("to communicate successfully") and finally seven chose the last option ("to test the students' passive and active knowledge of a foreign language"). All alternatives got high scores which shows that all possible options are thought to be vital in the foreign language classroom.

The survey contains an additional entry in which teachers were free to add any other information that they think might be relevant concerning the research topic. A couple of teachers took the opportunity and gave some useful remarks. One teacher wrote that "without translation students often misunderstand texts or expressions" since their knowledge is quite superficial even in Hungarian. Another teacher claimed that translation should be taken as a separate skill besides the four basic skills. As the results show foreign language teachers do employ translation tasks even if it is not included in the syllabus or in the practice book.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I was trying to examine whether translation is still a central technique in the teaching of foreign languages or it is an outdated method in the language classroom. Many scholars and theorists contended against the application of translation arguing that it has not (and should not have) a central role in foreign language teaching.

In the first section of this paper I tried to present the arguments for and against the use of translation in the foreign language classroom. In the previous decades translation has become an outlaw and it has been overshadowed in certain respects in foreign language education. Theoretically, it has become an “enemy” so to say, and protesters tried to exclude translation from the methodological scene. They asserted that the application of translation encourages foreign language students to believe that there is a full equivalence in the two languages. They also said that the employment of translation was rather inadvisable due to interference: using translation is not learner-centred and may discourage the student from speaking. Protesters emphasized that translation excludes spoken language fluency by putting the learner into a confusing communication situation. In this section I tried to shine the spotlight on the fact that before we condemn translation completely, we should examine what is behind the scenes. More specifically, what kind of translation we use, in what teaching context we do it, and finally, what is our purpose with the application of translation. Translation is wrongly accused of being an exclusively written method: with the help of the ideas of Stibbard (1998), we saw that translation can also be delivered orally where the student can improve his or her communicative skills and spoken language fluency. On the other hand, it is unlikely that translation will cause interference: on the contrary, translation is a great aid to raise awareness and logical thinking. Furthermore, assuming that translation is a “static” phenomenon does not seem well-founded, either. Being a motivative and originitive method, translation is one of the best tools to improve foreign language writing skills. The key factor is always the purpose of the given translation task: if the appropriate kind of translation is employed for the appropriate purposes in the appropriate context, it is the best technique in foreign language teaching.

In the second section of this paper I tried to give a detailed analysis about the current practice books used by foreign language teachers. I aimed at answering the following question: do course book offer translation activities? If they do, what is the purpose of these tasks? As the analysis demonstrated, these books include a minimal number of translation tasks: in addition, there are books that do not employ translation at all. Shockingly, current practice books’ structure is one-dimensional and their structure lack diversity. Translation is

not a primary technique in these books and even if it is included in the given book, its role is rather frivolous.

In the last section of my paper, I tried to connect the first two chapters by analysing the practical side of this issue with the help of a survey questionnaire. In this survey I asked foreign language teachers to answer some practical questions about their foreign language lesson. I aimed at collecting information from them about their views and practices concerning the employment of translation in the language classroom. Being aware of the content of course books, I was curious to know what language teachers can do and what they really do during the lesson. As the results show, they do apply translation tasks in foreign language lessons with different purposes. Most of them make students use translation regularly and they consider translation as a vital technique. I tried to collect information from three levels: primary and secondary school teachers and college teachers were among the respondents.

All things considered, to be able to answer the question whether translation is a central technique in foreign language teaching or not, we have to make a distinction between two things: theory and practice. In theory, translation is not mentioned as a useful methodological device in the classroom. However, in practice the answer is definitely yes. Translation is still the most clear-cut method in the foreign language lesson and its effectiveness is unquestionable. Personally, I cannot imagine a foreign language lesson without the application of any kind of translation. The influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is clearly strong although translation is still used as a possible teaching method. I think, translation can be (and should be) used in the context of Communicative Language Teaching and vice versa: these should not mutually exclude each other because the purposes of the two theories are quite similar. There are several cases when there is a total break-down in communication: translation is the best possible technique to avoid confusion and superficiality. Translation is an effective tool to improve foreign language writing, reading and speaking skills as well. Sometimes it is considered as the fifth skill, however, methodological theories do not really support this idea. Surely, translation still exists in the language classroom and teachers employ it as a possible teaching technique.

During my survey, twenty teachers had been asked to answer the questions. In the near future, it would be interesting to extend this research to more language teachers. In this way, this issue could be seen from a wider perspective and the central thesis of this paper could be discussed more thoroughly. On the other hand, the survey questionnaire may be updated on

the basis of the teacher's constructive comments and remarks. A detailed discussion will be presented in a separate paper.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

The following questions are related to the employment of translation in the foreign language classroom. In my paper I aim at examining whether translation is still a central technique in the teaching of foreign languages. In the past decades translation has been overshadowed in certain respects in foreign language education. In this study I will try to present the arguments for and against the use of translation in the foreign language classroom. I also aim at collecting information from language teachers about their views and practices concerning this question.

The study aims at answering the following questions:

- Does translation have a central role in foreign language teaching?
- Do language teachers employ translation in the language classroom?
- Do they use it systematically?
- Do course books offer translation activities?
- What is the purpose of a given translation task?

The Questions:

Please feel free to add comments to any of the questions!

1. Do you use translation in the foreign language class?
 - a. Regularly.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Rarely.
 - d. Never.
2. If you do so, what kind of translation do you use?
 - a. Written
 - b. Oral

- c. Both
3. You use translation with:
- More than one answer is possible.*
- a. beginners
 - b. students on elementary level
 - c. students on pre-intermediate level
 - d. students on intermediate level
4. Which course book(s) do you use?
-
5. Does the course book include translation tasks?
- a. Yes, systematically.
 - b. Yes, but irregularly.
 - c. No, it doesn't.
6. Do you use translation only if a particular translation task is included in the given course book?
- a. Yes, only in this case.
 - b. No, I also use translation when the book does not offer such tasks.
7. Which direction do you use in the language class?
- a. Translation from L2 to L1
 - b. Translation from L1 to L2
 - c. Both are equally used; I try to find the balance between the two
8. How do you make your students do a particular translation task?
- More than one answer is possible.*
- a. I make them work individually.
 - b. I make them work in pairs.
 - c. I make them work in groups.
 - d. It depends on the purpose of the given task.
9. As far as your lesson plan is concerned, when do you use translation?
- a. At the "presentation" stage of the lesson.
 - b. At the "practice" stage of the lesson.
 - c. At the "production" stage of the lesson.
 - d. It depends on the purpose of the lesson (introducing a new topic; revision; practice, repetition, etc.)
10. What is the purpose of a given translation task?

More than one answer is possible.

- a. To introduce word meanings
- b. To help the students find the differences between source language structures and target language structures
- c. To communicate successfully
- d. To test the students' passive and active knowledge of a foreign language

Other: _____

11. What is your opinion about this questionnaire? *Please add any other information that you think might be relevant concerning the research topic.*
