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Explicit information on translation theory in contemporary Hungarian and English Bible prefaces – a contrastive approach¹

*Nihil est tam perfectum quod non aliquid imperfecti secum trahat.*²

(Bálint Mantskovits, typographer of the first Hungarian Bible translation)

1. Introduction

One of the most (if not the most) important sacred texts in European religious culture is the Holy Bible – for most of us now available in translated versions. Its original texts describing world in a non-European cultural sphere more than two thousand years ago were written in Aramaic and Hebrew (Old Testament), and Greek (New Testament). The first legal vernacular translations in Europe coincided with the onset of the Pre-Reformation period, marking a significant development in the field of translation studies. These translations were accompanied by prefaces, which served as crucial supplementary documents, providing valuable explanatory information to enhance the comprehension of the translations. These prefaces allowed translators to articulate their rationale for particular decisions, offer interpretations of the text, and engage with the audience. As Tibor Fabiny states: “Whoever translated and edited the Bible in the vernacular was wholeheartedly committed to show the dramatic event of how the letter or the word was becoming Gospel while reading it” (Fabiny, 2016, p. 14).

The earliest extant Hungarian translations were also produced during the European Pre-Reformation (the so-called Hussite Bible) followed by several other Hungarian translations; the first complete translation of the Bible was published in 1590 by a team of the Reformed pastor Gáspár Károli. The interpretation of the

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² Nothing is so perfect that it does not carry with it something imperfect.

Hebrew, Greek and later Latin texts for Central European believers was for a considerable period confined to the oral culture of the church. However, centuries after the first Hungarian translations, a wide variety of Hungarian Bible translations now exist, in keeping with the often unwelcome diversity of linguistic and interpretive differences (for the importance and accuracy of interpretation see Carson, 1984, *Resolution on the Newly Revised Károli Translation*³). The challenges of interlingual translation between unfriendly languages (languages with different grammatic structures and lexicon) affect not only the readability or acceptability of the target language text, but also the comprehension and interpretation of the source language text itself (as evidenced by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativism). Hungarian language differs from Hebrew, Greek (which are sacred languages) and Latin (which was later considered sacred) and these differences in language and interpretation are evident in both early and modern Bible translations.

The purpose of the early Hungarian translations, in the spirit of the 16th-century erasmo-humanist aspirations, was twofold: firstly, to establish or strengthen the literary language, and secondly, as a kind of religious activity. However, in addition to their language-forming (or today: language-planning) activity, the translators also pursued another important aim: the Erasmian plea programme of bible reading for all. In other words, the translations did not only help to shape and strengthen the internal change of the language; they also played a cultural and historical role. In accordance with the pre-reformation Erasmian conception of the Bible, the confessional activity of Hungarian Erasmian translators (such as Benedek Komjáti, Gábor Pesti and János Sylvester) adhered to the concept of sharing the Word through Bible reading for all. This was distinct from Erasmus's approach, as it was not initiated by the renewal of faith, but rather by the challenge of translating into Hungarian and disseminating the Hungarian texts.

The early biblical translators were pioneering figures in the fields of linguistics and hermeneutics, a fact which was regarded as revolutionary and even perilous in their era. They initiated a process that has enabled modern language users to access and interpret multiple Hungarian translations simultaneously in a synchronous language.

2. Problem

In this paper, an attempt will be made to present a kind of imprint of the translators' meta-linguistic activity by examining the preface of the most significant Hungarian Bible translations. This will involve an analysis of how they

³ Állásfoglalás az újonnan revideált Károli fordítással kapcsolatban (URL1)

perceive their own translational and linguistic work, and how they evaluate their own linguistic work in the preface of the volumes. The summarised findings will then be synthesised with the relevant ideas concerning translation and language use, whilst acknowledging that recent studies have brought to light different concepts. The present study will primarily adopt a general linguistics perspective, with the possibility of incorporating a philological viewpoint, and will not utilise the tools of modern translation studies when analysing the texts.

Research on the philological or linguistic topic of the prefaces of Bible translations is not new in the field, but an introductory sub-chapter of Christiane Nord's study (Nord, 2016, pp. 568–569) is somewhat unique in that it employs 17 English-language prefaces offered by BibleGateway in February 2016 (URL2). The study's conclusion asserts that despite the proliferation of 20th-century Bible translation theory and practice, English-language Bibles contain a paucity of information regarding the linguistic and grammatical aspects of translation, the purpose of translations, and strategies for the translation process. Of the seven subjective points of Nord's study above, I would highlight, subjectively, only the following:

- a) there is only little information about the translators, about their work and experience;
- b) there is no mention of Translation Studies, of its theoretical and practical ground, the only information is only mention of formal, dynamic and functional equivalence;
- c) there is confusion about the value of “paraphrasing” as there is no agreement whether paraphrasing is something to follow or something to avoid, or no clear evidence of to what extent paraphrasing was used;
- d) in relation to the preceding point, recent translations have been observed to prioritise a linguistic and stylistic approach that is designed to ensure comprehensibility for a broad audience, eschewing the use of what is commonly referred to as ‘Biblical English’, while these translations tend to delineate the intended audience in a relatively expansive manner.

It is evident that the aforementioned statements do not represent broad general theoretical formulations by linguists; rather, they underscore the extent to which contemporary Bible translations require (at least in certain respects) the translator's goal-orientation, as emphasised by the Skopos-theory. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the results or theoretical issues of translation studies are not incorporated within the preface of Bible translations, as they do not fall within the purview of linguistic studies. However, they do highlight an important question: if Bible translation is part of translation studies, to what extent can reflection on the meta-linguistic part of translation be expected (either in the preface or in a separate study or volume)?

What kind of linguistic information is relevant in the prefaces of Hungarian Bible translations. As was indicated in the introduction above, the aim of this study is to identify the meta-linguistic information in the preface of the Bible translations, and to summarise the content relating to linguistic, linguistic and translation studies: from early Hungarian translations from the 16–17th century and from the current translations from the 20–21st century.

3. Linguistic evidence in the prefaces of Hungarian Bible translations in the 16–17th century

Translators discuss their translation work not only in the prefaces, but also in letters addressed to their patrons, to patrons of translation. These letters provide valuable information for both literary studies and linguistics. The earliest Bible translations were works of three Hungarian erasmics (Komjáti, Pesti, Sylvester, from 1533–1574), whose work typically included expressions of gratitude to the sponsors of the translation and a commentary on the necessity and the inadequacies of the translation, as appropriate to the prevailing circumstances. It is noteworthy that none of the volumes provide insights into the methodology employed in the translation process or the linguistic nuances utilised. However, a notable exception is Sylvester's New Testament from 1541, the concluding chapter of which provides a list of biblical words deemed significant for readers of that time in Hungarian. This list functions as a glossary of terms with either a target language equivalent or an explanation provided next to each headword. The inclusion of commentary documents alongside the text represents a noteworthy illustration of the prevailing conventions of the era, which can be regarded as a nascent manifestation of relevance theory.

During and after the erasmic beginnings, translators worked continuously to translate parts of the Scripture into Hungarian. Fourteen partial Protestant translations have survived from the 16th and 17th centuries, including complete New Testament, translations of the Psalms and collective translations of several books (e.g. the Pentateuch or the Books of Solomon). The Protestant translators of these translations between 1548 and 1686 were, in chronological order, István Benczédi Székely, István Gyulai, Gáspár Heltai, Péter Melius Juhász, György Gönci, Albert Molnár Szenczi and Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis. As in the previous period, the prefaces were greetings and excursuses, but some authors already included reflections on the functioning and stylistic solutions of the Hungarian language or linguistic elements, as well as explanations of some part or feature of their translation.

In the preface to his translation, István Benczédi Székely, the author of the first Hungarian *Psalter*, states that his translation is an exact reproduction of the Hebrew texts, relying on these as the primary source texts for an accurate

translation, rather than the Latin or Greek translations. The attempt to accurately reproduce the meaning of the Bible is also evident in István Gyulai's work (*A Bibliának első része, azaz Mózesnek öt könyve*, 1551 /The First Part of the Bible, that is the Five Books of Moses, 1551/): the preface points out that the Latin translation does not correspond to the Hebrew texts in some places, so that for the Old Testament books he relies on the "Jewish Bible" and on translations of "several Latin Bibles". The preface also elucidates the formal-dynamic principles of translation, particularly the relationship between "grammar" and the "Holy Spirit". It asserts that "Scripture must be explained not from grammar but from Scripture", as "St. Augustine says and confesses".

The preface of the editions following Gyulai's translation of Moses primarily comprises an excerpt of the translated content, with the exception of explanations for the reader. The linguistic or theoretical aspects of translation are no longer addressed. Other translations by Gyulai, as well as Gáspár Heltai's translation of Moses, do not allocate any space to theoretical inquiries, which may have been deemed unimportant during that period. The Hungarian Bible translations of the Reformation are of particular significance in the context of the history of ideas, as it is probable that for the contemporary reader, the hermeneutical precision of the translation was of lesser importance than the fact that the text was in Hungarian.

Péter Mélius Juhász is the first to provide a more precise definition of his translation process (*Az két Sámuel könyveinek és az két királi könyveknek az zsidó nyelvnek igazságából és az igaz és bölcs magyarázók fordításából igazán való fordítása magyar nyelvre*, 1565 /Two Books of Samuel/): he places interpretative translation at the centre of the process (as the counter-pole to literal translation). In other translations, Méliusz Juhász also provides insights into the translation process and its source, thereby ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the work. The chapter entitled "For Readers" (*Az olvasóknak*), published as an introduction to the translation of the Book of Job from the Hebrew and the Wise Commentators' Translation into Hungarian (1565) (*A Szent Jób Könyvének a zsidó nyelvből és a bölcs magyarázók fordításából igazán való fordítása magyar nyelvre*, 1565), offers several noteworthy insights. For instance, Méliusz Juhász observes that, in order to facilitate comprehension, "the Bible was written in the common language of the Jews", with the aim of rendering it accessible to individuals across diverse social strata (while in contemporary Hungarian translations, there are numerous instances of 'antiquated' language, elevated style, which results in parts of the translation resembling a specialized text, moving away from the vernacular; although the term 'cultivated vernacular' once again targets the language used by the wider classes). The Hebrew text and the works of Münster and Vatablus were cited as the basis for the translation, with Latin translations used in conjunction with the Hebrew text. However, the Hebrew text was not merely translated word

for word, but with due consideration for both the letter and the sense of the Hebrew text, thereby ensuring that the words not only conveyed their meaning but also their contextual sense.

The prefaces of our whole Reformed Bible translations do not deviate significantly from the earlier custom: they mainly give the background of the translation, the reasons for the work, and explanations of the content (sometimes hermeneutical). The first complete translation of the Bible in Hungarian, Gáspár Károli's 1590 Vizsolyi Bible, is no exception. The preface primarily serves to legitimize the translation process, with references to the works of other translators and an emphasis on interpretative translation. Károli asserts that he employed interpretative translation, but that the explanations and commentary are primarily found in the summaries rather than the main text. István Lanstyák (2020, p. 171) has highlighted that Károli's approach entailed a hybrid form of translation, wherein direct translation constituted the foundation, while the explanatory components were excluded from the translated text, despite this characteristic aligning more closely with the principles of indirect, explanatory translation. Lanstyák (2020, p. 171) has identified in these solutions the emergence of relevance theory, asserting that the pivotal aspect in translation was the transfer of communicative clues, rather than textual fidelity.

Károli's approach to translating difficult-to-understand texts involved following the structure of the Hungarian language. He translated and modified the structures created by formal equivalence, which, due to the rules of Hebrew and Latin, appeared less natural in the target language, adapting them to the target language. The sources (including translations) utilised in the translation process also serve to legitimise the correct interpretation of the meanings. However, there has been a paucity of empirical research on the depth of use of source materials, resulting in a lack of detailed knowledge of them.

It is natural to question the perfection of translation, given the spirit of the times. Károli's approach was not predicated on the resolution of partial linguistic problems (such as differences in grammar or the use of inappropriate stylistic elements), but on the accurate transfer of meaning.

4. Letters to patrons

The challenges associated with the ambitious endeavour of translating the Bible, and the identification of effective solutions to these challenges, have been previously addressed by St. Jerome in his correspondence. Some of the Hungarian translators also documented their theoretical and practical intricacies of the Bible translation process, primarily through letters addressed to the patrons providing financial support for the translation. János Sylvester, as one of those, in his

correspondence with Tamás Nádasdy, proposed that translators should consciously draw upon the contributions of other translation scholars. As he writes, 'I have collected from various authors, ecclesiastical and secular, the general and specific rules of correct translation' for the sake of supporting his translation solutions. An important linguistic note is that 'a sentence should be rendered differently according to the different kinds of sentences, even the same word', giving priority to meaning and accurate interpretation over formal translation principles.

Misztótfalusi's revision of Jansonius' edition of the Bible (*Apologia Bibliorum*) encapsulates his linguistic and translation properties. In addressing grammar and spelling, he draws upon the extant scholarship of his era, employing these grammars as a benchmark for his own work. The translation guide issues warnings primarily against exegetical problems and errors, but also against the use of Latin abbreviations and the preference for the Hungarian vernacular (e.g. the use of Hungarian instead of Latin names to indicate parallel places, for the sake of clarity, instead of the Latin names for *Genesis*, i.e. *1st Book of Moses*).

A notable translation solution is provided in the section on the separation of the target-language translation and the explanations of the source text, with the suggestion of using italics for explanations. The consistent use of words is indicative of both linguistic and translation knowledge, with words used in the same sense and concept consistently rendered in the same translation. The justification of this approach is multifaceted, incorporating linguistic considerations. Identity is stylistically significant, and the stylistic meaning of a word is crucial for the accuracy of the target language text. For instance, in Misztótfalusi's interpretation, the word *genus* is mostly informal (whereas in the more formal style of the Bible it is more like *tribe*), and it encourages the accurate translation of ontological concepts that denote part-whole relationships in order to achieve accuracy (for example, consistent use of people, genus and family).

5. What do the prefaces to the early translations say?

Following a thorough examination of the early translations and the accompanying letters, it can be concluded that the prefaces offer limited insight into the translation process and the target language structures, as asserted by Christiane Nord. However, it should be noted that the preface does not necessarily serve as the primary medium for linguists to convey significant linguistic content. The preface is not intended to be a platform for the dissemination of content relevant to experts and scholars; rather, it is designed to be accessible to lay readers, in this case, believers. Consequently, it is more important to present the background or the knowledge that is important for interpretation, rather than to describe the

translation process, which is often not easy even for scholars. The situation is no different in the case of letters to patrons: in the age of the early translations, there were no linguistic works on early translations. One reason for this may be the early state of linguistics, which only became an autonomous science that shared its knowledge with lay language users in the 20th century.

6. Linguistic evidence in the prefaces of Hungarian Bible translations in the 20–21st century

In case of the early Hungarian Bible translations, a clearly defined set of translations was available for analysis (it is important to note that not all modern translations include a preface or epilogue). However, the selection of modern translations for the research was made in an opportunistic manner. The present study has focused on the prefaces of the most common translations, with plans to extend this analysis to other prefaces and aspects in the future. In the analysis, which encompasses not only the study of the prefaces but also the linguistic features of the translations, the following translations were examined:

- 1) KIF = Kecskeméthy (Csapó) István 1931/2002. *Biblia*. Kolozsvár: CE Koinónia Kiadó.
- 2) CSIA = Csia Lajos 1978. *A puszta létnél többet. Az Új Testamentum*. Palos Verdes Estates, CA (USA): Univerzális Bibliaiskola (World Bible School).
- 3) KNV = 1997. *Ó- és Újszövetségi Szentírás a Neovulgáta alapján*. Budapest: Szent Jeromos Katolikus Bibliatársulat.
- 4) EFO = 2012. *Biblia (Egyszerű fordítás)*. Texas: World Bible Translation Center.
- 5) SZIT = Rózsa Huba főszerk. 2013. *Biblia – Ószövetségi és Újszövetségi Szentírás*. Budapest: Szent István Társulat.
- 6) RÚF = 2014. *Biblia – Revideált új fordítású*. Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó – Magyar Bibliatársulat.
- 7) ÚRK = 2019. *Újonnan Revideált Károli-Biblia*. Budapest: Veritas Kiadó.

The presentation of the historically significant prefaces of the Hungarian Bible translations may indicate the presence (or absence) of the issues raised by Christiane Nord. However, it may also reveal peculiarities specific to the Hungarian language and language perception, such as the open propagation of the standard language variety, the insistence on the biblical language, or the gradual abandonment of that language.

The following investigation will examine the Bible translations of the 20th century in chronological order, commencing with the Protestant translation

produced in the first third of the century, yet published only in the 21st century. István Kecskeméthy translated the Old and New Testaments in the early 20th century, and his Bible translation, published in 2002, is a compendium of his translation and revision work. The volume, published at the turn of the millennium, contains, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, a preface (a eulogy) and an epilogue (a study of the manuscript of István Kecskeméthy's Bible translation): both texts primarily praise the author and his work, while the final essay contains excerpts from the translations that remain in manuscript. Notably, these texts do not include a discussion of the translation process or the linguistic characteristics of the text, given that the author has primarily lauded the translator and his work. With regard to the linguistic characteristics of the translation, Ferenc Visky merely states in the preface that the translation is "in language and thought thoroughly evangelical and Hungarian" (p. 7), but he does not provide any further details. The sole linguistic reference to the translation is a quotation from Kecskeméthy's 1931 paper (*Református Szemle*), where, in response to László Musnay's criticism, he points out that the translation was, in fact, a revision of Károli's work (p. 1583). Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that current research on the linguistic background of Bible translation does tackle the issue. This, however, does not negate the fact that the preface fails to address issues concerning translation and language.

In the preface to Lajos Csia's *New Testament*, the author provides concise yet pivotal information regarding the translation process. This preface identifies the source text and language, and elucidates the foreign-like language that results from the foreignizing translation processes:

"The basis of this work is the original Greek text compiled by E. Nestle, recognised and used throughout the world. The translation's fidelity to the Greek text has resulted in the preservation of some unusual and novel expressions, thereby stimulating novel ideas and concepts and prompting collaborative efforts."

In addition to the source text mentioned in the preface, an important element of Csia's translation is its fidelity to form, its "insistence on meaning". Given that the target language text constitutes an exact, literal translation of the Greek source text, the New Testament, which has been translated for some forty years by the process outlined in the preface, has become somewhat artificial. However, the preface demonstrates that the translator's objective is to collaborate, to study the Hungarian and Greek texts. Csia has created numerous neologisms not employed in 20th-century translations or has resorted to established synonyms in other meanings. Regrettably, the preface does not provide exhaustive details regarding these neologisms.

The Second Vatican Council initiated a series of novel prospects for Catholic Bible translations. A notable element in the history of the Hungarian Catholic translation of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, based on the Neo-Vulgate (KNV), published in 1997, is its incorporation of corrections and interpretations of the Neo-Vulgate, derived from contemporary scholarly perspectives. The fundamental text of the 17th-century translation underwent modifications in accordance with the alterations introduced in the 20th-century Neovulgate. The Hungarian Catholic translation aligns with the Neovulgate's principles, adhering to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Nestle-Aland Greek version of the New Testament, with additional references to the Septuagint. A notable aspect of this study is the inclusion of numerous references in the shorter preface and longer epilogue to the language employed in the translation and the process of translation itself.

The Bible translation's one-page preface does not address the process of translation; rather, it offers an eternal statement: "Every translation is also an interpretation. New translations [...] validate the needs of new times, of renewing human cultures [...]" This statement demonstrates a preference for contemporary language usage and interpretation. It is also noteworthy that the translation has been "adapted to the Hungarian language of today." As Béla Tarjányi writes in one of his studies, the translators attempted to "polish the text of the early 20th-century Káldi revision into the spoken language of today, preserving its beautiful vocabulary" (Tarjányi, 2014, p. 88). A more comprehensive discussion of the linguistic and theoretical aspects of translation can be found in the study "The Káldi-Neovulgate Bible translation" by János Székely. The sub-chapter "Principles of the Neovulgate translation," which is part of the final study, provides a general briefing on the source texts involved in the translation and some linguistic features of the target language text. The translation maintains the semitisms that are already familiar and therefore do not disturb the meaning, has endeavoured to use 'and' and 'because' as conjunctions, and has "endeavoured to be uniform in the use of names, preferring the most common forms that are based on the Greek translation" (p. III). In addition to hermeneutical reasons, the text of the Káldi translation, "written in beautiful, antiquated Hungarian" (p. III), underwent modifications "when the development of the Hungarian language in the meantime required it" (p. III).

The *Easy to Read* (EFO) version is distinguished from the Hungarian canonical translations examined in this study in terms of its linguistic utilisation, translation methodologies and intended audience. The indirect translation, independent from the Károli or Káldi translation, was produced with international support and background work and was intended for the less educated, the non-religious and the teenage groups. The selection of the target demographic presumably influenced both the translation process and the utilisation of the language, thereby resulting in a translation that differs from the standard Hungarian translations.

Its foreword, entitled “with the tools of everyday language”, presents a variety of noteworthy facts and data regarding the translation process. According to the preface, the objective was to produce a translation that “accurately and faithfully expresses” the text of Scripture in the “language of the early 21st century”, while remaining “easy to understand, simple and clear” (EFO, v). A survey of prefaces to Bible translations reveals that the EFO provides the most comprehensive information regarding the target language text. The preface incorporates the main ideas of Nida, including the significance of fidelity and accuracy in translation, and the necessity of translating meaning into the target language. According to the preface, “a good translation effectively conveys the thoughts, intentions and message of the author of the original text”. The utilisation of appropriate linguistic instruments is paramount in achieving these objectives. Effective communication and good (‘faithful’) translation are necessarily achieved by “using the right words”, since the translators’ aim is to convey the message and meaning of the original text in a way that is comprehensible in today’s Hungarian language (EFO, v). The translators’ approach is not focused on literal accuracy, but rather on the successful conveyance of the original text’s effect and the preservation of its fundamental ideas.

The preface enumerates the source-language texts and proffers translation solutions to facilitate “better understanding”. For instance, it translates select words, such as “Eternal” as an equivalent of the Old Testament “YHVH,” except in “a few special cases,” and “Lord” as “adonai” in the Old Testament. It also utilizes footnotes for explanatory purposes (EFO, vi). In essence, the EFO’s preface is predominantly concerned with the methodology and process of translation, encompassing the identification of the intended readership, the utilization of language, and the exposition of radical indirect translation. It is possible that the volume’s comprehensive coverage of translation processes, which exceeds that of other translations, is intended to assist the intended readership. Alternatively, this comprehensive approach may be attributed to the author’s decision to refrain from publishing separate studies on the features of translation.

The number of modern Catholic Bible translations into Hungarian is less than that of Protestant translations. This is because the need for new Catholic Bible translations into national languages was legalised only by the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. The translation of the St. Stephen’s Society into Hungarian, however, had been in progress since the 1960s and was finally published in 1973 /*Biblia. Ószövetségi és Újszövetségi Szentírás (SZIT)*/. This 1973 translation was an unconcealed state commitment in socialist Hungary, where the political leadership felt the need to prove that the Church could be active in Hungary at that time. The translation was executed with such meticulous care that Éva Ruzsiczky, a renowned linguist of the era, was invited to proofread the completed Hungarian version. In the preface, Cardinal Péter Erdő highlights that the translators aspired

to render the original text comprehensible, idiomatic in Hungarian and aesthetically pleasing (Erdő, 1973, 5). This objective was pursued through a purist approach, favouring the use of Hungarian words and synonyms, while also allowing for a freer translation based on dynamic principles. It is noteworthy that purism is a characteristic feature of other modern translations, such as the RÚF.

The “Foreword” and “Publisher’s Foreword” in the 2013 edition concentrate on the historical aspects of translation. These sections identify the sources of the translation, and provide a concise overview of the translation process and the revision history. A Bible translation is not intended to provide a linguistically precise description of the linguistic and stylistic solutions of the edition. However, as stated in the “Publisher’s Preface”, the translation incorporates a series of linguistic-stylistic modifications, including “corrections of spelling errors, stylistic changes more in keeping with the original text, and changes in the transcription of certain biblical names (p. 7).”

In 2014, the *Revised New Translation Bible* (RÚF), maintained by the Hungarian Bible Society, was published. The “Foreword” of the RÚF first describes the preparation of the translation and the source texts, and then explains the importance of making the necessary changes due to the “constant change of language”. These include, for example, linguistic solutions of “good-sounding Hungarian”, corrections to the wording of the earlier translation which is out of date or too time-bound, confusing, inconsistent or difficult to read, and changes to the wording of difficult-to-translate passages where the new translation attempts to resolve the problem, either independently or by means other than consensus, have not been justified by recent findings in biblical scholarship (p. 7).

An important change is the more uniform treatment of the spelling of proper names, and more consistent adherence to the transcription of Hebrew, Latin and Greek names – Latin names are transcribed in their Latin form, Greek names in their simplified phonetic transcription of their original Greek form. A significant translation principle asserts that “the number of notes indicating the basic cultural and historical background has been increased in the Old Testament and reduced in the New Testament, thus making the translation more balanced” (p. 8).

The 2019 edition of the *Newly Revised Károli Bible* (ÚRK) is notable for its absence of a publisher’s or professional foreword, with the translation being described in the Epilogue. The revision was based on the Károli Revised Version published in 1908, but it also drew upon more than twenty translations from Hungarian and foreign languages, primarily English and German. According to the publisher, the primary objective of the project was to modernize the translation, which entailed adapting it to contemporary linguistic norms, particularly by replacing archaic vocabulary and verb forms with more modern alternatives. A further objective of the translators was to bring the translation of

the century on which the revision was based as close as possible to the reader. In the translators' words, the reader should be "tuned in" rather than "tuned out" to the Bible translation.

7. What do the prefaces to the current translations say?

The prefaces (and epilogues) I have looked at tend to focus on describing the background to the translation and placing it in a historical context. They are shorter than those of the early translations. Overall, information on the linguistic background and translation studies in the prefaces of the modern translations is characterised by the following (the text in brackets is a quotation from the translation)⁴:

- *it is important to acknowledge that the use of the language has evolved over time, and to employ comprehensible and accessible language* (KNV: adapts to the present Hungarian language / written in a beautiful, clear Hungarian / the development of the Hungarian language over time requires this; EFO: easy to understand, simple and clear; SZIT: striving to render the original text in an intelligible, Hungarian and well-sounding way / a smooth and modern translation that is easy to understand; RÚF: good Hungarian; ÚRK: to preserve and restore the distinctive flavour that made Gáspár Károli's translation, more than four hundred years old, antiquated Hungarian);
- *Protestant translations prioritize the preservation of the linguistic and translation values of the Károli Revised Version published in 1908* (KIF: This stipulation was included to ensure the preservation of the Károli text to the greatest extent possible);
- *the Hungarian translations prioritize interpretative translation and the significance of meaning for enhancing comprehension* (in contrast, the CSIA translation places greater emphasis on adhering to the Greek text; CSIA: adherence to the Greek text; EFO: Accuracy, however, was not interpreted as rigid adherence to the original grammatical forms, but rather to remain faithful to the original ideas / better understanding; RÚF: the number of notes on basic cultural and historical background was increased in the Old Testament and decreased in the New Testament, thus also balancing the translation);
- *none of the prefaces deal with technical and theoretical issues of translation, but they do consider it important to make the source text understandable.*

⁴ The texts in brackets are literal quotations of the Bible translations indicated by the abbreviations.

It is important to note that, despite the absence of any discussion on translation issues in prefaces, issues are a recurring topic in scientific journals and monographs. The question arises as to whether it is necessary to incorporate scientific (linguistic or exegetical) knowledge into the preface of Bible translations, given that the intended audience – the lay reader and believer – may not have the capacity to engage with such content. Nord’s assertion that (Hungarian) Bible translations do not address translation studies is valid; however, the significance of incorporating the issues she has identified in the preface of the Bible remains a subject of debate. It is imperative to assess whether the reader stands to gain from acquiring more accurate information about scholarly content that is beyond their comprehension or interpretation. It is also important to acknowledge the existence of a scholarly debate and literature that parallels contemporary Bible translations, addressing the exegetical, translation studies, and linguistic aspects of the translations in question, specifically for an academic audience. This development enables the informed reader to address the lacunae identified by Nord, albeit not within the preface, which, by design, bypasses the non-specialist audience.

8. Where is the truth – a “promising enterprise”

The purpose of my study was not to question Nord’s statements, but to give a more nuanced picture of the preface in early and modern Bible translations. I agree with Nord that the preface of the Hungarian translations does not focus on the process or theoretical background of translation, but both the 16th–17th century and the 20th–21st century translations deal with the linguistic aspect of translation. As a picture of the translation and hermeneutical thinking of the period, the preface gives us an insight into the motifs that were considered important in that era, such as the “greatness” of the use of vernacular languages in the case of the old translations, or the turn to standard language, to the vernacular, and at the same time the changes in the use of liturgical or biblical terminology in the case of the contemporary translations. While Christiane Nord’s statements above may be correct, it should also be noted that research into the language of translation is now being done within what is now called *Biblical translation studies* (see Chao-Chun, 2022, p. 68 and Wendland, 2012).

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Explicit information on translation theory in contemporary Hungarian and English Bible prefaces – a contrastive approach

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In this paper, an attempt will be made to present a kind of imprint of the translators' meta-linguistic activity by examining the preface of the most significant Hungarian Bible translations. This will involve an analysis of how they perceive their own translational and linguistic work, and how they evaluate their own linguistic work in the preface of the volumes. The summarised findings will then be synthesised with the relevant ideas concerning translation and language use, whilst acknowledging that recent studies have brought to light different concepts. The present study will primarily adopt a general linguistic perspective, with the possibility of incorporating a philological viewpoint, and will not utilise the tools of modern translation studies when analysing the texts. The analysis does not deal with the translation theories applied in the Hungarian Bible translations, but a more detailed knowledge of the content of the prefaces may help to gain a deeper understanding of the translation theories behind the translations.

Research on the philological or linguistic topic of the prefaces of Bible translations is not new in the field, but an introductory sub-chapter of Christiane Nord's study (Nord, 2016, pp. 568–569) is somewhat unique in that it employs seventeen English-language prefaces offered by BibleGateway in February 2016. The study's conclusion asserts that despite the proliferation of 20th-century Bible translation theory and practice, English-language Bibles contain a paucity of information regarding the linguistic and grammatical aspects of translation, the purpose of translations, and strategies for the translation process.

The research tries to determine what kind of linguistic information is relevant in the prefaces of Hungarian Bible translations. The aim of this study is to identify the meta-linguistic information in the preface of the Bible translations, and to summarise the content relating to linguistic and translation studies: from early Hungarian translations from the 16–17th century, and from the current translations from the 20–21st century.

Keywords: *Bible translations, translation studies, prefaces, source analysis, metalinguistic information.*

Явна інформація про теорію перекладу в сучасних передмово-х до угорських та англійських перекладів Біблії – контрастивний підхід

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У статті зроблено спробу представити своєрідний відбиток метамовної діяльності перекладачів шляхом аналізу передмов до найвизначніших угорських перекладів Біблії. Дослідження включає аналіз того, як перекладачі сприймають власну перекладацьку та мовну роботу, а також як вони оцінюють її у передмо-вах до видань. Узагальнені результати синтезовано з відповідними ідеями щодо перекладу та мововживання, з урахуванням того, що нещодавні дослідження висвітлили різні концепції. У даній праці переважає загальнолінгвістичний підхід, хоча можливе також залучення філологічної перспективи; при цьому не використовуються інструменти сучасного перекладознавства. Аналіз не стосується теорій перекладу, застосованих у зазначених угорських перекладах Біблії, проте детальніше ознайомлення зі змістом передмов може сприяти глибшому розумінню перекладацьких теорій, що лежать в основі цих перекладів.

Дослідження філологічних або мовознавчих аспектів передмов до перекладів Біблії не є новим у цій галузі, однак підрозділ у вступі до дослідження Крістіане Норд (Nord, 2016, с. 568–569) є дещо унікальним, оскільки ґрунтується на аналізі сімнадцяти англomовних передмов, опублікованих на сайті BibleGateway у лютому 2016 року. У висновках дослідження зазначається, що, попри значне зростання теорії та практики біблійного перекладу у ХХ столітті, в англomовних Бібліях міститься вкрай мало інформації щодо мовних і граматичних аспектів перекладу, цілей перекладів та стратегій перекладацького процесу.

Яка саме лінгвістична інформація є релевантною у передмо-вах до угорських біблійних перекладів? Метою цього дослідження є виявити метамовну інформацію в передмо-вах до перекладів Біблії та узагальнити зміст, пов'язаний із мовознавством і перекладознавством: як у ранніх угорських перекладах ХVІ–ХVІІ століть, так і в сучасних перекладах ХХ–ХХІ століть.

Ключові слова: *переклади Біблії, перекладознавство, передмови, аналіз джерел, метамовна інформація.*

Fordításelméleti információk a kortárs magyar és angol bibliafordítások előszavaiban – kontrasztív megközelítés

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A tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa a fordítók metanyelvi tevékenységének lenyomatát a legjelentősebb magyar bibliafordítások előszavainak vizsgálatán keresztül. Ennek során elemzésre kerül, hogy a fordítók hogyan viszonyulnak saját fordítói és nyelvi munkájukhoz, valamint hogyan értékelik azt az egyes kötetek előszavaiban. A szintetizált megállapításokat ezután a fordítással és a nyelvhasználattal kapcsolatos releváns elméleti megközelítésekkel vetjük össze, figyelembe véve azt is, hogy a legújabb kutatások eltérő fogalmakat és nézőpontokat tártak fel. A vizsgálat elsősorban általános nyelvészeti nézőpontból közelít, esetlegesen filológiai szempontokat is integrálva, ugyanakkor nem alkalmazza a modern fordítástudomány módszertani eszközeit a szövegek elemzése során. Az elemzés nem foglalkozik a magyar nyelvű bibliafordítások fordítástudományi vonzatával, ugyanakkor az előszavak tartalmának részletesebb megismerése segíthet az egyes fordítások fordításelméleti hátterének mélyebb megismerésében.

A bibliafordítások előszavainak filológiai vagy nyelvészeti vizsgálata nem új keletű a kutatások területén, azonban Christiane Nord tanulmányának egyik bevezető alfejezete (Nord, 2016, 568–569. o.) különlegesnek tekinthető abból a szempontból, hogy 2016 februárjában a BibleGateway által közzétett tizenhét angol nyelvű előszavat dolgoz fel. A tanulmány következtetése szerint, noha a 20. században a bibliafordítás elmélete és gyakorlata jelentősen kibővült, az angol nyelvű Bibliákban továbbra is kevés nyelvészeti és grammatikai információ található a fordítás nyelvi szempontjairól, céljáról és a fordítási stratégiákról.

Arra a kérdésre keressük a választ, hogy milyen típusú nyelvi információ tekinthető relevánsnak a magyar bibliafordítások előszavaiban. A jelen tanulmány célja, hogy feltérképezze a bibliafordítások előszavaiban megjelenő metanyelvi információkat, és összefoglalja a nyelvészeti és fordítástudományi szempontból releváns tartalmakat a 16–17. századi korai magyar fordításoktól kezdve a 20–21. századi jelenkori fordításokig.

Kulcsszavak: *bibliafordítások, fordítástudomány, előszavak, forráselemzés, metanyelvi információk.*