WRITING ONE'S OWN TEXTS FOR TRANSLATION ASSIGNMENTS

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Abstract

The paper examines the possibility of teachers of literary and non-literary translation writing their own texts that are then given to students of translation as assignments to translate at home and later checked and discussed with the teacher during classes. The author discusses several pros and cons of the writing process of such texts and then goes on to show several kinds of translation problems a teacher of translation can include in a literary and a non-literary text (e.g. terminology, cross-cultural differences, linguistic differences, charactonyms, word play, intertextual problems, text analysis, conventions, etc.). The stated examples are taken from his own texts that he created for the purpose of teaching literary and non-literary translation courses. He also adds possible steps the students can take in order to solve the given problems and a possible solution to them.

Key words: text creation, teaching translation, translation assignments, literary translation, non-literary translation, translation didactics, own text writing

1. INTRODUCTION

The study field of Translation and Interpreting in Slovakia can be studied at five universities (in Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Prešov and Košice). Students attend literary and non-literary translation seminars, which are either compulsory or compulsory optional. The aim of these seminars is to familiarize students with different types of texts and, within the texts, with various translation problems. During the seminars, students should learn to react to individual problems, to form an opinion on them, to look for the necessary solutions, and then to argue their correctness.
Most of the teachers assign texts they have encountered, translated for own clients, so they know the individual problems that are in the texts and, on this basis, can help students to solve them. Some teachers reach for texts freely available on the Internet or in newspapers or magazines.

This paper will try to show the advantages and disadvantages of creating one's own texts for translation assignments. It describes the pros and cons of such texts, and then based on two of the author's own texts (one created for literary translation and the other for non-literary translation), it will show ways to incorporate various translation problems into a text. It also offers possible solutions to the problems.

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2. BACKGROUND

Teaching translation of literary and non-literary texts became a widely discussed topic in the 20th century. Several different journals (*CTTL E* and *Translation Journal* to name at least two) are published world-wide, that deal with this topic and books on this topic are being published as well (*Teaching Translation: Programs, Courses, Pedagogies* by L. Venuti or the most recent in Slovak context *Didaktika prekladu a tlmočenia na Slovensku* by M. Djovčoš and P. Šveda). It is true, that "the last three decades brought huge changes to different professions and fields […] and Translation and Interpreting Studies belong among those definitely as well" (Djovčoš, Šveda 2018, p. 7).

Thorough research makes clear, that the available literature on translation teaching focuses on the process and different methods of teaching translation. However, this article focuses on a (apparently) novel part of translation teaching – the text, as there seems to be a lack of literature focusing on text selection. Therefore, the points stated in the following chapters (chapter 3. mainly) stem from the author's own experience and therefore can be perceived subjectively.

2.2. The Texts

Chapters 4. through 5. present different translation problems teachers can incorporate in their own texts

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based on the author's own texts. This chapter is used as an introduction for the two texts.

The text created for literary translation classes is 3.7 standard pages long and it contains 28 paragraphs. There are only two short monologues present, one being a question. The sentences tend to be short and the lexis repetitive.

It is basically a fantasy short story set in a city called Alexandria that is being attacked by an enemy army. The ruler of the city summons a dragon and later a protective spirit to guard the city and fight the invaders. It ends with the city being destroyed. Since it is a fantasy piece, it contains foreign (made up) and fantastic elements like dragons and magic.

The second text for non-literary translation is 4.1 standard pages long and contains 22 paragraphs. It contains 4 quotations by different authors. The sentences tend to be longer, more complex and the lexis contains terminology as well.

The text is basically a comparison of different religions of the world, it deals with Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Thelema. The text also contains one diagram and a footnote.

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3. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF OWN TEXTS

Creating one's own teaching materials brings many advantages and disadvantages. This chapter will describe some of them and at the end will try to summarize the main aspects of own text writing.

3.1. Advantages of One's Own Text

A text for translation created by the teacher offers a number of advantages to the teacher. The following points present some of the noteworthy advantages a teacher of translation can subjectively benefit from (since there is no quantitative or qualitative research on this topic at the moment):

- The text addresses a translation problem that the teacher considers relevant. The teacher can create a text that deals only with the translation problems they chooses. Most of the "real" texts contain many different translation problems at the same time, so students can learn to respond to different problems, but they do not practice different approaches to solving one specific problem repeatedly.

- The teacher knows their text best. In the case of own texts for translation (or any other texts), the author knows their text the best. Thus, if there are formulations

with several meanings in the source text (whether intentional or not), the teacher will always be sure how to interpret the meaning. In addition, if such a formulation was created on purpose, it can draw students' attention to the complex perception of the whole context, not just the individual parts of the translated text.

- The text is devoted to a topic the teacher and/or students are well versed in. This point applies mainly to non-literary translation. The teacher can offer students a topic that is close to them or they can decide the topic with the students at the beginning of the semester and then create the texts based on the topic. The advantage of a pre-agreed topic is that if a teacher wants to write a professional paper for translation, they have to study the chosen topic thoroughly so that they can guide students during the seminars.

- An own text may contain multiple issues that the teacher wants to practice on a smaller overall text size. Let's say that a teacher wants to teach students the principles of Naturalization, Exotization and Creolization (Vilikovský 1984). The teacher would search for a text that contains several options for carrying out these translation procedures for a long time, and most of the time, texts that contain passages to practice these procedures are too long to be checked within a reasonable time (especially if the teacher wants to discuss more issues during one semester).

Most of the benefits outlined above arise from the fact, that the teacher creates the text themself and thus has

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complete control over the content. For non-literary oriented texts, although they have to study relevant literature in advance, it gives them insight into the content (and context) of the text.

3.2. Disadvantages of One's Own Text

Of course, creating one's own study materials in the form of texts for translation assignments also has several drawbacks. Again (as stated in 3.1), the following points are up to subjective interpretation:

- Creating one's own texts takes a lot of time. As the teacher writes their own text, they must understand the subject matter they are writing about. During the whole work they have to pay attention to the desired result – if they want to create a text with grammatical errors, they must be careful how they write, what vocabulary they use and so on. On the other hand, when creating a literary text, the teacher must be careful that the text meets their aesthetic expectations and does not just sound like a mere expression of colloquial style.

- The text one creates may have a too narrow focus. This point does not have to be a problem in a text for non-literary translation, where texts from one scientific field are often translated, since the vast majority of technical texts intended for translation are not interdisciplinary. However, when creating a text for literary translation, the teacher must take care that the text is not only a description of the storyline, but also includes direct

speech and descriptions of the surroundings. He is therefore trying to create a text that is as close as possible to a real, artistic text.

- The teacher must have a good command of the language in which the text is written. If a text is to be written in a foreign language and the teacher wants to produce a good text in terms of language quality, but is not entirely sure of some expressions or grammatical constructions, they need to ask a proofreader (preferably a native speaker) to read the text and correct any shortcomings. On the other hand, sometimes mistakes in the source text are welcome, since translators often encounter source texts that are linguistically incomprehensible. It is therefore worthwhile to consider whether students should also try to translate a text that is linguistically not perfect.

From the above points we can summarize that the greatest pitfalls of writing one's own source texts are language and time spent writing the texts.

3.3. Summary

Based on the advantages and disadvantages of creating one's own texts, the conclusion is that creating one's own texts for translation is associated with the following three aspects: topic, time, and language.

Although the teacher has to study the topic that they want to write the text about, they will therefore be able to

understand the topic sufficiently in order to guide the students during the seminars – they will know the sources, parallel texts the students can work with, and can reveal possible inappropriate or inadequate translation solutions.

On the other hand, studying an unknown topic and creating one's own text takes a lot of time. This is a time that many university teachers do not have due to scientific work. Though if they invest their time in creating their own texts for translation, they will be able to use them at any time in the future and will no longer have to prepare for seminars as much as they would have had had they worked with an unknown text.

Last but not least, language plays an important role in the creation of one's own texts. The texts that translators work with are often grammatically correct, but grammatical or stylistic mistakes can also appear in texts. In this case, however, it is up to the teacher to choose the variation – a grammatically perfect or imperfect text. However, if the text is in a foreign language, it is advisable for the text to be read by a proofreader or a native speaker.

To conclude, while creating one's own texts for translation has advantages and disadvantages, the importance of these can only be evaluated by each individual teacher, since time, language and writing skills are individual, therefore it is also very subjective and more research would need to be done in order to say, whether the above points are valid.

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4. LITERARY TRANSLATION

During literary translation lessons, students should learn about the solutions to translation problems that are typical for this kind of translation. The basic and main problems were described by different Translation Studies scholars and include translation of charactonyms (Hečko 1991, Kalašnikov 2006), cross-cultural differences (Vilikovský 1984, Venuti 1995), inter-language differences (Newmark 1988, Müglová 2009), stylistics and stylization of sentences in the target language (Newmark 1988, Müglová 2009), translation of word play (Kubuš 2011) and often intertextuality (Rakšányiová 2014).

The following chapters will discuss the translation problems mentioned above. They illustrate how to include a problem in one's own text and at the same time offer solutions or guidance on how students could proceed in translating the problem.

4.1. Charactonyms

Charactonyms are names that, in a way, describe a character or object that they name. This may be a character trait, a feature of external appearance, or other characteristics that are vital in the description of the character or object. This implies that charactonyms are most often proper nouns. In practice, translators often choose to translate charactonyms. If they decided not to

translate them, they would deprive the reader of one of the characteristics of the original work, thus reducing the overall aesthetic function and value of the translation. In his work *Preklad ako tvorba*, J. Vilikovský claims that "a functional aspect requires clarification of their meaning, because clarity is part of the author's intention" (1984, p. 134).

For example, the text the author created contains the following charactonyms. For each charactonym he also offers own translation suggestions that students could use in their translations.

Orig.	Summoner	Dragonlord	Holy Protector
Trans.	Privolávateľ, Volajúci, Zvolávateľ	Drakopán, Pán drakov	Svätý ochranca, Svätobranca

From the illustrated examples, we can see that translation of charactonyms really constitutes a translation problem, and there are several possibilities for translating individual charactonyms. In this case, students can practice creativity, especially by translating the word "*Summoner*", which was created from the verb "*summon*" to which the suffix -er was attached, which in English usually expresses a doer of an action. Thus, students can use a similar word-formation process as in English.

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4.2. Naturalization, Exotization, and Creolization

Two cultures come into conflict during translation. The translator must therefore decide which culture to favor in their translation. On this basis, Vilikovský (1984) distinguishes three translation procedures, two of which are also mirrored in Venuti's work from 1995:

- Naturalization – domestic elements outweigh the foreign – the work is transferred to the home environment (Venuti calls this procedure Domestication).

- Exotization – foreign elements outweigh the domestic – yet they might not be understood by the readers of the target language (Venuti calls this Foreignization).

- Creolization – domestic and foreign elements are kept in balance (although Venuti does not name this translation procedure, it also appears in the work of Komissarov (1990), who calls this procedure "adequate translation").

From the example text, the words "wyrm" and "communication" were chosen as examples. We must choose at least two words, because the translation of cultural differences can only be evaluated on the scope of the whole text. The individual principles are illustrated in the table.

	Naturalization	Exotization	1. Creolization	2. Creolization
wyrm	drak	virm	drak	virm
communication	rozhovor	komunikácia	komunikácia	rozhovor

As the table shows, creolization can be accomplished in a number of ways, since it is essentially an equilibrium of foreign and domestic elements in a translation. The words "*drak*" and "*rozhovor*" are considered naturalization because they are culturally and linguistically close to the Slovak reader. On the other hand, the words "*virm*" and "*komunikácia*" can be considered to be exotization because they have an English base. Moreover, the word "*virm*" may not be understood by every Slovak reader.

On the basis of such words and phrases, students of translation can practice the above-mentioned translation procedures and at the same time try to defend their translation decisions during a discussion.

4.3. Language Differences

Language differences mean those differences that arise mainly from morpho-syntactic differences between the language of the original and the language of translation. Newmark (1988, p. 85-87) states that these occur, because of "a change in the grammar from SL to TL", "a SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL",

"literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL" or "the replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure".

The most typical example for this problem between English and Slovak is the translation of verb voice, which would be an example for the third reason stated above. While English prefers the passive, the active verb voice is used in Slovak.

Such a problem can also be included in one's own text. Here is an example:

Original	The army was commanded to attack Bahamut, but the Dragonlord would not be even scratched by their attacks.
Passive translation	Armáde sa prikázalo zaútočiť na Bahamuta, ale Pán drakov by ich útokom nebol ani poškrabaný.
Active translation	Armáde prikázali zaútočiť na Bahamuta, ale ich útoky Pána drakov ani neškrabli.

The sentence containing the passive voice construction in Slovak translation also contains an incorrect translation. The first part of the sentence sounds unnatural in Slovak, but the subordinate clause is pointed to the extreme and does not sound Slovak at all, on the contrary, it transfers the English word order into Slovak. On the other hand, active verbs sound much more natural for Slovak.

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4.4. Style

Style is one of the most sensitive parts of a text. This is stressed by two different sets of rules created by Slovak teachers of translation:

- Ferenčík formulated in 1982 five normative principles, one of them being the "good Slovak principle" (p. 64);

- Müglová (2009) summarized ten points for beginner translators, number seven being: "You will not underestimate your mother tongue and will learn how to write comprehensible sentences" (p. 307).

Problems with stylistics are manifested in both literary and non-literary translation, but for the sake of brevity, we will only give an example for literary translation.

Original	But know this, dear reader, fate is a cruel lady who likes to intrigue wonderful pieces of poetry and play.
Translation	Drahý čitateľ, vedz, že osud je krutý pán, ktorý rád snuje neuveriteľné básne a drámy.

The changes in stylistics are reflected in two places in the example. First of all, it is common for Slovak to put salutations at the beginning of a sentence, so it was moved. Secondly, while in English the word "*fate*" is personified as "*lady*", in Slovak, the word "*fate*" is personified as "*pán*" ("*lord*") because fate is of male

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grammatical gender in Slovak. This case could also be categorized as a language difference.

4.5. Word Play

Word play can be a regular part of literary texts, so it is also a part of the example text. Students will practice the possibilities of translating word play and consequently also their creativity. Again, the original and then a proposed solution to the translation problem will be listed.

Original	And so, one dire night, when the moon was shining its crimson light, a small army attacked the peaceful Alexandria.
Translation	Jednu strašnú noc, mesiac na kraj rozlial svoju krvavú moc a na pokojnú Alexandriu zaútočila malá armáda.

There is a rhyme in the original text, which is constituted by the word pair "*night*" and "*light*". It is desirable that this rhyme also translates into the target text, for example through the word pair "*noc*" ("*night*") and "*moc*" ("*power*").

Source text analysis is also an important part of the translation process when translating word play (more on this in chapter 5.2. Understanding the Source Text). Students must be able to find out whether a given passage that makes up a word play is the author's intention or merely a random choice of words. The above

example can also be seen as a random arrangement of words.

4.6. Summary

The aforementioned chapters have listed some of the most common translation problems that novice translators have to deal with. The example text managed to incorporate all these issues, which have been cited in the above examples.

The above examples show, how a teacher of literary translation can incorporate the selected problems into their own text. This way, the students will practice different translator competences, not only the linguistic competence, but also the interlingual and cultural competences.

During class discussions, the teacher can show different ways how a translation can be received based on different decisions a translator makes, e.g. the decision between Naturalization and Exotization can impact understanding of the target text, the decision not to translate charactonyms can cause loss of meaning, etc.

Not only that, the teacher will also fully understand all the nuances of the literary text, since they are the author, they will therefore be able to help students identify word play or problems caused by different styles and languages. The teacher will be able to present or react do translations with a different style, and again, the teacher

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will be sure, that a sentence they wrote hides a double meaning.

A thoroughly planed out text should not hold any surprises for the teacher.

5. NON-LITERARY TRANSLATION

During non-literary translation seminars, students should become familiar with solutions to translation problems such as intertextuality (Rakšányiová 2014), understanding the source text (Nord 2005, Keníž 2018), correct stylization, and adherence to conventions (Byrne 2006, STN 01 6910), use of appropriate terminology (Keníž 2011), or the creation of own terminology (Newmark 1988).

The following chapters will show each of the mentioned problems with an example from an own text and propose the author's solution or instructions how students could proceed in solving the given problem.

5.1. Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the phenomenon that "no text is properly understood and fully interpretable without other contexts and texts that are latently present in the utterance" (Rakšányiová 2014, p. 47). Finding citations and allusions to other texts is a translation problem in both literary and non-literary translation.

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The clear solution to the problem is that citations are translated with equivalent Slovak citations. The translator must therefore search and find out whether the quoted source text has been translated into Slovak, then search for it and use it in their translation. The basis of a successful translation is therefore a high-quality search (or research). If the translator finds that the quoted source text has not been translated into Slovak or cannot find it, the translator can translate the quote themself. The paper illustrates this problem with an example:

Original	He defines the term as follows: "the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will".
Translation	Termín definuje nasledovne: „veda a umenie spôsobiť zmenu v súlade s mysľou".

The original contains a quote by A. Crowley from *Magick, Book 4*. Through a thorough search, we find that this book has never been translated into Slovak, and therefore the translator is forced (or allowed) to translate the quotation by themself according to the context.

5.2. Understanding the Source Text

In order to translate any text, the translator must first understand it. A prerequisite for understanding the text is that the translator understands the language of the source text. Consequently, it is advantageous for the translator to analyze the source text. We use the analysis described

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by Ch. Nord (2005). Her model is a holistic one, not restricted to any specific text type, it does not contain any references to specific characteristics of source or target languages, and it is independent of the translator's level of competence.

Based on a good analysis, the students should familiarize themselves with the source text and avoid negative shifts (Popovič 1983). These may arise due to poor understanding of the original. Parallel texts – texts from similar and trustworthy sources dealing with the same or similar topics – are used to help translate the original correctly. An example follows.

Original	All that is known to us is that they are three different beings who take turns in guarding the science and art…
Translation	Vieme iba toľko, že ide o tri bytosti, ktoré sa striedajú v strážení vedy a umenia...

This example uses the phrase "*science and art*" again later in the text. We have taken this from the quotation we have given in the previous example. However, if a student reads the source text quickly, not paying attention, and then does an inadequate analysis of the text, they overlook this link, which may result in it being lost.

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5.3. Writing/Naming Conventions

Conventions constitute a specific case of Naturalization (or Localization). Conventions are not a case of translation proper, rather a replacement of foreign conventions by domestic ones. The student needs to know the domestic conventions or they need to know where to look for them.

The writing conventions for Slovak are described by norm STN 01 6910 which can be found online. Writing conventions are also often summarized in different style guides (e.g. style guides of the European Union for different languages).

As far as conventions are concerned, their main purpose is to ensure fluent communication that the professional translator is supposed to convey. Students will therefore be able to experience the responsibility of a professional translator. The example text uses the following passage to exemplify the translation of conventions.

Original	Paul	Moses	e.g.
Translation	Pavol	Mojžiš	napr.

The translation of conventions is mainly encountered in the form of translation of established names, abbreviations, and various punctuation. An important part is also the translation of measures and scales – if the

original country uses inches, they are translated and transferred into Slovak as centimeters.

As an example of conventions in the example text we can again use the first example (chapter 4.1.). We can see that the nouns in the original are capitalized. However, this is not customary in Slovak, so all nouns begin with a lowercase letter.

5.4. Terminology

An integral part of non-literary translation is the translation of terminology. In terms of terminology, it is generally not translated but replaced, i.e. substituted (Popovič 1983) with the corresponding terms used in the target country.

Obviously, when substituting terminology, good research and work with parallel texts is of great importance. In these cases, it is always necessary to verify the sources and to trust those parallel texts that come from reliable sources (scientific articles, scientific publications, government texts, etc.). On the other hand, unreliable parallel texts are mostly considered to be forum articles and Internet discussions.

Here are a few terms that can be found in the example text:

Orig.	nontheistic	monotheistic	polytheistic
Trans.	neteistický	monoteistický	polyteistický

The second and third examples are self-evident, but the first one requires searching. The author did this too and the explanation he found on a university webpage[1] served as a suitable parallel text.

During the attempts to translate the first example, we could also consider to look for a calque in the form of "*nonteistický*". The author was able to find this in only one parallel text[2], but due to misspellings and countless mistakes in the text, he decided to consider this parallel text as unreliable and therefore continued to look for another term.

5.5. Creating One's Own Terminology

When translating non-literary texts from some research areas (e.g. IT) or from areas of low interest in the target country (esotericism), it is often the case that the translator fails to find the appropriate equivalent even after a thorough search because an equivalent does not exist. In this case, the translator is forced to coin their own translation. For this they have several options, which were described by e.g. P. Newmark (1988, p. 90) as translation labels, which are used when translating a "new institutional term, which should be made in inverted commas, which can later be discreetly withdrawn. It could be done through literal translation".

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[1] http://dai.fmph.uniba.sk/~filit/fvn/nabozenstvo_neteisticke.html
[2] http://www.reocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5707/podobenstva.html

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That is precisely why it is important that students of translation experience the difficulty of creating their own terms, especially if they have to meet certain characteristics. ISO 704 (2009) offers help to translators regarding terminology features. The example text also contains terminology that students are not likely to find in any Slovak parallel texts.

Original	magick
Translation	mágija

A good example of non-existent terminology is the word "*magick*" introduced to English by A. Crowley. We see that the English ending of the word is intentionally different so that it is not the same as the common word "*magic*". A possible equivalent in Slovak is the word "*mágija*", which has similar pronunciation as "*mágia*" and differs from the original word only graphically.

Therefore students will be able to practice their own creativity with the creation of new words, but at the same time they will have to keep in mind that the word they create should have certain features that are described for example in ISO 704. The norm states several features a newly created term should have in order to normalize terminology (e.g. motivation, derivativeness, language correctness).

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5.6. Summary

The previous chapters have shown some of the most common problems encountered by translators of non-literary texts. At the same time, the author managed to incorporate all these problems into his own text so that students would practice solving several different problems in a single text.

Although creating a non-literary text for translation might be time consuming, the teacher might consider it, since then they will know all the ins and outs of his text, they will understand the topic thoroughly, they will know where to look for citations (and whether these exist in the target language), therefore, they will be able to guide the students and help them to better understand the text for example through source text analysis.

The teacher can also incorporate elements with different conventions (e.g. naming or measurements) in the source and target language, so that students can practice this problem as well.

Lastly, terminology can play a role in one's own text as well. This means, that the teacher will understand the chosen terminology, they will know where to look for equivalents and parallel texts, or, on the other hand, if a used term does not have an equivalent in the target language, the teacher will understand the whole concept behind the term and will be able to guide the students

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during discussions and will be able to show them how to create ad hoc terminology.

Again, a thoroughly planed out text should not hold any surprises for the teacher.

6. CONCLUSION

The paper pointed out the main advantages and disadvantages of creating one's own texts for translation assignments. All these points are related to the subject, time and language, but we believe that if the teacher decides to create their own text for the students, they might not regret this decision.

Subsequently, based on the author's own texts, several possible translation problems that can be incorporated into own texts were shown as examples. The author used two texts – one for literary translation and the other for non-literary translation. He used both texts to illustrate individual translation problems.

It appears that this approach to translation teaching is quite novel and was not documented yet, it would therefore be interesting to see some qualitative or quantitative research done on this topic (e.g. how long does it take to write one's own text for either type of translation). However, it needs to be stated yet again, that this approach is highly individual and depends on the language skills and extralinguistic knowledge of the teacher.

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In conclusion, one's own texts for translation appear to be good teaching aids that can be used many times and can be recycled in the future because they can serve in the creation of newer, more up-to-date texts. In addition, they offer students the option of solving either one translation problem in a single text multiple times or multiple different problems in a single, shorter text.

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