

Originalni naučni rad  
Primljen: 31. januara 2024.  
Prihvaćen: 14. februara 2024.  
UDK 371.3::811.112.2'243  
371.3::811.112.2'25  
10.46630/phm.16.2024.95

**Nikoleta M. Momčilović<sup>1</sup>**

Univerzitet u Nišu  
Filološki fakultet  
Katedra za nemački jezik i književnost  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6674-9186>

**Marija M. Stanojević Veselinović**

Univerzitet u Kragujevcu  
Fakultet pedagoških nauka u Jagodini  
Katedra za filološke nauke  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8683-4940>

## THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION STUDIES IN GERMAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this research is to examine students' attitudes and experiences regarding translation classes in German language and literature studies. This quantitative and qualitative research was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire with third-year students who, as part of the compulsory course *Modern German Language 5*, attended translation classes in the winter semester, with two classes a week. The results of the conducted questionnaire represent an overview of the current status and role of translation studies in the classes of German as a foreign language in the *German language and literature studies* department at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Niš. The results of the research indicate to what extent translation studies affects the process of learning German as a foreign language and how translation teaching can be improved in order for students to acquire linguistic and translation competence. In addition to the practical significance of the research for translation classes, the work also has a theoretical significance, since various approaches and theories in the teaching of translation are presented that thematize translational categories (also areas of linguistics) such as lexicon, semantics, pragmatics, etc. and the means by which the process and product of translation are described or reflected. Many aspects of translation (understanding, intention, communication, mediation, communication, etc.) are reflected and intertwined in the attitudes of the students.

*Keywords:* translation studies, teaching German as a foreign language, function of translation, theories in the translation teaching

### INTRODUCTION

Translation is taught in *German Language and Literature* studies within the compulsory course *Modern German Language 5* at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Univer-

---

<sup>1</sup>nikoleta.momcilovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

<sup>2</sup> The paper is published as part of conference proceedings of the *Language, Literature, Process Conference 2023*, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.

sity of Niš, as well as within the course *Theory of Translation* in the fourth year of study, where theoretical lectures are followed by practice. This research, however, was conducted among third-year students who had not yet taken the *Theory of Translation* course. The paper deals with the role of translation study in German language teaching and how translation classes can be improved and used as a didactical tool in German as a Foreign Language Learning.

Practical translation can have different functions within foreign language teaching. Integrative translation tasks in the teaching of the German language consist of a communicatively and situationally coordinated series of language actions in which, in addition to language tools, other language skills are adequately taken into account. Translation is integrated into the teaching of the German language as a form of exercise centered on the mediation text. The translated texts belong to different functional styles and are thematically oriented to current events in the German-speaking countries. In addition to translation being one of the means of acquiring language competence, the purpose of applying translation in the teaching of German as a foreign language is often also to contrast the foreign and native languages on the morphological, syntactic, semantic, lexical and pragmatic levels, thereby contributing to the development of metalinguistic knowledge.

The questionnaire carried out in this research deals with questions about the attitude of the students of the third year of *German as a foreign language studies* on the subject of translation study within the course *Modern German Language* and what experiences they got while attending translation classes. With the help of an online questionnaire (Google Forms) conducted from (according to the submission dates) January 20 to 31, 2023, an attempt is made to investigate the current role of translation study as a methodological tool in German as a foreign language teaching and to identify ways to improve the teaching of translation.

We can say that the work has both practical importance, in the form of pedagogical implications of the application of translation study in foreign language teaching, and theoretical importance for the teaching of German as a foreign language. When we say theoretical, we mean first of all that different theories in the teaching of translation are presented, as well as previous research studies on the role of translation study in the teaching of foreign languages.

## Translation study in the German Language Teaching

Considering that translation is any oral or written statement (text), translated from one language to another language (RSJ, 2007: 1033), its mediating role is highlighted, which aims to facilitate cultural exchange in connection with different domains of human life (i.e. foreign films, television programs, international conferences, professional and everyday communication).

However, translation study as part of a course implemented with the aim to help the students acquire better knowledge of various linguistic aspects, such as morphology, syntax and semantics and translation as a skill are separate fields, but they can interact and benefit from each other. In this sense, the improvement of language competence and translation competence differ. Furthermore, for the purpose of improving language competence, translation from native to foreign language is of particular importance, since the students cannot rely on their intuition of the native language to the same extent as when

translating from foreign to native language (Saliha, 2016: 70).

Translation raises awareness of certain grammatical and lexical peculiarities of a foreign language, but also awareness of one's own language. In the case of translation from a foreign language into the native language, the focus is on checking the understanding of the meaning, but also on checking the correct command of the native language and the ability to formulate coherently and semantically nuanced speech and texts in the native language.

Therefore, self-reflexivity is present in learning; certain sentence constructions are established, whereby the focus must never be exclusively on the formal linguistic properties of words, collocations, and sentences in the original and in translation, but also on pragmatics, the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences within different situations and contexts (Fischer, 2012: 30).

### Previous research

In the last twenty years, several works have appeared on the topic of translating and teaching foreign languages (House 1981, Keim 2003, Perez 2005, Fischer 2012, Saliha 2016, Asher 2019), which provide us with some examples and theories that support conclusions in this work.

Some researchers - such as House (1981) and Asher (2019) - have discussed the lack of a pedagogical framework in which translation study takes place, since it involves a grammar-translation method, the application of which generally neglects the development of a large number of language skills and competences. On the contrary, Perez (2005: 1) believes that the integration of theory and practice can improve translation studies and examines how the theory and teaching of translation are connected with special reference to seven schools or approaches in translation studies. Based on different goals in translation teaching, we distinguish seven important trends in translation studies that represent seven different approaches: an approach with a focus on contrasting languages, with a focus on the communicative nature of texts, with a focus on communicative aims through texts, with a focus on the link between translation and target cultures, with a focus on the new translation ethics, with a focus on the translator as a rational and emotional being, and with a focus on translation corpora (*ibid.*, 2-6).

Therefore, translation study can have different goals from contrasting languages, typologies of texts, organizing teaching on the basis of skopos theory (where the emphasis in teaching is on the micro and macrostructure of texts), descriptive translation, the fundamental ideological role of translation and the translator in society and social repercussions, that is, cultural issues, cognitive and emotional processes in translating to comparable corpora where students can find equivalents for the source texts they are looking for.

Additionally, many authors speak in favor of the skopos theory, which represents an orientation towards the pragmatic in translation (Keim 2003; Fišer 2012; Salih 2016). From the perspective of the skopos theory, types of texts and conventions are singled out in the target languages that represent characteristics at the structural-linguistic level. The conventions significantly contribute to the identification of the text, regulate the form of the texts within the culture and can change over time (Salih 2016: 114–116).

Hence, in order to process written translation tasks, it is necessary to present students with different types of texts and conventions, as well as strategies they can apply when translating, such as well-founded reading and writing skills. However, reception comes before production, which means that reading should be for the purpose of checking the quality, accuracy and authenticity of the text, for the purpose of forming hypotheses about the intentions of the author when writing the text, as well as about the influence of the environment and culture in which the text was created.

It is also necessary to mention intercultural competence as an integrative part of translation activity in the teaching of foreign languages which refers to another aforementioned trend in translation study. Keim (2003: 392) emphasises that solving translation tasks requires the acquisition of basic cultural knowledge of the target language, since there are not always equivalent relations between native and foreign languages or between their cultures.

### Methods

The goal of the research is to examine students' attitudes and experiences regarding translation study and its role in German language and literature studies. The research question that represents the starting point of the paper is whether translation study has a decisive influence on the learning of the German language.

In order to provide a better understanding of the role of translation study within German language and literature studies we chose a mixed-method study. Hence, quantitative as well as qualitative research methods were included in order to analyze translation in the teaching of German as a foreign language.

Mixed-methods research provides more comprehensive data for studying a research problem and helps to answer questions that cannot be answered using only one of the approaches (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data contain open-ended information collected through questionnaires. In general, open-ended questions in the questionnaire allow respondents to answer in their own words.

### Questionnaire

The research sample consists of twenty third-year students studying German language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, aged 21 to 23. The research respondents were chosen in order to show that the introduction of a minimum of translation studies within a larger course can be beneficial. Translation is an integral part of the compulsory course *Modern German Language 5*, which was held in the winter semester with two classes per week.

The questionnaire was conducted in the period between January 20 and 31, 2023 and contains 7 questions that examine what attitude students have towards translation classes, whether and which dictionaries they use when translating, and to what extent translation classes influence the improvement of German language competence. The questionnaire by Saliha (2016: 183), which we modified and adapted for students in Serbia, served as a model for creating the questionnaire.

### Results and Discussion

We present the data obtained with the help of the questionnaire in the following

way: the questions are presented, explained, and the obtained results are interpreted and processed as percentages.

When asked whether students think that German as a foreign language teaching is interesting, the respondents gave a completely affirmative answer (100%), which represents a positive incentive for the teaching of the *Modern German language*.

The second question concerns the use of dictionaries in the teaching of German as a foreign language. Students generally use dictionaries when they have difficulty understanding certain words during German language classes. By statistical data processing, 85% of students use a dictionary frequently, while 15% use a dictionary sometimes. This information indicates a lack of vocabulary knowledge, weak language performance in the target language, which students at that level of study should already have. Dictionaries generally offer the basic meanings of lexemes, which can be modified in the context or acquire a completely different meaning.

In accordance with the previous result, based on the answers to the third question, it was determined which dictionaries are most often used. 70% of respondents use bilingual dictionaries (Serbian-German; German-Serbian), 15% use monolingual dictionaries (German-German), and 15% use both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Students use bilingual dictionaries as a more practical and faster solution because they rely on their mother tongue as a medium of quicker comprehension. These results illustrate the possible influence of the respondents' mother tongue on German language learning. Since there are not always equivalent relations between the Serbian and German languages and if there are equivalents, they are not always applicable in every context, students should be sensitized to a great influence and possible interference of the mother tongue on learning the German language. This refers to the intercultural competence which is required and which allows translator to identify culturally specific information in the source language and correctly reflect these in the target language, as we mentioned previously in the paper (Keim, 2003: 388, Fischer, 2012: 42).

When asked if they remember the meaning of words when translating, 62% of respondents answered sometimes, 31% answered yes, and 7% answered no. The aim of the question was to establish whether translation contributes to the expansion of vocabulary in the target language, as well as to the improvement of language competence in the German language. Based on the obtained results, the role of translation as a methodical approach in teaching German as a foreign language can be somewhat confirmed, because translation can be used as a way for identifying new words, phrases, for evaluating and checking their meaning in different context.

The fifth question refers to the information about whether the meanings of unknown words that are processed during translation are forgotten immediately after the translation lessons. The majority of students (70%) answered that sometimes they forget the meaning of words immediately, 23% of students answered negatively, while 7% of students said yes. This data illustrates the shortcomings in the approach to teaching translation. The use of bilingual dictionaries, on the one hand, contributes to contrasting the two languages, but also hinders the process of the heuristic method, during which students independently discover the meanings of words through the context and thus memorize them better. It can also be established that it is necessary to thematically integrate unknown lexicon into the teaching of the *Modern German language*, which will later be used in translation classes in order to reinforce the vocabulary while translating and to enable

the acquisition and determination of the lexicon through the context.

The following answers were offered to the question of what they think about the translation organized within the *Modern German language* course: interesting, not interesting, difficult, easy. Translation is considered interesting by 77% of surveyed students, interesting but difficult by 16% and uninteresting by only 7% of students. Based on the majority of positive responses, the obtained results represent an incentive for teaching translation, but we should not ignore the answers that indicate that teaching approaches should be modified in order to improve student motivation and translation teaching itself.

The last question deals with the respondents' personal insights about the impact of the application of translation study in the teaching of the *Modern German language*. It was answered differently, but the focus was on the positive aspects of translation study. Based on the comments of the surveyed students, the following linguistic (lexis, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) and non-linguistic categories (feeling for the language, communicative environment, immersion in the language, creativity, etc.) were highlighted in which the effectiveness of the use of translation in learning German as a foreign language was registered:

- Grammar, lexis, and syntax

1. *In translation classes, we practice grammar and vocabulary. I find the translation classes helpful because I learn new words and the classes are very interesting because we get to know different sentence constructions.*

2. *I think that translation in German language classes is very useful, because it is the best way to learn new words. We deal with foreign words and this way we learn them faster.*

- Lexis, aids, i.e. dictionaries

3. *We learn new words and synonyms, we learn how to use dictionaries.*

- Lexis, productive skills

4. *With the help of translation, we create our own vocabulary in the German language, which we can later use in various areas, such as: spoken language, writing, etc.*

- Communication, communicative environment, adaptation to communicative environment

5. *We learn how to orient ourselves in a new communicative environment. Each new translation is a new challenge, where we can use our language knowledge.*

- Lexis (phraseology), interference

6. *I think translation has a lot of positive sides. It helps to learn new words and phrases and to become familiar with the interference that can make translation difficult.*

- Lexis, syntax, creativity, group translation as an opportunity to exchange creative translation ideas

7. *Translation has a great positive impact on learning German because it makes it easier for us to learn new words, to expand our vocabulary in German, to become familiar with different sentence structures, to express our creativity by choosing the right synonyms, and different opinions are also very useful and explanations that can be heard in translation classes.*

- Lexis, grammar, the necessity of knowing translation techniques

8. *Translation helps because we can improve not only vocabulary but also grammar. My opinion is that we should first familiarize ourselves with different techniques in translation in order to translate unfamiliar content more easily.*

- Stylistics

9. *In my opinion, translation has a great influence in German language learning, because we get to know different expressions that may not belong to everyday language, but represent stylistic features of the target language.*

- Lexis, understanding words through context-pragmatics

10. *Translation allows new words to be properly understood and even defined.*

11. *Translation contributes to getting to the true meaning of words.*

- The necessity of knowing translation techniques

12. *It is important to practice translation techniques because it is very useful for everyday life, especially for those who will be involved in translation after graduation.*

- Lexis, (deeper) understanding of the target language, interculturality and metalanguage

13. *By translating, we expand our vocabulary. With the help of translation, we speed up the process of immersion in the target language and begin to think in that language.*

14. *I believe that when translating, we can expand our vocabulary in the German language. I think it helps us to see the differences between language systems, between mother tongue and German.*

- Lexis, writing competence, grammar

15. *Translation enriches our German vocabulary and helps us improve our writing skills. In Serbian-German translation, we also practice grammar.*

16. *Translation helps us learn new words and enrich our vocabulary. In this way, we practice grammar and improve communication in the German language.*

- Interference

17. *By means of translation, the problem of interference can be solved.*

- Semanticization process, acquisition of skills, foreign understanding

18. *Translation is not only a process of semanticization, it is how we build our own skills. By translating, we understand what is foreign.*

- Translation as a method and as an art

19. *Translation is not only a teaching method but also an art.*

- Lexis, understanding of cultural phenomena, developing a feeling for a foreign language

20. *In my opinion, translation has a great impact on vocabulary expansion. I find it most useful to learn phraseology. Sometimes through translation we learn about new cultural phenomena in German culture. By translating, we develop a feeling for the foreign language and do not translate literally.*

Different important segments and functions of translation were recorded based on the respondents' answers, such as:

- translation as a method in teaching,
- the economic aspect since through translation they understand new words faster through the context,
- translation as a tool for expanding and defining lexis,
- the meta-linguistic function of translation,
- translation as a tool for acquiring intercultural competence.

If we analyze the frequency of certain segments in the given comments, we will notice that for the majority of respondents, expanding the vocabulary is a very important function of translation study, among which some emphasize the importance of phraseology and synonyms. A smaller number of respondents emphasize stylistics and pragmatics, while some see the function of translation in contrasting language systems (which leads to developing a sense of the foreign language, "immersion in the language") and spotting interference (thus avoiding mistakes). For some respondents, translation study is important for a better understanding of grammar (syntax), or for the development of productive language skills (speaking and writing) in a communicative situation.

Given that it is about translation study within the teaching of a foreign language, and not within a subject dealing with the theory or techniques of translation, it is expected that the respondents view translation mainly as a method of language learning and acquiring language competence. Nevertheless, some students notice that through translation they also acquire intercultural competence, and a smaller number see the necessity of knowing translation techniques, which are otherwise important for the acquisition of translation competence. When we talk about translation competence, one respondent also mentions the skill of using a dictionary that they acquire in translation classes, which is also one of the translation sub-competencies, namely instrumental (in addition to linguistic, intercultural and other sub-competencies), and one experiences translation study as an art.

The presented results support the fact that there is a huge positive impact on learning the German language through translation studies. Therefore, we can establish that from the perspective of the students, translation study is a kind of methodical tool, as



well as a form of reflective learning in the teaching of the *Modern German language*. Furthermore, based on the answers of a smaller number of respondents the translation is also seen as the path to acquiring translation competence.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the received answers revealed a mostly positive attitude towards translation study as an integrative part of the *Modern German language* course. Students are mostly interested and believe that translator training contributes to the acquisition and improvement of stylistic and lexical skills in the context of written translation work, which of course also benefits the spoken language. Translation is a good starting point for discussions about various linguistic phenomena. Therefore, translation classes are an ideal space for language description and contrastive linguistics.

Based on the qualitative analysis of the obtained results, we can conclude that students have a developed awareness of the advantages of translation teaching, such as: insight into the different structures of the native and target languages, the ability to determine the differences between the native and target languages, thereby preventing the occurrence of interference, translation as a means of semanticization, since words in different contexts can get different meanings, and translation as a means of enriching the lexicon.

The results also indicate space for improvement in translation teaching. Based on the analysis of the results, one way to do this is to present students a number of theories and their preferred views on translation in order to make them more flexible in decision-making processes in a real professional career.

In addition, also based on the conducted questionnaire, we can list some other ways to improve translation teaching with a focus on improving both linguistic and translation competence: improving reading skills, reflective reading, introducing students to different types of texts (such as articles from newspapers, advertisements, and literature etc) and conventions, and teaching them how to find the meaning of words in context and to use monolingual dictionaries. As translation involves a difference we have to improve students' competence to tackle typographical differences, false friends, semantic and lexical divergences. Furthermore, they should meet with as many different translational situations as possible in order to get familiar with the governing norms and sanctions. In this way, they also learn a range of strategic solutions when they meet with particular problems when translating.

Since translation is taught as part of the *Theory of Translation* course in the fourth year of study, the attitudes and experiences of students should be examined in some future research, after the course *Theory of Translation*, when they get an insight into the scientific aspect of translation in order to compare the results of that research with those shown in this paper.

### References

- Ascher, C. (2019). Übersetzen im Fremdsprachenunterricht. *Para lá da tarefa: implicar os estudantes na aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras no ensino superior*. Porto: FLUP. (p. 25–43). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21747/9789898969217/paraa2>.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*.

es (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/s1415-65552003000100015>.

- Fischer, J. (2012). *Übersetzen als Sprachmittlung im Deutsch-als-Fremdsprache-Unterricht*. Masterthesis. Universität Leipzig. Universidade Federal do Paraná.
- House, J. (1981). *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Keim, L. (2003). Übersetzung im DaF-Unterricht. *Informationen Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. De Gruyter, (p. 383–394). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/infodaf-2003-0409>.
- Perez, C. Maria. (2005). Applying translation theory in teaching, *New Voices in Translation Studies 1*. University of Ottawa. (p. 1–11). DOI: 10.1080/0907676X.2004.9961495.
- RSJ (2007): *Rečnik srpskog jezika [Dictionary of the Serbian Language]*, Novi Sad: Matica srpska.
- Saliha, S. (2016). *Die Wirkung der Übersetzung als Teillernziel auf das Verstehen im DaF Unterricht bei algerischen Studenten*. Doktorarbeit. Université d'Oran: Oran.

Николета М. Момчиловић

Марија М. Станојевић Веселиновић

## УЛОГА ПРЕВОЂЕЊА НА СТУДИЈАМА НЕМАЧКОГ ЈЕЗИКА И КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ

### Резиме

Настава превођења се на студијама немачког као страног језика изводи у оквиру предмета Савремени немачки језик на Филозофском факултету Универзитета у Нишу. Рад се бави улогом превода у настави немачког језика и како се часови превода могу побољшати у циљу учења немачког као страног језика.

Вежбе превођења могу имати различите функције у оквиру наставе страног језика. Интегративни преводилачки задаци у настави немачког језика састоје се од комуникативно и ситуационо усклађеног низа језичких радњи у којима се, поред језичких средстава, адекватно узимају у обзир и друге језичке вештине. Превођење је интегрисано у наставу немачког језика као облик вежбе у чијем средишту је медијацијски текст. У овом истраживању спроведени упитници баве се питањима какав став имају студенти треће године студија немачког као страног језика на тему превођење у оквиру предмета Савремени немачки језик и каква искуства имају у настави превођења. Уз помоћ упитника који је спроведен од 20. до 31. јануара 2023. године, покушава се утврдити тренутна улога превода као методичког средства на часовима немачког као страног језика и како се настава превођења може побољшати. Предлози и сугестије како побољшати наставу превођења су приказане кроз различите теорије у настави превођења и досадашња истраживања која су представљена у раду.

За потребе овог истраживања одабрано је микс-методско истраживање, будући да су укључене квантитативне, као и квалитативне истраживачке методе у циљу анализе превода у настави немачког као страног језика. Упитник садржи 7 питања која испитију какав став студенти имају према настави превођења, да ли и које речнике користе при превођењу и у којој мери настава превођења утиче на усавршавање језичке компетенције на немачком језику. Студенти набрајају различите битне сегменте и функције превођења као што су: превођење као метода у настави, економски аспект будући да кроз превођење брже разумеју нове речи кроз њихову употребу у контексту, превођење као средство за проширење и дефинисање речника, метајезичка функција превођења, средство за стицање интеркултуралне компетенције.

Приказани резултати говоре у прилог томе да постоји огроман позитиван утицај на учење немачког језика путем превођења. Стога можемо установити да је из перспективе студената превођење врста методичког средства, као и облик рефлексивног учења у настави Савременог немачког језика, а на основу ставова мањег броја испитаника и пут ка стицању преводачке компетенције.

*Кључне речи:* превођење, настава немачког као страног језика, функција превођења, теорије у настави превођења