

Beyond the market: Translation and cultural resistance in Slovak periodicals

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Big translation history. Periodical studies. Translation studies. Source language distribution. Linguistic power dynamics. Cultural resistance. Slovak culture.

This article contributes to the framework of big translation history, conceptualized by Diana Roig-Sanz and Laura Fólica in 2021, by analyzing medium-sized datasets of translations published in four Slovak periodicals, assembled by the authorial team in 2024, and applying data-driven methods to uncover broader historical and cultural patterns. The analytical lens used in this study is the source language, treated as a cultural good with varying degrees of symbolic capital within the ecosystem of world languages. An analysis of the literary periodical *Revue svetovej literatúry*, alongside data on the Slovak book market from 1995 to 2015, reveals that *Revue* – as a translation-focused periodical with a strong editorial direction and supported by cultural subsidies – can subvert dominant linguistic power relations by significantly diminishing the prominence of English as a source language. Moreover, a comparison of the choice and distribution of source languages in two periodicals from the late 1990s and two from the early 2020s allows for an exploration of questions such as the changing role of German as a language mediating international discourse and current knowledge, both in the years following the fall of the iron curtain and in the decades that followed.

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TRANSLATIONS IN SLOVAK PERIODICALS FROM THE TRANSFORMATIVE 1990S TO THE PRESENT

In an era of intensified global information flows, curated periodicals run by engaged actors represent essential sites of intellectual and activist spaces that resist the unproblematic influx of profit-driven and consumerist content into a cultural-linguistic space. The analysis employs quantitative methods, alongside interpretation grounded in the political and economic context, to examine the flow of cultural-ideological goods, focusing on four non-mainstream Slovak-language print periodicals featuring translations. Through the examination of source languages in two publication outlets chosen to represent the 1990s and their two contemporary counterparts, the article aims to contribute to the understanding of societal changes, recent history, and the mechanisms of cultural resistance in a small Central European country marked by its “distinctive historical experiences” (Mälksoo 2009, 657) and the complex dynamics shaping perceptions of both history (Bakuła 2020, 42) and present identity.

This study focuses on the geographical and linguistic-cultural space of the Slovak Republic from shortly after its establishment in 1993 to the present. The datasets, assembled in 2024 (Hostová et al. 2024a–d), contain information on translations published in four periodicals selected to provide a robust basis for comparing the non-commercial, non-mainstream cultural landscape during the period in question. Two of these periodicals – the literary magazine *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of world literature, hereafter *Revue*) and the feminist-cultural journal *Aspekt* (Aspect) – contribute primarily to an understanding of the final decade of the 20th century, a time when post-totalitarian Slovakia was navigating its path toward democracy (cf., e.g., Henderson 2004). The other two, the political-cultural *Kapitál* (Capital) and the literary *Verzia* (Version) shape – and are shaped by – the contemporary Slovak cultural landscape (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. Basic overview of the studied periodicals

Periodical type	1990s periodicals	2020s periodicals
Literary	<i>Revue svetovej literatúry</i> (covered in the dataset: 1995–2015)	<i>Verzia</i> (published since 2020, covered until 2024)
Cultural-political	<i>Aspekt</i> (published and covered: 1993–2004)	<i>Kapitál</i> (published since 2017, covered until 2024)

It can be hypothesized that the curated and subsidized periodicals – unlike mainstream print media which are largely motivated by profit – display distinct patterns in their choice of source languages and based on the assembled data, an answer is sought to the question of how the distribution of source languages differs between these two types of publications. To do that, the distribution of source languages for *Revue* and for translated books (Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký 2020) published between 1995 and 2015 is compared. The choice of source language is

closely tied to the extent to how far the publication platform aligns with the use of hegemonic English as a vehicle for cultural and informational imports after the fall of socialism and is also inevitably shaped by structural factors such as school language curricula and the linguistic competences of individual actors.

In the second analytical section, distant reading (Moretti 2000) of data on source languages in the four periodicals is employed to shed light on the broader cultural and social conditions of the temporal and spatial context under examination, and observe how periodicals, as actors and networks, actively shape public discourse.² To examine diachronic changes, two five-year periods were chosen during which the two sets of periodicals were in circulation: 1) 1995–1999 for *Revue* and *Aspekt* and 2) 2020–2024 for *Kapitál* and *Verzia*. The introductory sections of the article briefly outline the current state of research at the intersection of periodical and translation studies, with a particular focus on Slovak-related scholarship in this area. This is followed by a concise overview of the data collection methodology, leading into the analytical sections of the study.

TRANSLATION STUDIES AND PERIODICAL STUDIES

Periodicals, as a loosely defined category encompassing any media with a serialized or (semi)regular appearance, include everything from newspapers and academic journals to zines and trade magazines; as such, they occupy an interesting position as a locus of scholarly research. Laura Fóllica, Diana Roig-Sanz, and Stefania Caristia highlight their programmatic nature, the importance of their visual presentation, and their strong embeddedness in the time and place of their creation (2020a, 3). Their ephemerality, relative ease of publication, and porousness in absorbing new ideas make them an ideal vehicle for closely observing historical and societal shifts, as well as the evolution of print culture and literary landscapes.

Although periodicals have been a well-established component of research in fields such as literary criticism and history since the late 19th century, periodical studies as a distinct research field began to emerge in the 1980s. A shift from primarily author-centric studies to considerations of broader publishing networks, along with questions of power structures, materiality, and interdisciplinarity, opened the field to a variety of new approaches and laid the foundation for possibilities enabled by the digital turn. An influential article by Sean Latham and Robert Scholes (2006) provided the field with clear contours for the 21st century, arguing for the perception of periodicals as primary texts and dynamic cultural artifacts that require their own methodological approaches. The field was further solidified by periodical-focused societies, such as ESPRit (founded in 2009; see also Stead et al. 2024), and the establishment of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* in 2010 (see Collier 2015 for an overview of the journal's first five years).

The intersection of periodical studies and translation studies initially emerged from the subfield of translation in media and journalism (van Doorslaer 2010, Bielsa and Bassnett 2009), but later expanded to include literary, cultural, and historical perspectives, developing into a distinctive and well-established subfield of translation studies. One of the most notable large-scale efforts to integrate periodical stud-

ies into translation research was the ERC project led by Roig-Sanz, *Social Networks of the Past: Mapping Hispanic and Lusophone Literary Modernity, 1898–1959*, which focused on Hispanic and Lusophone periodicals (CORDIS 2018). More recent research showcases the breadth of historical and geographical zones of inquiry for translated periodicals, ranging from 19th-century Texas (González Núñez 2023) and early 20th-century Estonia (Möldre 2024) to socialist Hungary (Sohár 2025) and present-day China (Xu and von Flotow 2024). Efforts to synthesize these various strands into an established branch of translation studies have resulted in several key publications, most notably the special issue of *Translation and Interpreting* titled “Translation and/in Periodical Publications”, edited by Constanza Guzmán (2019), as well as the edited volumes *Literary Translation in Periodicals: Methodological Challenges for a Transnational Approach* (Fólica, Roig-Sanz, and Caristia 2020b) and *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Media* (Bielsa 2022). The recent conference *Translation and the Periodical*, organized in September 2023 by Ghent University, further contributed to expanding global and local perspectives in this area.

The methods employed at the intersection of these two fields draw on tools from both disciplines and broadly apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Qualitative research, which relies on discourse analysis, paratextual studies, and the exploration of publishing and reception histories – including interviews with translators and editors – helps uncover linguistic and national power relations, ideological influences, and broader trends shaping the creation of periodicals. Quantitative research utilizes content analysis, bibliometric studies, and circulation data, which can then be employed in network analyses to trace the connections underpinning the flow of ideas across languages and cultures. Combining these in a mixed-methods study allows for cross-referencing numerical data with textual evidence, providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of various trends in translated periodicals. Both approaches rely heavily on digital tools, which Latham and Scholes identify as a key driver of the rise of periodical studies (2006, 517).

However, this synthesis of two fields naturally also results in methodological challenges. Issues commonly associated with periodical research – such as the heterogeneity of the medium, the unsystematic categorization of different types of periodicals, and inconsistencies in digitization – are further complicated by the frequent lack of information regarding the authorship of translations, their source texts, and potential relay languages. In many cases, translations are not acknowledged at all, posing additional obstacles to systematic study.

SLOVAK RESEARCH ON TRANSLATION IN PERIODICALS

Slovak literary and cultural periodicals, i.e., periodicals dedicated to literature and culture, emerged somewhat late, in the second half of the 19th century. Their profiles were shaped by national oppression, the need to defend the fledgling nation, readership’s low level of education, underdeveloped distribution limiting social impact, and the cultural lag of the Hungarian-ruled territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Consequently, most contemporary literary translations also appeared in periodicals. Until Czechoslovakia’s establishment in 1918, the Slovak cultural space heavily relied

on a network of periodicals that gradually established itself across readership strata and ideological orientations. Thus, in Slovak literary studies, researching periodical reception of literary works and authors became fundamental for obtaining information, confronting views, and contextualizing phenomena in the literary and cultural life of the period.

Although present since its inception, scholarly reflection on translation in Slovak literary periodicals began later. The first comprehensive work, a case study of magazine translations during the *Matica slovenská* period (1863–1875), appeared in 1961. Its author, Anton Popovič, using aesthetic norms and concepts of literary taste in his literary-historical analyses of Russian literature translations in that era's magazines, outlined the contemporary reception situation. Translation significantly contributed to this formation, considerably reconfiguring Slovak literature's stylistic, aesthetic, and thematic repertoire. This groundbreaking work offered a novel perspective on translation, allowing Popovič to pioneer new research into translation's role in Slovak literature.

Following Popovič and his understanding of translation as part of cultural history (Kusá 2005), analyses of foreign literature reception in periodicals have been integral to translation and reception history studies at the Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences (regardless of its institutional form) since the 1970s. Periodical reception was reflected in global monographic studies, like *Stručné dejiny umeleckého prekladu na Slovensku* (A brief history of literary translation in Slovakia). Researchers based at the Institute also authored specific case studies on foreign literary and non-literary works in literary magazines of the 1960s and 1970s (Truhlářová 1997, Bžoch 2011, Kusá 2011, Vajdová 2020).

After 2010, two new research types of translation in periodicals emerged: firstly, surveys as annotated bibliographies of socialist literary journal translations (Priščová 2016, Varačková 2016, Mikleová 2018), and secondly, specific reception case studies. For instance, Natália Rondzиковá (2020) discussed Russian journal translations in *Slovenské pohľady*. Additionally, Ľubica Pliešovská (2016) studied the Slovak reception of American literature (1945–1968), and Matej Laš (2019) examined translation criticism in Slovakia. These studies commonly integrate reception case study methodology with bibliographic research and historical contextualization, often with varying statistical evaluation.

Another line of research on literary and cultural periodicals includes smaller (Popovič 1965, Žemberová 1994) and larger syntheses (Timura 1998), as well as synthesizing-cataloguing works (Darovec and Barborík 1996) on literary magazines in Slovak literary history's turning points. While not primarily focused on translation, their renown highlights their substantial contribution to understanding 20th-century literary magazines' social and cultural roles. This line of research also includes (non-academic) memoir texts by translators who edited and collaborated with important 20th-century literary magazines, shedding light on periodical operations and translation practices (e.g., Feldek 2007, Passia and Magová 2015).

The last line of research focuses on translation in literary journals themselves, displaying two views: emphasis on the literary magazine as a historically specific

arena for translation (Tyšš 2017), overlapping with historiography (Rundle 2012); or a more traditional, receptive emphasis on translation including historical contextualization (Jánošíková 2016, Varačková 2018, Laš 2022).

In conclusion, research on literary and cultural periodicals has been present in Slovak translation studies since the 1960s. After 2015, studies increasingly focus on journal material itself, evident in bibliographic surveys and reception-bibliographic syntheses.

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION

Some metadata on translations in Slovak periodicals are accessible through the *kis3g.sk* portal³ and, upon request, from the Slovak National Library.⁴ However, the catalogs include only articles published up to 2012, and the metadata are neither exhaustive (e.g., lacking information on source languages in *Revue*) nor always accurate. For *Revue*, a bibliography covering the years 1965–2004 exists (Kerlik 2005) and was consulted in preparing the dataset. Nevertheless, extensive surface reading proved necessary.⁵ This approach also enabled a more precise definition of the nature of the collected data (for example, by including very short translations scattered through some of the magazines or abstracts of papers written in Slovak translated into foreign languages) and helped avoid various biases present in existing databases (cf. Popea 2023, 347). During the data assembly process, each issue of the four periodicals (cf. Table 1) was examined to identify the translated content. Data were then entered into structured spreadsheets, verified, and cross-referenced with original sources (when possible).⁶ As indicated by the labels, translators were treated as target text authors.⁷ The methodology of data collection was aimed at being as detailed as possible and individual texts, regardless of their size, have separate entries. Data analysis was made based on the number of entries, not text length.

OBSTACLES TO DATA COLLECTION

The challenges in data collection related to *Revue* stemmed from bibliographical inconsistencies, with source information either missing or irregularly placed within the paratexts. In some cases, paratexts included author biographies without providing any details about the translated text. Poetry translations in the periodical were particularly arduous, with translators frequently failing to quote the source materials which made it very hard to trace the sources. Non-Latin scripts caused additional problems in *Revue* and required secondary translation verification. Instances of indirect translations further complicated the accuracy of data.

In the context of *Aspekt*, the introduction of feminist thought into Slovak entailed significant translation challenges. Without established translations of key vocabulary, editors intervened heavily, blurring lines between editor and translator. Composite metatexts – such as commented translated fragments that blended original and translated material – further complicated the process, as did missing bibliographic data, including original titles and translator names. Interviews posed a distinct challenge: the multilingual participants often made it difficult to determine the source language.

Kapitál, as a primarily non-literary medium encompassing a diverse range of text types – including academic articles, essays, political manifestos, and personal blog posts – presented a distinct set of obstacles to data collection, primarily related to the lack of source text information. While individual articles in *Kapitál* typically provide brief bibliographical details about the author and the translator, references to the original source materials are rarely included, necessitating a manual search with varying degrees of success. This issue was further exacerbated by uncredited and unacknowledged editorial interventions, as many texts were abridged or condensed into fragments of the original. A further complication arose from the absence of information regarding source languages, which significantly hindered the manual search for sources and proved particularly challenging in the case of interviews, as was also observed in *Aspekt*. These interviews are frequently conducted with non-Slovak speakers; however, details concerning the languages in which they were conducted, as well as the identities of their translators, are consistently omitted.⁸

Lastly, *Verzia* as the most recent publication with a strong emphasis on translated literature, presented comparatively fewer challenges in the data collection. Nevertheless, the magazine's inconsistent approach to source attribution necessitated manual tracing. As with *Revue*, poetry translations proved particularly problematic, as they frequently lacked official titles or information regarding their origins, rendering some texts untraceable.

FOUR SLOVAK PERIODICALS: PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

Revue svetovej literatúry was a Slovak literary magazine devoted exclusively to translated literature. Established in 1965 and following the examples of such magazines as *Internatsional'naia literatura* (International literature, est. 1933) and *Inostrannaia literatura* (Foreign literature, est. 1955) in the USSR (see also Sherry 2015) or the Czech *Světová literatura* (World literature, est. 1956), it provided an important platform for introducing foreign literatures to Slovak readers. The magazine, primarily focusing on 20th-century authors, featured translations of prose, poetry, and drama and published original essays, reviews, and cultural journalism pieces. From its inception, it was published for three decades by the major state-owned publishing house Slovenský spisovateľ (Slovak writer). During the political and economic transformation in Slovakia following the fall of state socialism in 1989, the large formerly state-owned publishers experienced difficulties in adjusting to the market economy, as was the case of Slovenský spisovateľ. In 1995, it ceased publishing *Revue* for economic reasons and the magazine's publication was then taken over by the Slovenská spoločnosť prekladateľov umeleckej literatúry (SSPUL, Slovak literary translators' society), a translators' association established in 1990, which effectively saved the periodical (Šrank 2015, 50). The publishing was later subsidized by the Pro Slovakia cultural fund established by the Ministry of Culture in 1991. In 1995, Jarmila Samcová, a translator from English, Serbian, and Croatian, became the magazine's longtime editor-in-chief.

Revue played a crucial role in enriching the Slovak cultural space by providing access to diverse global literary voices (Magová and Passia 2015) such as international

networking through featuring translations of essays previously published in foreign periodicals – although this was true only for the more liberal 1960s (Bujačková 2020, 15).⁹ After 2010, as the SSPUL struggled to attract new generations of translators and its leadership failed to respond to the needs of younger professionals, its activities declined. After Samcová passed away in 2017, she was succeeded as editor-in-chief by Gabriela Magová (1976), a translator from Hungarian. The periodical's unstable economic situation, however, offered no viable means of continuation, and its last issue was published in 2018.

After a two-year gap without a Slovak-language periodical specializing in translated literature, the newly formed civic association of literary translators DoSlov – mainly comprising the younger generation – launched *Verzia*, a magazine featuring translations of literary works, interviews with translators and experts on foreign literature, articles on translated literature, and reviews.¹⁰

Verzia, which was founded with Gabriela Magová as chief editor, collaborates with both established and emerging translators, providing the latter with the opportunity to work with experienced editors. The first issue of *Verzia* was published in 2020 on 30 September, International Translation Day. Initially available only in digital format, the magazine has since expanded to print editions, thanks to funding received from the Slovak Arts Council.

Aspekt was a Slovak feminist cultural journal first published in 1993.¹¹ It was founded by a working collective that, to serve as the legal and financial entity for the magazine's publication, established a non-profit organization of the same name. This non-profit – the first feminist association in Slovakia – was created to “encourage the development of the woman's self-awareness, educational opportunities, and her independent self-fulfillment” (Stanovy... 1993). It continues to operate as an educational and publishing organization focused on gender awareness and women's rights, organizing regular cultural and educational events. The establishment of the journal was partly a response to the rising nationalism in public and political life which also gave rise to the culture wars unfolding in Slovakia in 1992 and 1993, when the populist government of the newly founded Slovak Republic controlled cultural funding. Support was primarily directed toward cultural actors affiliated with the ruling parties – or at least those who did not openly criticize state cultural policies or promote values perceived as subversive or provocative. One of the key cultural battles was fought over *Slovenské pohľady*, the oldest Slovak literary and cultural periodical, which was taken over in 1993 by the nationalist institution Matica slovenská. As a result, deputy editor-in-chief Jana Juráňová (also a translator from English and Russian), together with all other members of the editorial team, was removed from her position. Later that same year, she and Jana Cviková, a literary critic and doctoral candidate at the Institute of Literary Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, became founding members and editors-in-chief of the journal *Aspekt*.¹² The first issue states that contributors worked without compensation (ASPEKT... 1993, 1). The printing of the inaugural issue, and later also the overall production of the journal was financially supported by international foundations (Frauen-Anstiftung, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Pro Helvetia). In 2004 it transitioned to an online-only format.

Table 2. Number of issues and pages per publication platform per year

	Average No. of issues per year	Approximate No. of pages per year*	No. of years followed
<i>Revue svetovej literatúry</i>	4	800	20
<i>Aspekt</i>	3	600	12
<i>Kapitál</i>	12	400	8
<i>Verzia</i>	4	400	5

* The calculations for the number of printed pages are rough estimates.

Table 3. Number of translation entries per publication platform (entire datasets)

	No. of entries*
<i>Revue svetovej literatúry</i> (1995–2015)	5,164
<i>Aspekt</i>	931
<i>Kapitál</i>	239
<i>Verzia</i>	206

* The size of the entry may vary greatly (cf. Hostová et al. 2024e).

Table 4. Number of source languages

	No. of source languages
<i>Revue svetovej literatúry</i>	58
<i>Aspekt</i>	27
<i>Kapitál</i>	12
<i>Verzia</i>	20

Table 5. Number of source text and target text authors and an average number of source text authors translated by one target text author

	No. of source text authors	No. of target text authors	Average No. of source text authors translated by one target text author
<i>Revue svetovej literatúry</i>	1,659	432	4
<i>Aspekt</i>	639	214	3
<i>Kapitál</i>	266	100	3
<i>Verzia</i>	155	117	1

The journal was established as a “Slovak-Czech” periodical (ASPEKT 1993, 1) aiming to introduce and promote feminist discourse in the Slovak and Czech cultural contexts, deliberately broadening its pool of contributors to include both Slovak and Czech authors and publishing in both languages – even in defiance of the State Language Act then in force. Between 1993 and 2004, 21 issues were published and in 1996, ASPEKT also started its own book series, which is still running. The journal featured both originals and translations of literary and academic texts, practical educational handbooks, and theoretical works by seminal feminist thinkers, including works by Naomi Wolf and Judith Butler, thus making feminist literature accessible to Slovak readers for the first time. *Aspekt* has played a crucial role in analyzing and critiquing Slovakia’s political, social, and cultural history from a feminist perspective, addressing the complexities of women’s emancipation during and after socialism.

Kapitál is a Slovak critical cultural and political magazine that began publication in 2017 and is published by the not-for-profit organization KPTL, chaired by Tomáš Hučko, a publicist, editor, and translator from English. Initially released as a monthly print edition, it transitioned to an online-only platform in 2024. The magazine offers commentaries, columns, reports, essays, and interviews on political, social, and cultural phenomena. It emphasizes social justice and equality, providing a platform for voices often underrepresented in mainstream media. Its publication and the development of other media produced under the label (webpage, podcast, events) have been financially supported by various funds.¹³ *Kapitál* addresses global environmental, feminist, and postcolonial topics, as well as local economic, social, and cultural issues. It strives to foster discussion within the new left in Slovakia and features translations of various works, including literature, essays, and articles; however, to a much lesser extent than the feminist journal published two decades earlier.

DATASETS OVERVIEW

With approximately 800 printed pages published annually (Table 2), *Revue* – which was tracked for a 20-year period, and which is exclusively dedicated to translated literature – contains the highest number of translation entries, totaling over 5,000 (Table 3). *Aspekt* comes second in this regard, with over 900 entries, and *Kapitál* and *Verzia* contain slightly more than 200 entries each. Of the four periodicals, *Revue*, was the one with the highest proportion of literary texts – 95% (Figure 1) and *Kapitál* contained the highest proportion of translations of non-literary entries (81%).

Revue also covered the greatest number of languages – almost 60 (Table 4). The diversity of languages was lowest in *Kapitál*, which, as will be shown in the next section, most heavily relied on English as the language of international communication. Regarding the number of source text and target text authors, as well as the average number of source text authors translated by target text authors (Table 5), *Revue* exhibits a pattern indicative of repeated collaboration with a relatively small pool of translators. This might be a result of several factors including the large number of translated texts and a limited openness to new collaborations.

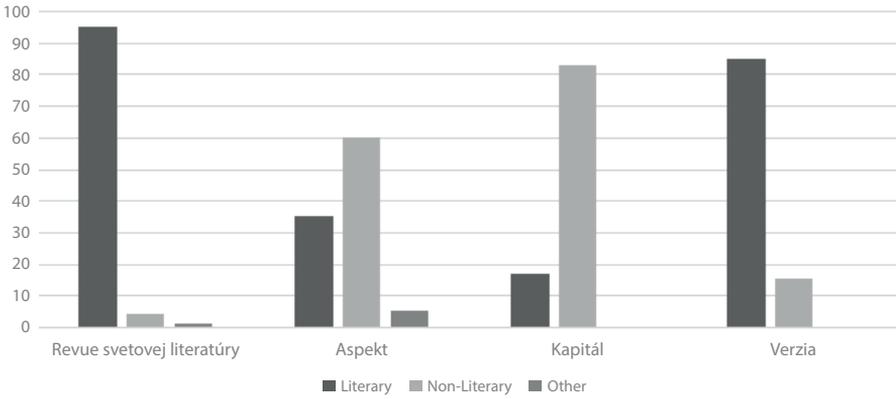


Figure 1. Percentage of literary versus non-literary entries

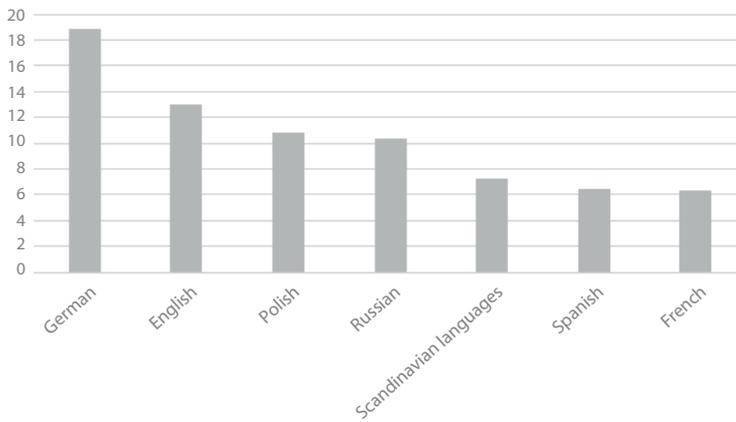


Figure 2. Languages of translated texts in *Revue svetovej literatúry* (1995–2015), based on data from Hostová et al. (2024b), highlighting the seven most frequently translated languages¹⁵

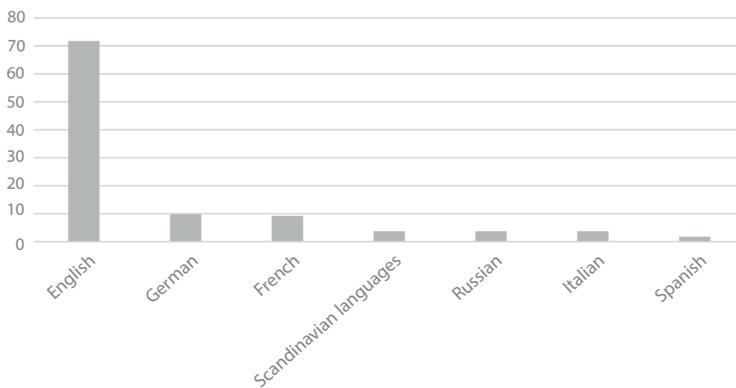


Figure 3. Languages of literary book translations into Slovak (1995–2015), based on data from Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký (2020)

SOURCE LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION IN CURATED AND MARKET-DRIVEN TRANSLATIONS IN SLOVAKIA (1995–2015)

This section compares the distribution of source languages in one of the periodicals – *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Figure 2) – with that in book production (Figure 3) over the period of 1995–2015, aiming to highlight contrasting patterns between the predominantly profit-driven and the mainly subsidized sections in the field of literary translation.¹⁴ For book translations, data published by Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký (2020) were referenced, even though the authors did not focus specifically on commercial translations. Their data remain relevant for the present analysis because book production by small, subsidized presses represents only a negligible percentage (cf. e.g., Združenie vydavateľov a kníhkupcov 2015), making the dataset suitable for this purpose.

The comparison between primarily market-driven choices in book publishing and the curated content in *Revue* reveals not only differences in preferred source languages, but also a significantly more balanced distribution of languages in the periodical. From the most translated languages not represented in book translation, Polish as the source language of more than 10% of entries in the periodical is most interesting. Significantly, German rather than English was the most frequent source language in the magazine – even though the editor-in-chief Jarmila Samcová was herself a translator from English. This might reflect not only the fact that the editorial board drew on different pools of source texts, but also that highly skilled (and respected) translators were less frequently working from English, which was rarely taught during state socialism, *Revue* built on the tradition of translation as an art form (Levý 1963, Vilikovský 1984), which held a prestigious status in the Slovak cultural landscape and valued experienced translators, which influenced both the linguistic composition and the age of the translators collaborating with the periodical. The comparison shows the ways in which a curated and subsidized publication platform diverged from the composition of book production mostly focused on creating profit. Editors, translators, funding bodies, and other actors within *Revue*'s network created a platform that promoted literatures written in languages beyond those favored by the market – by then fully integrated into the global flow of literary goods – and conveying messages distinct from those of mainstream publications.

SOURCE LANGUAGES IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE: THE 1990S AND TODAY

The selection of periodicals for this study, along with the collected data (Hostová et al. 2024a–d), enables the identification of patterns relevant to cultural, social, and historical research. To examine shifts in the cultural and social climate over the observed period, two five-year spans were selected for each of the two translation datasets, drawing on information from the following sources: 1) *Revue svetovej literatúry* (1995–1999), 2) *Aspekt* (1995–1999), 3) *Kapitál* (2020–2024), and 4) *Verzia* (2020–2024). Figures 4–7 show the percentage of entries translated from the ten most frequently represented source languages in each periodical during the respec-

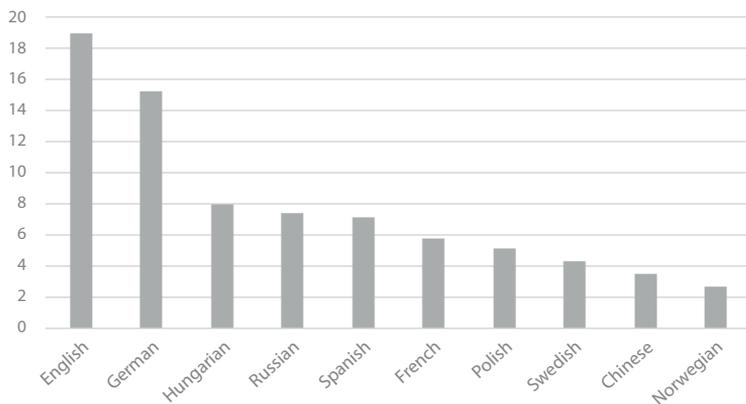


Figure 4. Ten most frequently translated languages in *Revue* (1995–1999)

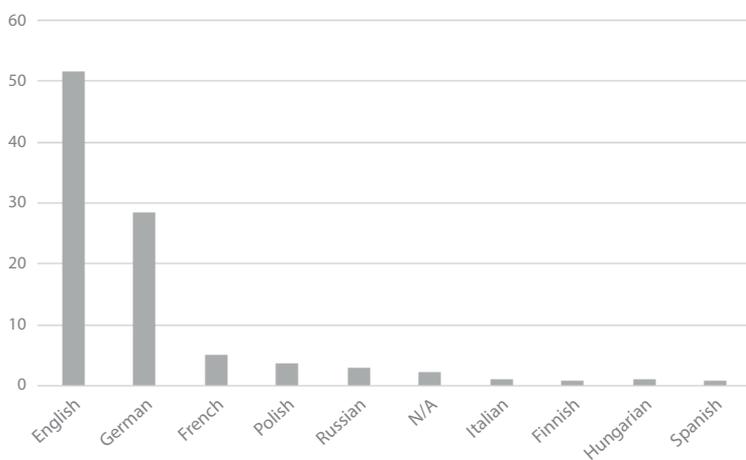


Figure 5. Ten most frequently translated languages in *Aspekt* (1995–1999)

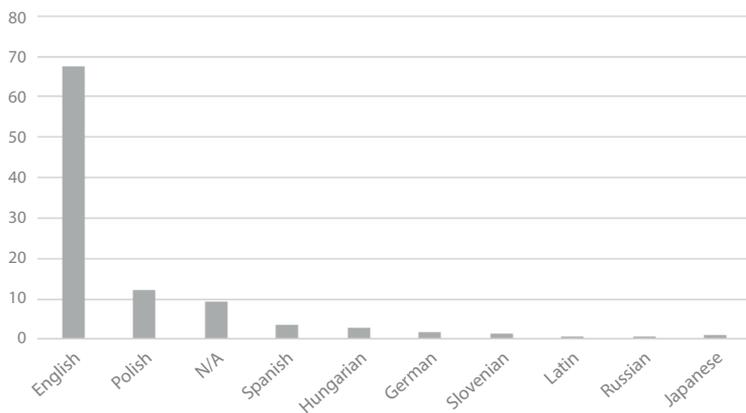


Figure 6. Ten most frequently translated languages in *Kapitál* (2020–2024)

tive time frames. Differences in source languages – both in terms of the specific languages represented and their overall distribution – can be observed across the timeline and between the two types of periodicals.

PERIODICAL TYPE

With literary texts forming only 38% and 19% of translated entries in *Aspekt* and *Kapitál* respectively (Figure 1), the primary focus of these periodicals – *Aspekt* in the past and *Kapitál* currently – has been on presenting content related to current events and novel theoretical and critical approaches regarding sociological, cultural, and political thought with which the Slovak cultural space had limited prior engagement. *Aspekt* and *Kapitál* were focused on providing conceptual tools for analysis and the formation of political opinions and values among the public, placing less emphasis on diversifying source languages. As such, they have significantly drawn on internationalized content mediated through English (51% of all entries in *Aspekt* and more than 67% of entries in *Kapitál*).

With a small number of languages dominating the translation outputs, the distribution of source languages in these political-cultural outlets is significantly unequal. In both periodicals, two languages – English and German for *Aspekt* and English and Polish for *Kapitál* – account for about 80% of translation entries. This distribution approximately follows the Pareto principle – a distribution found in non-regulated environments. The remaining languages with few translation entries form a long tail and just *survive* (Pareto 2014, 194). *Revue* and *Verzia*, as periodicals systematically focused on translation and the representation of cultural others, and promoting linguistic diversity, on the other hand, consciously focus on diversifying the source literatures, cultures, and languages, and their distribution of source language, as can be seen in Figures 4 and 7, are significantly more balanced.

DIACHRONIC VIEW

The temporal shift in connection with political-cultural periodicals is reflected in the significantly strengthened position of English as the source language in *Kapitál* (cf. Figure 8 for a comparative overview). The relatively high percentage of texts translated from German in *Aspekt* (28%) is a result of a combination of factors springing from geopolitical circumstances. German has historically been the mediator of new ideas for the Czech context, and the Slovak context has traditionally drawn on both Czech-language and German-language sources for intellectual and cultural influence. In the period before Slovakia fully entered global capitalist modernity (Osborne 2013, 2018) and started using English, German was a frequently studied Western language.

Other contributing factors include the fact that one of the editors-in-chief, Jana Cviková, is a translator from German; that funding institutions from German-language cultures – such as Switzerland and Germany – played a key role in supporting the periodical (e.g. Frauen-Anstiftung, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Pro Helvetia), and that *Aspekt*'s editors, translators, and collaborators engaged in repeated interactions with actors using the German language as the primary means of commu-

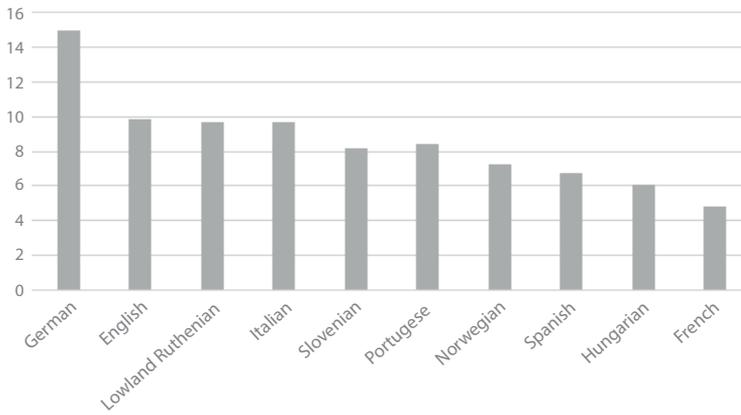


Figure 7. Ten most frequently translated languages in *Verzia* (2020–2024)

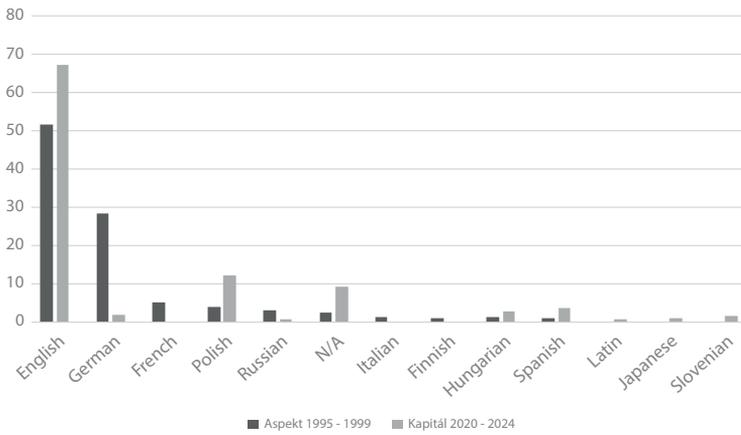


Figure 8. Diachronic comparison of source languages in *Aspekt* and *Kapitál*

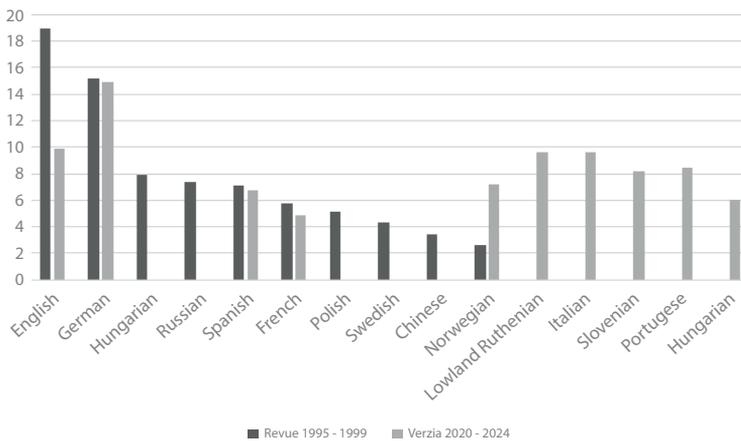


Figure 9. Diachronic comparison of source languages in *Revue* and *Verzia*

nication. The decline of German as a significant vehicle for new information, as observed in *Kapitál*, springs from the generational shift: the actors who founded and ran the outlet were educated almost entirely after the fall of state socialism and would typically use English as their second language.

The two literary periodicals share six source languages among their most translated ones (cf. Figure 9 for a comparative overview). Four of them – English, German, French, Spanish – are major world languages with substantial symbolic capital. Another is Hungarian – the language of Slovakia’s largest minority. The sixth is Norwegian: in *Revue*, its prominence was the result of cooperation with the translator Milan Richter who contributed a significant number of poetry translations; in *Verzia*, the high number of entries from this language sprang from Norway being the guest of honour at the 2023 Central European literary festival Authors’ Reading Month. *Verzia* dedicated its first issue in 2024 to Norwegian literature. The four differing languages – Russian, Polish, Chinese, and Swedish in *Revue*, and Lowland Ruthenian, Italian, Slovenian, and Portuguese in *Verzia* – reflect both the respective missions of the periodicals (such as a focus on minority cultures) and the composition of their contributor networks. The most exclusive of *Verzia*’s source languages is surely Lowland Ruthenian, spoken by a Ruthenian diaspora in Vojvodina, Serbia, with historical ties to the eastern parts of Slovakia from which the translator Maroš Volovár originates. The high proportion of translations in this language partly reflects our methodology: since the entries were poems, we treated each poem as a separate item.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The above data was approached through the analytical prism of the source language – a cultural good possessing varying degrees of symbolic capital in the ecosystem of other languages. The value of capital is not fixed or stable; it varies over time and is contingent on the cultural and linguistic framework within which it is assessed. Attitudes towards a source language relate to, among other factors, values, beliefs, personal trajectories, and can also vary greatly between individuals and groups of actors. Looking into distribution of source language in time therefore offers insights into such issues as current geopolitical constellations and mechanisms underpinning cultural resistance – particularly in an era when many regions are under the lasting effect of English linguistic colonialism. Significant differences were found in the ways periodicals handle the globally hegemonic English language with literary magazines significantly shifting the balance towards a more even distribution of source languages. The political-cultural outlets viewed source languages primarily as instruments for the mediation of the contents which they aimed to spread and so accentuated their diversity to a much lesser degree.

Although literary histories often tend to “relegate periodicals to the periphery, underestimating their contributions and function in structuring the transnational literary field” (Fólica, Roig-Sanz, and Caristia 2020a, 3), focusing on periodicals in the study of translation – even on those with limited circulation – enables researchers to uncover patterns obscured by grand historical narratives and to illuminate

the overlooked elements that have shaped the fabric of the social. This research shows that the deliberate selection of source languages by the literary magazines *Revue* and *Verzia* in Slovakia in the 1990s and 2020s offered a corrective to the highly uneven distribution of source languages observed in the book market where hegemonic English dominates. Moreover, a shift in the use of language as the mediator of novel ideas in Slovakia was identified. Whereas in the 1990s, political-cultural outlets relied not only on English, but also on German as conduits of new content, by the 2020s they had shifted to the almost exclusive use of English.

Data which was generated to investigate the issues discussed here (Hostová et al. 2024a–d) not only open further questions concerning the cultural, economic, and political changes in Slovakia over the past three decades, but also offer potential for broader, large-scale analysis. They also provide opportunities for researching the history of translation as both the history of trends in translating texts and the history of a region as seen through the lens of translation. Additional methodologies that can be fruitfully employed to such big data include social network analysis which can “unearth cultural mediators who were overshadowed by mainstream history and may appear in the center of the network showing a more significant role. Or, quite the contrary, a network science approach can show the peripheral position of well-known authors in cultural mediating processes” (Roig-Sanz, Cardillo, and Ikoř 2024, 183). The open data here invites further exploration of the region, but also enables comparative analysis and, through its potential inclusion in larger data sets, aims to contribute to a better understanding of global flows of ideas.

NOTES

- ¹ The authors contributed to this work as follows: Ivana Hostová was responsible for conceptualization, methodology development, writing, data collection, and funding acquisition. Eva Spiřiaková contributed through writing and data collection. Marianna Bachledová and Natálie Tyřř Rondziková also assisted with writing and data collection. Róbert Novotný oversaw data curation and conducted quantitative analysis. Igor Tyřř contributed to writing and Richard Gramanič Štromajer assisted with data collection. Following “Guidelines for ethical use and acknowledgement of large language models in academic writing” (Porsdam Mann et al. 2024), we declare that any use of generative AI in this manuscript adheres to ethical guidelines for use and acknowledgement of generative AI in academic research. AI was used for proofreading and at some places as a tool for enhancing the style. Each author has made a substantial contribution to the work, which has been thoroughly vetted for accuracy, and assumes responsibility for the integrity of their contributions. The final manuscript was proofread by a human proofreader, Jonathan Eddy. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Slovak into English were made by the authors.
- ² The understanding of the functioning of the social in this work draws on actor-network theory (ANT) in which the “task of defining and ordering the social should be left to the actors themselves, not taken up by the analyst” (Latour 2005, 23) – in other words, in which the social forms in ad hoc and repeated, interactions and is to be observed empirically, not made to fit preexisting categories. In ANT, actors are “semiotic spaces in which the different elements that are involved are both defined and stabilized by their relationships to other entities in the web” (Vicsek, Király, and Konya 2016). Networks consist of human (translators, editors, authors) and non-human actors (funding institutions, computers, distribution companies, printers or the editorial office) and all actors are also networks and vice versa.

- ³ Gathering metadata from the portal kis3g.sk can be carried out by first searching for the desired record(s), adding them to the research list (either individually via “Add to research” or collectively via “Add page/all to research”), accessing the research list from the top menu, selecting the relevant records (or applying the operation to all), and finally exporting them in MARC or MARCXML format to generate a downloadable file.
- ⁴ The Slovak National Library hosts a specialized National Bibliography department, including the Department of Authorities and Metadata Strategy, which can be contacted to provide metadata for research purposes (Národná bibliografia 2024).
- ⁵ Surface reading is a method between close and distant reading (Collier 2015, 107) or reading for patterns (Cohen 2009, 59) which allows researchers to make “the most of the rich, abundant, and understudied data provided by periodicals and will inevitably enhance our understanding of literary history” (Popea 2023, 43).
- ⁶ Partial datasets were published in Hostová et al. (2024a–d) as open access and include the following fields: “Year”, “Number”, “Location”, “Source Text Author(s)”, “Source Text Author(s) Gender (Assigned at Birth)”, “Target Text Author(s)”, “Target Text Author(s) Gender (Assigned at Birth)”, “Target Text Title”, “Source Text Language”, “Target Text Language”, “Text Type”. Comprehensive documentation was published in Hostová et al. (2024e). Where some information was unavailable, “N/A” was entered in the corresponding cell. In the analysis presented here, this data is grouped under “Other” along with a few additional categories, such as instances where “Gender Assigned at Birth” was not entered into the spreadsheet (for details on gender labelling and its limitations, see Hostová et al. 2024e).
- ⁷ This responds to appeals such as Kate Briggs’s: “I am a translator and a writer, or so I claim, when asked what I do, professionally speaking. As a way of making the writing part clear – in case it were not already obvious” (2017, 197).
- ⁸ Later interviews with editors revealed that the interviewer was also the translator. Published bibliographies, however, relied solely on the metadata provided in the periodicals.
- ⁹ The international cooperation of *Revue* in the 1960s was so widespread that it featured parts of foreign journals and even kept foreign correspondents (like Edward Lucie-Smith in the UK). However, international contacts were cut when the magazine was “normalized” in the 1970s (cf. Jánošíková 2016).
- ¹⁰ The civic organization DoSlov is part of CEATL – European Council of Literary Translators’ Associations and was founded by Barbara Sigmundová (1987), a translator from Spanish and English; Lucia Halová (1979), who translates from Portuguese and English; Gabriela Magová (1976), a translator from Hungarian, Natália Tyšš Rondziková (1992), a translator from English, Spanish, and Russian, and Linda Magáthová (1988), who translates from German and English. It focuses on making translators visible, builds community through activities on social networks and organizing regular live gatherings for members and non-members (festivals, presentations, community picnics). Part of their mission is educational (workshops, webinars) and they also monitor the working conditions of literary translators and the situation on the market. At the same time, it helps raise awareness among literary translators and editors about their rights and advocates for decent working conditions for translators and editors of fiction and poetry. Apart from the founding members of DoSlov, Igor Tyšš (1989), a translation scholar and translator from English, also helped launch the periodical *Verzia*.
- ¹¹ Currently, it functions in online form as ASPEKT in *feministický webzín* on the website <https://www.aspekt.sk/aspektin/vsetko>.
- ¹² Cviková and Juráňová, with a network of other scholars, translators, writers, artists, and activists, have been creating transnational networks (also by translating and publishing expatriate Slovak writers) and introducing feminist and gender theory into the Slovak context (cf. Cviková 2010, 2014).
- ¹³ These include the Slovak Arts Council, the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung representation in the Czech Republic, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and Bratislava City Foundation.
- ¹⁴ For discussions of the different ways subsidizing literary translation shifts the market, see Hedberg and Vimr (2022a) and the special issue of *Perspectives* (Hedberg and Vimr 2022b).
- ¹⁵ While Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký (2020) group data according to national literatures, this analysis is based on languages. The data for the group of Scandinavian languages was calculated by

summing entries for translations from Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic, and Faroese. Other Scandinavian languages did not appear as source texts in translations published in *Revue svetovej literatúry*. To enable comparison, data related to English and American literature in Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký were also combined and treated as a single category: the English language.

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