

Interaction and Cooperation Between Professional Associations and Academia in the Czech Republic: The Case of the Union of Interpreters and Translators



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Abstract

This paper seeks to answer the question whether and how professional associations help students and young translators develop the competences required in the translation market, and how they interact with the academic community. It specifically focuses on the Czech Union of Interpreters and Translators, which brings together interpreters and translators of all specialisations. It summarises the Union's aims, mission, and activities, with a particular focus on translation and interpretation trainees and young professionals—the annual conference for young translators and interpreters and the Master's and Bachelor's Thesis Awards. Based on data collected from the Union's website and archives, the content of these two events was analysed to see how the Union interacts with the academic world, what topics are prioritised, and to what extent and how the two events complement university education and reflect the Union's mission. The results reveal how professional organisations can support interaction between translation and interpreting students/recent graduates and the professional sphere and how the activities of these organisations can be useful in translator training.

Keywords: translation and interpreting training, professional associations, praxeology, history of translation, specialised translation, translator competence

Interacción y cooperación entre asociaciones profesionales y el mundo académico en la República Checa: el caso de la Unión de Intérpretes y Traductores

Resumen

Este artículo busca responder a la pregunta sobre si las asociaciones profesionales ayudan a estudiantes y traductores noveles a desarrollar las competencias requeridas por el mercado de la traducción y cómo interactúan con la comunidad académica. El estudio se concentra específicamente en la Unión de Intérpretes y Traductores de la República Checa, la cual agrupa a intérpretes y traductores de todas las especialidades. El artículo resume sus objetivos, misión y actividades, prestando especial atención a las iniciativas dirigidas a los estudiantes de traducción e interpretación y a los recién graduados: la conferencia anual para jóvenes traductores e intérpretes y los premios para las mejores tesis de pregrado y magister. A partir de la información recogida en las páginas web y los archivos de la Unión, se analizan los datos sobre el contenido de la conferencia y sobre el certamen para evaluar su



interacción y cooperación con el mundo académico, los temas que se priorizan, hasta qué punto y de qué manera estos eventos complementan la educación universitaria y reflejan la misión de la Unión.

Palabras clave: formación de traductores e intérpretes, asociaciones profesionales, praxeología, historia de la traducción, traducción especializada, competencias del traductor

Interaction et coopération entre les associations professionnelles
et le monde universitaire en République tchèque : le cas de l'Union
des interprètes et des traducteurs

Résumé

Cet article vise à comprendre si les associations professionnelles favorisent le développement des compétences demandées par le marché de la traduction et comment elles interagissent avec la communauté académique. L'étude se concentre plus particulièrement sur l'Union des interprètes et des traducteurs de la République tchèque, qui rassemble des interprètes et des traducteurs de toutes les spécialités. L'article résume ses objectifs, sa mission et ses activités, en accordant une attention particulière aux initiatives destinées aux étudiants en traduction et en interprétation et aux jeunes diplômés : la conférence annuelle pour les jeunes traducteurs et interprètes et les prix récompensant les meilleurs mémoires de licence et de maîtrise. Sur la base d'informations recueillies sur les sites web et dans les archives de l'Union, les données relatives au contenu de la conférence et du concours sont analysées afin d'évaluer leur interaction et leur coopération avec le monde universitaire, les thèmes qui sont privilégiés, dans quelle mesure et de quelle manière ces événements complètent l'enseignement universitaire et reflètent la mission de l'Union.

Mots clés : formations des traducteurs et des interprètes, associations professionnelles, praxéologie, histoire de la traduction, traduction spécialisée, compétences du traducteur

Introduction

Professional associations that promote the interests of translators and interpreters are important in influencing the status and development of these professions. Their place in translation studies has been recognised by scholars such as Antonín Popovič (1975, pp. 239–240), who defines “praxeology” as one of the branches of Translation Studies and includes the “history of translator institutions (organisations and journals)” among its topics of study, as these institutions are an important part of the external social context that influences the work of translators and the translation process. The role of translator associations is also taken up by Jiří Levý in *Czech Theories of Translation* (Levý & Honzík, 1996), where he explains how the first Czech translator organisation, the Translators’ Association (Sdružení překladatelské), founded in 1911, helped to ensure the quality of Czech literary translations by insisting on certain qualitative criteria.

Munday (2016) mentions how the formation and activities of national and international associations of translators and scholars, such as the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT, founded in 1953), have contributed to the development of translation studies starting in the 1950s, and especially since the 1980s. Herzog (2010) emphasises the role of professional associations in the professionalisation of community interpreting, as they are “pre-eminently placed to try and improve the recognition and status of CI in society, provide support and continuous training to their membership and, on the whole, campaign for the visibility and quality of CI.” (p. 51). He thus summarises the main roles attributed to professional organisations in general.

Another important task and mission of professional associations is to formulate and promote ethical principles in translation and interpreting, as they are usually the ones who draft and publish various codes of ethics. Thus,

Van Wyke (2010, p. 112) makes reference to the “Code of Ethics” by the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta, the American Translators Association’s “Code of Professional Conduct”, and to the “Code of Professional Practice”, published by the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs. In the Czech context, a general code of ethics for both interpreters and translators forms part of the Statutes of the Union of Interpreters and Translators (Jednota Tlumočníků a Překladatelů, JTP, 2014), whose mission and activities will be discussed further. The codes of ethics for specialised translators and interpreters are available on the websites of the Chamber of Court Interpreters and Translators (n. d.) and the Czech Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters (n. d.).

There is documented evidence that, upon entering the translation market, young translators need an ever wider set of skills and competences, not only in connection with the increasing demand for the use of technologies and machine translation processing (cf. PACTE, 2020; Froeliger et al., 2023). It has also been shown that the community of practicing professionals can help novice translators develop such competences, thus bridging the gap between training provided by universities and professional practice. Olalla-Soler (2019) describes the case of a mentoring programme of the Professional Association of Translators and Interpreters of Catalonia, while Berthaud and Mason (2018) explore the use of Communities of Practice to enhance translator training. With regard to their findings, one question relating research on translator associations is to what extent translation associations serve as a platform for such kind of cooperation and how this cooperation is developed.

Although the importance of professional organisations is clear, it seems that their history and specific activities have not been extensively studied or sufficiently referenced in translation studies literature, especially in countries using languages of lesser diffusion. In the chapter of

the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* devoted to the Czech tradition (Kufnerová & Osers, 2011, p. 384), there is no mention of any of the associations of translators and interpreters that have been active in the Czech Republic since the 1990s.

There is, however, a short paragraph devoted to “professional organisations and translator training” in the chapter summarising the history of translation in Slovakia, which highlights the fact that Slovak translators (unlike Czech) have been represented in the FIT uninterruptedly since 1970 (Kufnerová et al., 2011, p. 526). More recently, the history of Czech translator associations and their role in shaping the profession and specifically the field of specialised translation has been the topic of study in several dissertations and master’s theses (cf. Běloušková Zemanová, 2020; Chmelařová, 2014; Kolářiková, 2007).

Pym (2014) provides an overview based on information collected about 217 selected translator associations active in the EU countries, China, Asia, Oceania, Africa and South America. His analysis focuses on the development of these organisations over time, which, according to the author, “is in part an index of the way the translation profession itself has evolved” (Pym, 2014, p. 2).

This paper describes the translator and interpreter organisations active in the Czech market and briefly outlines their history. Then, it gathers information about the activities and events organised by the Czech Union of Interpreters and Translators (Jednota Tlumočnicků a Překladatelů, JTP) that are geared to translation and interpretation students and novice translators and interpreters. The objective is to describe the role of this organisation in the education of young translators, to see how its activities complement translator training provided by universities and how they reflect current trends in translation and interpreting.

1. Method

This research project was driven by the question of whether and how professional associations help students and young translators develop the competences required in the translation market and how they interact with the academic community. In order to provide a more general context, the first part outlines the history of Czech organisations of translators and interpreters and describes those currently active in the Czech Republic. This part is based on Czech translation history literature (Kufnerová & Osers, 2011; Kufnerová et al., 2011; Levý & Honzík, 1996; Rubáš, 2012), the results of previously conducted research in this field (two master theses and one dissertation—cf. Běloušková Zemanová, 2019, 2020; Chmelařová, 2014; Kolářiková, 2007), interviews with translators and representatives of Czech (Czechoslovak) translation organisations, and the information published in the media, on the organisations’ websites and in their bulletins. The aim of the historical overview is to provide a wider context for the development of Czech professional organisations.

In the second part, the paper depicts the Union of Interpreters and Translators, its objectives, and its agenda, following the Union’s website, the *ToP* bulletin, and the monograph on the Union’s history based on a Master’s thesis (Běloušková Zemanová, 2020). We believe it is useful to show how the Union itself presents its mission and tasks in order to compare these statements with the actual activities implemented.

The main objective of the study is to explore the Union’s activities that are specifically designed for students and young translators and interpreters. To do this, we focused first on the annual conference currently organised under the name *Jarní balíček* (Spring Package). The research method in this part combines a qualitative and quantitative approach (an analysis of the titles of presentations and their classification

into categories). The programmes of the thirteen events held from 2011 to 2023 were analysed in terms of the target group (translators, interpreters or both), focus of the presentations (theoretical vs. practical), the qualifications of the speakers (translation professionals, academics, representatives of public administration authorities, and other specialists), the areas of specialisation in translation and interpreting (general vs. focused on a specific genre, text type/thematic area or setting), and specific topic. The classification of topics is partly derived from the emt Competence Framework and includes the following categories:

- Business-oriented, which roughly falls into the category of personal, interpersonal and service provision competences.
- Process-oriented, i.e. providing advice on how to translate, which corresponds to the translation competence.
- Ethics, treated as a separate category, although in the competence framework it falls under service provision.
- Translation tools, which in our analysis include all kinds of technologies and resources, such as corpora.
- Training and didactics.
- Topics related to physical and psychological aspects, i.e. developing personal and interpersonal competence.
- General—miscellaneous presentations on culture, literature, etc.

The data on the conference programmes and on the competition were gathered from the Union's website, the *ToP* bulletin, and the private archives of the Union's current secretary and of one of its founders, Petr Kautský. Wherever we noticed discrepancies between these sources, we used the most up-to-date information so that it would include the presentations that were actually delivered, but such differences were minimal.

Secondly, we analysed the data on the theses submitted to the Award for the Best Master's

and Bachelor's Thesis in translation and interpreting studies, their authors, the researched topics, and the winners. The information was obtained from the Union's website (and from the reports published in the *ToP* journal (JTP, 2023; Petru, 2018; Svoboda, 2020). Similarly, as in the case of the conference presentations, the topics and other information related to the works were divided into categories according to several criteria. Special attention was paid to the winning theses. The aim of this section was to describe the competition, its participants, evaluators and trends in terms of preferred topics (both from the participants' and the evaluators' perspective).

The findings of the analysis (of the conference programmes and theses submitted in the competition) have been placed in the context of the current organisation of translator training in the Czech Republic (the curricula of the Institute of Translation Studies were used as an example—Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova, n. d.) and the Competence Framework proposed by the European Master's in Translation (European Commission, 2022) (cf. Froeliger et al., 2023). Finally, we try to evaluate how both activities comply with the Union's mission, to what extent they respond to the needs of the translation market, and how they reflect the interaction between the professional community and the academic sphere.

2. A Brief History of Professional Associations of Interpreters and Translators in the Czech Republic

The history of Czech associations of professional translators started with the establishment of the Translator Association (Sdružení překladatelské) in 1911 (Levý & Honzík, 1996, p. 209). As stated in the Association's programme (Levý & Honzík, 1996, p. 209), its tasks were, among others, to protect the interests of good and diligent translators and suppress low-quality translations, to be in contact with publishers and editors, to recommend

good translators, to write evaluations of translations, to investigate and review translations, and to publish the opinions of its members. Before joining, its members had to submit a translation of their own. However, the Association was only active until 1913 (Levý & Honzík, 1996, p. 209). It was not until 1936 that this organisation was succeeded by the Translators' Circle (Kruh překladatelů) (Levý & Honzík, 1996, pp. 214–215), which developed into a more stable organisation of literary translators. Its most important aim was to bring new perspectives into translation criticism and to educate translators.

The increasing demand for translators in the post-war period led to the formation of new organisations catering to their interests and the different aspects of their work. In 1949, the Union of Czechoslovak Writers (Svaz československých spisovatelů, sčss) was established, with a separate section for translators. The Translators' Circle joined the Union and was transformed into the Translators' Section in 1961 (Chmelařová, 2014). At that time, the section brought together elite translators, theorists of literature, and critics, and had several hundred members. The Translators' Circle, and later the Translators' Section, were very active, their activities including research, education, the popularisation of translations, and publishing policy (Rubáš, 2012). The Translators' Section was a member of the FIT and it was expected to organise the FIT Congress in 1969. Preparations for the congress were already under way, and according to the preliminary programme, its central focus should have been literary translation. However, this effort was thwarted by the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the subsequent dissolution of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers and its translator section in 1969 (Haeseryn, 2005; Chmelařová, 2014).

The political, social, and economic developments in socialist Czechoslovakia led to an increasing need for professional interpreters and

non-literary (or specialised) translators, which resulted in the opening of the Institute of Translating and Interpreting at the University of 17 November in 1963¹. The institute offered study programmes in translation and interpreting in Prague and Bratislava. Later on, it was annexed as a department of Charles University in Prague, and in 1990, it changed its name to Institute of Translation Studies.

Kolářiková (2007) suggests that the efforts to unite both literary and non-literary translators led to the establishment of the Association of Czech Translators (Sdružení Českých Překladatelů) in 1968. In 1972, the association, the activities of which included the organisation of seminars, symposia and conferences, was dissolved by a decision of the Ministry of the Interior, presumably for political reasons. In 1978, the activities of the association were renewed, and in 1981, it became a member of the fit. Interestingly, apart from the cited dissertation (Kolářiková, 2007), no documented information has been found on the existence of this association before 1978, and other resources date the year of its foundation in 1978². In an interview published in the Czech daily *Rudé právo* [Red Justice] on the day of its first meeting, the president of the (re)established association said that its objective was to improve the quality of literary translations, coordinate translators' work, and create an education and training system. It also focused on establishing and developing contacts and partnerships with translators in other countries. The president also mentioned that the association aimed to provide special assistance to young translators starting their careers (Hrouda, 1978, p. 5).

As the above historical overview implies, non-literary and specialised translators and

- 1 The University of 17 November no longer exists.
- 2 However, the existence of the Association of Czech Translators that supposedly to gather together non-literary translators between 1968 and 1971 was confirmed by Ljuba Suchá —managing director to in an interview. (Chmelařová, 2014, p. 94)

interpreters did not have a stable professional association of their own, something that would change in the 1990s. This decade actually saw the founding of five associations catering to the interests of translators and interpreters of different specializations, all of which are still active today: the Czech Literary Translators' Guild (Obec překladatelů) founded in 1990, the Union of Interpreters and Translators (Jednota tlumočnicků a překladatelů) founded also in 1990, askot (the Association of Conference Interpreters,) founded in 1990, the Chamber of Court Interpreters and Court Translators of the Czech Republic (Komora soudních tlumočnicků a překladatelů České republiky) founded in 1996, and the Czech Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters (Česká komora tlumočnicků znakového jazyka) founded in 2000. The Associations of Conference Interpreters and Sign Language Interpreters are members of the Union of Interpreters and Translators.

3. Results

As implied in its name, the Union of Interpreters and Translators is open to all translators and interpreters regardless of their specialisation, although its secretary admitted in an interview (Chmelařová, 2014) that it mostly develops activities for non-literary translators, while the Literary Translators' Guild focuses on literary translators. The Union was founded shortly after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, when translators and interpreters were finally allowed to practice their profession as independent selfemployed professionals in a free market. Interestingly enough, although the Czechoslovak state split already in 1993, the Union operated as a Czechoslovak organisation until 2005, when the independent Slovak Association of Translators and Interpreters was established (n. d.).

The Union offers three types of membership—regular, discounted (for part-time translators/interpreters), and extraordinary (for students and retired translators/interpreters). The applicants must prove they are professional translators or interpreters or are studying to become

one, and pay the membership fee. Based on information from the Union's website, in 2024 it had approximately 470 members. However, in an interview held in 2014, the secretary stated that it had 600 members (Chmelařová, 2014). Comparing the data on the Union with those provided by Pym (2014), we can say it belongs among smaller European associations and it was established much later than most of its European counterparts. It is also remarkable that in the Czech/Czechoslovak context, associations of literary translators have existed long before those that bring together non-literary translators.

The Union is a member of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT) and Audio-Visual Translators Europe. On its website, it states its mission as follows:

- We are elevating the profile of the interpreting and translation profession.
- We connect generations of interpreters and translators.
- We provide information about current events in the field.
- We support new interpreters and translators and increase the knowledge and skills of established interpreters and translators.
- We are strengthening the market position of interpreters and translators and are helping to educate the market.
- We advise members in disputes with customers and employers.
- We promote cooperation among and network with professional translation and interpretation associations.
- We are a meeting place. (JTP, n. d.a)

Also, the organisation provides its members with the following benefits (information from the organisation's website paraphrased by the author):

- Members have an opportunity to offer their translation and interpreting services.

- They can attend events, training sessions, and seminars free of charge or at significant discounts.
- They can use the Union's remote simultaneous interpreting hardware.
- They have access to the quarterly bulletin *ToP* (Translation/Interpreting) and regular industry updates.
- They can join the Union's mentoring programme.
- They can become members of a Facebook group and a Google group with access restricted to the Union's members only.
- They have access to the Union's library with five thousand publications.
- They can enjoy discounts on events hosted by other FIT member organisations such as BDÜ, CBTI, and others.
- They can enjoy discounts offered by leading developers of dictionaries, software, and other translation and interpreting tools.
- They can attend professional and social events.
- They can request funding to cover attendance at professional events held abroad. (JTP, n. d.b)

The Union achieves its goals through a number of activities. Since 1994, it holds an annual professional conference, St. Jerome's Days (Jeronýmovy dny), each autumn. Additionally, it hosts or sponsors a number of other training workshops, meetings, and conferences in the field of translation and interpreting, both academic and professional.

Another important initiative is the "Dictionary of the Year" award, which recognises and promotes high-quality lexicographic and terminological publications covering all languages and fields of specialisation. The Union also publishes the *ToP* quarterly bulletin available to its members free of charge and to other readers upon subscription. It publishes all kinds of information relevant to the translator and interpreter profession: articles from the domain of linguistics and terminology, organizational and legal issues, regular reports on newly published literature in translation and interpreting

studies, invitations to and reports from the events and competitions organised by the Union and other associations, and diverse popularizing articles. Academics affiliated with universities (mainly the Institute of Translation Studies of the Charles University) are among the regular contributors to the journal.

3.1. A Conference for Students and Young Translators and Interpreters

Since 2011, the Union has organised a smaller, usually one-day event for young translators and interpreters who are entering the market that focuses on topics and issues relevant to them. This event is conceived as a spin-off of the St. Jerome Days, whose programme could not accommodate all topics due to time restrictions. The attendees can learn from the experience of senior interpreters and translators and other experts and obtain useful advice on how to start their career, how to set prices, and how to promote their services and communicate with agencies and clients³. In 2020 and 2021, the event could only be held online due to COVID-19 restrictions. Exact data on the number of attendees were not available, but the venue has a capacity for about 70 persons. Since 2022, the conference has also been streamed online for up to another 90 viewers.

The data collected from the programmes of the thirteen editions held from 2011 to 2023 show that a total 80 presentations have been delivered by 66 different speakers (some of them appeared more than once). In addition to this, there were six award ceremonies relating to the announcement of the Best Master's/Bachelor's Thesis Competition and the results. Out of the 80 contributions, 26 were focused on topics relating to translation, 22 on interpreting, and 32 presented topics of interest to both translators and interpreters, that is, both audience segments

3 The event has had several names —originally it was called Spring Weekend (Jarní víkend), later Young Jerome (Mladý Jeroným), and in recent years, it has been organised under the name Spring Package (Jarní balíček).

(translators and interpreters) were addressed equally.

The topics discussed were categorised in terms of specific fields of translation and interpreting. Most of them (57) were of a general nature, while 23 made reference to a specific specialisation, namely legal and sworn translation and interpreting (6), translation and interpreting for the European Union, (5), literary translation (4), interpreting for diplomatic services (2), subtitling (2), interpreting into sign language (2), simultaneous interpreting (1), and community interpreting (1).

Also, speakers were categorised in terms of their qualifications and relationship to academia and government authorities, as shown in Figure 1. Most of the contributions (42) were delivered by professional translators or

interpreters, very often members of the Union or other professional associations. In addition, 20 presentations were read by experts from the academic sphere; this category includes all persons who were either employed or studied at a university at the time of their presentation. Most of the academics were affiliated with the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (Prague), and specifically with the Institute of Translation Studies (a total of 12 speakers). The categories of academics and professional translators/interpreters partly overlap, as many university teachers are also practicing translators/interpreters, some of the presenters are recent university graduates, etc. The presentations delivered by university teachers and students covered all types of topics in terms of their general focus (theoretical, practical, and mixed; see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Speakers' Profile

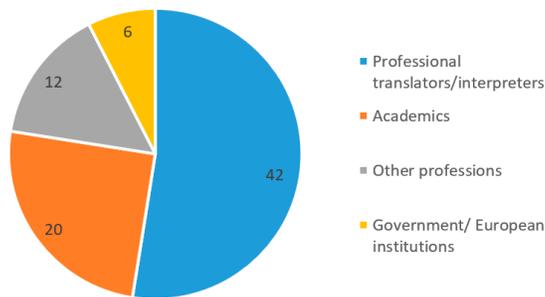
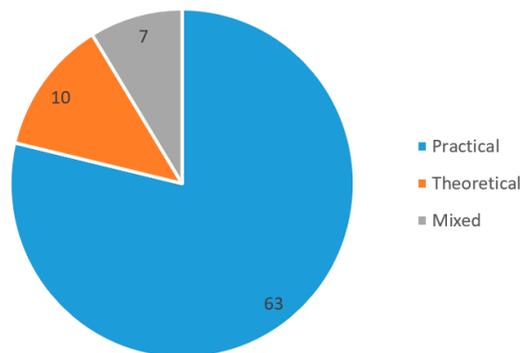


Figure 2. General Approach of Presentations



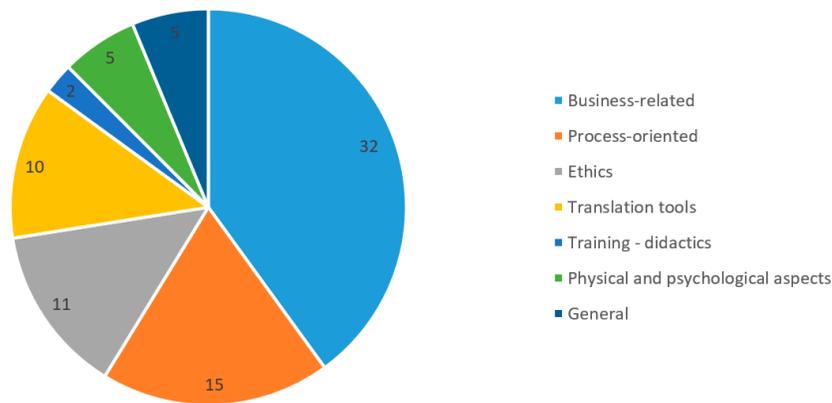
Twelve contributions were presented by persons with professions not directly related to translation or language, such as doctors, lawyers, and marketing specialists, who provided information on general topics, such as health, psychology, or marketing strategies. Other six contributions were delivered by delegates from Czech and European authorities, in particular, representatives of the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission and the Department of Sworn Translators of the Municipal Court in Prague. As for their nationality, all of the speakers were Czech, with two exceptions—professor Daniel Gile and Roderick Jones, head of Czech interpretation at the European Commission—(SCIC), who were special guests of the 2018 edition dedicated to translation and interpreting ethics.

In terms of the focus of the presentations, theory vs. practice (see Figure 2), practical topics strongly prevailed with 65 contributions, while 8 were theoretical and 7 contained elements of both theory and practice.

In terms of content, the presentations were further divided into seven subtopics (see Figure 3). The largest part (32) dealt with practical issues relating to the translation and

interpreting business, such as how to start working as a freelance or in-house translator/interpreter, what marketing strategies to employ, and how to use social networks and other self-promotion tools. At least six of the analysed presentations make explicit reference to pricing. The second largest group was oriented to the translation and interpreting process, with 15 presentations explaining how to translate specific genres (cartoons, subtitling, legal texts, EU-related texts) and how to interpret in specific situations (remote simultaneous interpreting, note taking in consecutive interpreting, etc.). Eleven were devoted to ethics in translation and interpreting. The fourth category, with a total of 10 contributions, includes topics dealing with translation tools, specifically terminology resources and terminology management (5), including the use of corpora in translation, CAT tools (3), and machine translation post-editing (2). The fifth group comprises contributions providing information on health and psychological issues related to the translation and interpreting profession (5 presentations). Two contributions discussed translation and interpreting training, and five presented rather general topics related to Czech language and culture. In terms of language, none of the

Figure 3. Topics Addressed by Presentations



contributions were language-specific, excepted for one, which discussed legal English for translation practice.

We can conclude this section highlighting that the profiles of speakers and the content of the presentations display high diversity which reflects the objective of the event, namely to educate young translators with a wide range of working languages and specialisations and to help them enter the translation market. The topics selected for presentation tend to be general rather than language-specific, and most of them address topics that are common to young professionals of different specialisations, translators as well as interpreters, although some of them were focused on specialised fields (such as sworn interpreting or translating and interpreting for the European Union). Although there were four contributions dedicated to literary translation, the event was much more focused on non-literary/specialised translation and interpreting.

The distribution of topics clearly shows that most of the contributions discussed very practical issues of the translation and interpreting business and were presented by practicing professionals, which very probably reflects the demand of the audience (while the availability of speakers may be another factor). This may also be related to the extent to which practical business topics are represented in the curricula of Translation and Interpreting programmes.

As a case in point, the curricula of the Institute of Translation Studies (Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova, n. d.) do include several subjects that are specifically dedicated to the practical aspects of both professions, namely the compulsory subject Business Skills and Career Guidance in the Translation Profession and the compulsory elective course titled Publishing Policies and Practices (focused primarily on literary translation), which are taught at the MA level. MA students of translation/

interpreting also have to complete a work placement as a compulsory part of their studies. At the undergraduate level, there is no course dedicated specifically to personal and interpersonal competence and service provision, although students receive information of this type in other more general translation courses (e.g., Introduction to Translation and Introduction to Interpreting).

However, students and recent graduates probably still feel the need to learn from their more experienced peers about the specific steps to be taken and the strategies to be employed. This seems to support the Brian Mossop's assumption that "translation schools are inherently limited in what they can do to prepare students for the workplace" (Durban et al., 2003). In our opinion, such limitations typically concern pricing and marketing strategies. It should be also noted that not all practicing translators and interpreters have studied in a programme specialised in translation or interpreting. Indeed, for many languages, such specialised programmes are not even available.

Students' concern about their service provision competence after graduation has been documented in several surveys, such as that conducted by Froeliger et al. (2023, p. 18) where translation students in the last year of study considered this to be their weakest competence. Similarly, in a study conducted by Álvarez Álvarez and Arnáiz Uzquiza (2017), professional competences were the most frequently mentioned as contents missing in translation and interpreting curricula according to graduates. Another survey, focused on the desirable profile for a translation teacher, showed that professional translators consider "knowledge about the translation profession (trends, workflows, tools and so on)" the third most needed competence in translation teachers (Pavlović & Antunović, 2019, pp. 8–9). This also seems to reflect the perceived importance of practical professional aspects in translation training.

The results also indicate that, in line with the Union's mission, the ethics of translation and interpreting in diverse contexts is an important concern to the organisers, as it was the third most frequently discussed topic and the central theme of the 2018 edition of the event. Ten of the eighty presentations discussed different aspects concerning translation technologies, including two papers on MT post-editing. In view of the recent advances in technologies in the translation and interpreting industry, this number may not seem too high, but it still shows that the Union acknowledges the relevance of translation technologies and makes an effort to keep up with recent developments⁴. It should be noted that the format of the event and the presentations (which are normally not longer than 60 minutes) only allows the presenters to provide general or introductory information on the different aspects of translation technologies. A more comprehensive training in CAT and MT is provided through specialised courses, also organised under JTP's sponsorship and in cooperation with Charles University.

Placing the findings of this section within the context of the EMT competence framework, it turns out that the presentations cover all five areas of competence defined in this framework: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal competence, and service provision, with a strong focus on the last two categories. Language and culture were thematised only to a limited extent, as given by the setting of the conference, which is generally non-language-specific (though the programme included several themes exploring Czech language and culture). Overall, the data on conference topics and target groups reflect the generalist approach of the Union, which

4 It should be added that the topic of translation technologies is more strongly represented in the main event organised by the Union in the Czech Republic, i.e. St. Jerome's Days (Jeronýmovy dny), designated for practicing translation and interpreting professionals.

may have certain advantages, but also disadvantages, such as failure to attract audience with specialised interest (cf. Pym, 2014).

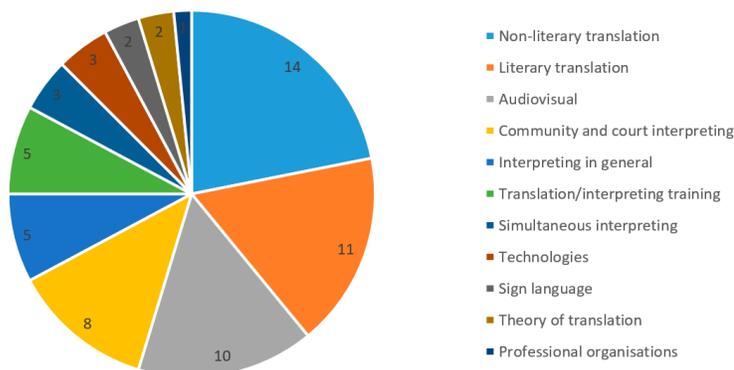
3.2. The Award to the Best Master's and Bachelor's Thesis

In 2017, the Union launched the first edition of the Best Thesis Award and the first winner was announced one year later. The competition is bi-annual, and since its second edition, which was announced in 2019, it has accepted both Master and Bachelor theses in translation and interpreting studies defended at a Czech or Slovak university within two years before the deadline for submission. The cooperation with Slovak universities increases the number of participants, and also the number of potential evaluators. There is one winner in each category. The aim of the competition is to support academic research on translation and interpreting and to promote the Union among university students and teachers. The jury is composed of academics in Translation Studies (from both Czech and Slovak universities) and a representative of the Union.

In the context of the competition, the award prizes high-quality theses that further contribute to the understanding of phenomena that are central to the Union's interest, including particularly: to improve the conditions in the translation and interpreting market; to educate clients, translators/interpreters, and recipients of translation/interpreting services; and to promote the ethical and other values of the Union (JTP, n. d.c). The best works are selected based on the number of points awarded according to the following criteria:

1. General content – contribution to the study of phenomena that are the focus of the Union's interest.
2. Innovation.
3. Content – clarity and comprehensibility of the text.
4. The extent of the thesis and the scope of details provided – standard vs. above the standard length.

Figure 4. Research Topics of Works Submitted to the Best Thesis Contest



5. The technical aspects of the thesis – language, typography, graphic layout. (JTP, n. d.c)

The winners are announced at one of the events organised by the Union and in its journal and receive a monetary prize.

In the three editions of the competition, a total of 64 Master's (46) and Bachelor's (18) theses were submitted for evaluation by students from nine different universities (four Slovak and five Czech)⁵. Most of the works (51) were written in Czech or Slovak, while thirteen were in the language of the student's specialisation (English or German). As for the field of research, 40 of the theses researched topics relevant to translation, 21 investigated interpreting (including interpreting into sign language), and three covered both fields. A more detailed look at the theses shows great thematic diversity. A possible classification according to research topics is shown in Figure 4.

The numbers suggest that most of the 64 submitted theses (14) dealt with non-literary/specialised translation (such as legal, technical, medical, website localisation, etc.). However,

5 For those who are not familiar with the two languages, it should be noted that the speakers of Czech can generally understand spoken and written Slovak and vice versa.

this group includes seven theses whose subject was an annotated translation⁶. The other eight investigated diverse aspects of specialised translation, such as terminology, approaches to the translation of varied text types and thematic areas. The second largest group addressed topics relating to literary translation, such as translation history and the specific aspects of different literary genres. The third most frequently discussed topic was audiovisual translation. Among the theses focused on interpreting, the most frequent specialisation was community and court interpreting with eight theses. In the remaining smaller thematic groups, there were five theses on translator/interpreter training, two on sign language, and two on translation technologies.

As the competition is biannual and the first edition was only open to masters' theses, there have been five winners so far. The topics of the winning works are summarised in Table 1.

The titles of the winning theses show that three of them belong to the category of community interpreting, one to non-literary (institutional) translation, and one addressing terminology in combination with translation technologies.

6 This number is influenced by the fact that, at some departments, all students must present an annotated translation as their bachelor thesis.

Table 1. Topics of Winning Theses at Each Annual Competition

Year	Degree	Title
2018	Master's Thesis	Community Interpreting at Labour Offices – A Case Study
2020	Master's Thesis	Children as Interpreters
2020	Bachelor's Thesis	Terminology Management in Practice. Management and Digitalisation of Glossaries.
2022	Master's Thesis	The Role of Comments Files in Institutional Translation: The Case of the ECB
2022	Bachelor's Thesis	Interpreting in the Refugee Context – “A Mouthpiece of European Union's Management of the Refugee Crisis”?

Although the winners are selected based on the overall quality rather than just the topic, the selection indicates the jury's preference for works that reflect up-to-date issues in translation and interpreting and are practice-oriented (which is in line with the rules of the competition).

To conclude this section, we can see that while the theses submitted to the competition are by no means a representative sample of all theses in the field of translation and interpreting studies defended in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, they do indicate certain trends. First, they cover a wide range of diverse topics and methodological approaches, including translator and interpreting training and sign language. Works addressing interpreting account for approximately one third of the submitted theses, which is a relatively high proportion given the fact that not all the universities involved offer specialised interpreting programmes. Specifically, theses on community interpreting are rather frequent and were also very successful in the evaluation. This seems to reflect the increasing relevance of community interpreting in the Czech and Slovak context in view of the political and social developments in the past five years.

Within the field of translation, the relatively high proportion of works dealing with

audiovisual translation stands out, which is again in line with the current developments in the translation market worldwide. Literary translation and translation history can be considered traditional and common research topics in Translation Studies. In the competition, they were the second most common type, accounting for about one sixth of all works submitted, which is perhaps less than could have been expected. This might be partly accounted for by the evaluation criteria, which emphasise innovation as an important aspect. In this context, it might be surprising that the number of theses (3) concerned with translation technologies and tools is not very high. This may be explained by the methodological and technical challenges associated with research in translation technologies and/or lack of academics with expertise in the domain when it comes to philology departments (i.e. departments not specialised primarily in translation studies).

4. Conclusions

The historical overview of the activities of translator and interpreter associations in the Czech Republic shows that efforts have been made to organise translators and promote their interests for more than one hundred years, although for a long time, they mostly concerned literary translation and translators. The first stable

associations that brought together non-literary translators and interpreters were only formed after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

The analysis of relevant resources confirmed that the education of translators in the broad sense of the word has been an important part of these organisations' mission since their beginning. Starting around the 1970s, they have included activities specifically targeting young translators and translation students. Since its founding in the 1990s, the Union of Interpreters and Translators, which brings together mostly non-literary translators and interpreters, has developed a stable and continuous cooperation with universities and budding translators. Every spring since 2011, it hosts a conference for novice translators and interpreters.

When looking at the programmes of the event's past editions, we can see that university students and teachers delivered 25% of the presentations, both theoretical and practical. Their participation may be specifically beneficial for those students and young professionals who have not studied a Translation Studies programme and have not been trained in specialised disciplines, such as note taking in consecutive interpreting or the use of corpora in translation.

As for the topics discussed at the event during the past thirteen years, practical issues prevailed (78.8%), specifically those relating to the translation business and service provision, including marketing, communication with clients, and pricing (40%), i.e. the knowledge and skills that are required from young translators and interpreters who are entering the translation market. The second largest set were contributions on different aspects of the translating and interpreting process (18.8%), i.e. responding to the question on how to translate/interpret different genres, thematic areas, in different settings, etc. In the context of translation, these would develop the translation competence as defined by the emt Competence Framework.

Also quite remarkable is the proportion of speeches on ethics in translation and interpreting (13.8%)—the promotion of which is in line with the organisation's mission.

The data collected on the Best Master's and Bachelor's Thesis Award illustrate that the competition does comply with its defined mission and indeed helps promote mostly innovative and up-to-date research topics, also in terms of their social and practical relevance (community interpreting being a good example of this). At the same time, the competition helps the Union keep in touch with the youngest generation of translator researchers. This is may be a way of overcoming certain stagnation (cf. Pym, 2014) and even attracting new members.

In view of their increasing presence and importance, translation technologies and machine translation post-editing are domains that seem to be somewhat underrepresented both in respect to conference topics and the research topics for theses. Possible reasons for this have been indicated above: training in and research in technologies are associated with specific challenges and require specific expertise on the side of the trainer or researcher.

Overall, the information collected and presented in this paper demonstrates that the Union of Interpreters and Translators works as a bridge between the academic and the professional worlds. Its events have the potential to complement the training offered by universities, particularly when it comes to personal, interpersonal, and service provision skills. The ability to attract professional translators and interpreters as speakers seems to be an important asset in this respect. It should be noted that unlike the activities described by Olalla-Soler (2019), with the mentoring programme in Catalonia, and Berthaud and Mason (2018), with the communities of practice for translation trainees, in the conference setting, the audience of students and young professionals are engaged rather passively.

On another note, the association plays an important role in encouraging research on under-researched topics and disseminating results, and generally providing space for discussion on less prominent themes and specialisations in translation and interpreting, such as sign language.

As for the limitations of this study, the most obvious one is its limited scope. Firstly, it focuses only on the situation in the Czech Republic and on the activities of the Union of Translators and Interpreters. At least the activities of the Czech Literary Translators' Guild, and specifically its competition for young literary translators would also be worth investigating to get an insight in the area of literary translation. Secondly, out of the events organised by the Union, the analysis only includes those specifically focused on students and young professionals. The analysis is based only on data collected from diverse written resources, most of them publicly available. It would be interesting to add more qualitative data, such as feedback from the participants or interviews with the organisers.

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