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SURVEY ANALYSIS OF DICTIONARY-USING SKILLS AND HABITS AMONG TRANSLATION STUDENTS

Abstract   The paper presents the results of empirical research conducted with students from the Faculty of Translation studies of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) in Latvia. The study investigates the habits and practices concerning the use of dictionaries on the part of translation students, as well as types of dictionaries used, frequency of use, etc. The study also presents an insight into the evaluation of the usefulness of dictionaries by Latvian students. The research describes the advantages and disadvantages of dictionaries used by the respondents, the importance of the preface and the explanation of the terms and abbreviations used in dictionaries. The research conducted, as well as the insights, results and recommendations presented, will be relevant for the lexicographic community, as it reflects the experience of one Latvian University to improve the teaching of dictionary use and lexicographic culture in this country and to complement dictionary use research with the Latvian experience.

Keywords   Dictionaries; dictionary use; translators; translation studies; translation tools; survey

1.   Introduction

An essential aspect of the translation process is the search for information in various resources, such as dictionaries, specialised literature and parallel texts. Checking word meanings in a dictionary is a fundamental stage of translation, especially when translating from or into a second foreign language, rather than translating from or into a first foreign language, as translators may not feel as confident in their use of a second language. Reasons for using a dictionary may vary, for instance, to ascertain the spelling of a word, to obtain information on the grammatical category of a word, or to obtain an explanation or translation. It is important to be aware of the importance of this process since dictionaries provide translators with valuable additional information, such as different meanings, special usages, etc. Atkins/Varantola (1998, p. 98) divide this information search into 2 types: primary information (when the first look-up in a search might be a quest for a second language (L2) translation) and secondary information (once the L2 word has been found, the search may involve looking to confirm the chosen translation or to obtain grammatical or other additional information about it. Translation students are expected to be particularly good at dictionary-using skills and to be knowledgeable about different dictionaries, their types, their structure, their functions and their use in the translation process. As all paper dictionaries have not yet been digitised, this applies to printed dictionaries as well as electronic ones.

This study describes the experience of using dictionaries in translation studies, as well as the dictionary-using habits of translation students, their frequency of use, and problems or difficulties faced in the process of dictionary use, especially when learning a foreign language and carrying out translation tasks involving a first or a second foreign language. The study aims to provide an insight into the author's observations and experiences on how translation students learn to use dictionaries, use them in practical assignments, what their dictionary usage habits are and how these observations can further improve the quality of

dictionaries in Latvian, according to the study's findings. The objective of the study is based on the assessment of the skills of dictionary users and the usefulness of dictionaries.

The main research methods applied in the study are a questionnaire, which is the most common approach for collecting data on dictionary use (Nesi 2013), the analysis of collected data and a descriptive method, based on the empirical study involving the observation of translation students during translation tasks, the analysis of feedback reported by students after practical tasks, as well as the analysis of their tasks, completed during study courses such as *Translation* and *Terminology and Lexicography*.

2. The need for researching dictionaries and dictionary-using habits in translation studies

The ability to search for information in various support tools, including different types of dictionaries, is becoming increasingly important in the everyday life of translators as their work routine relies significantly on modern technology. Translators must be able to evaluate all the translation support tools, to select the information needed for each specific case. Research of translation tools and dictionaries (especially to assess their usefulness) should be at the heart of planning and designing any new lexicographic sources and should contribute significantly to the publishing of new lexicographic sources (Dringó-Horváth 2014, pp. 218 f.; Hartmann 2000, p. 390). Already in 1987 R. R. K. Hartmann (1987, p. 11) proposed several reasons why dictionaries should be researched, given that reviews mention excessively diverse requirements for dictionaries while it often remains unclear to dictionary users what kind of information to expect. There are also uncertainties among language teachers about what dictionaries to recommend to their students for the language learning process. Dictionary research is also particularly important because the form, type and content of modern dictionaries are currently evolving and rapidly changing: paper dictionaries are still being digitised, dictionaries are being developed with new content, and the content of the information available in electronic dictionaries is changing as well, as they are improved, supplemented, etc. In addition, skills related to the use of dictionaries are already acquired independently or they need to be regularly improved and supplemented in schools; there should be a constant interest in the range of new dictionary editions, electronic dictionary updates and improvements in order to select at a metacognitive level the necessary edition, one which can be of assistance in translation studies or other instances of dictionary use. In particular, the results of studies on the use of dictionaries help find out what kind of lexicographic publications will be needed in the future. This is especially important for dictionaries in Latvian, as in practice they are still relatively seldom reviewed. Such user feedback is important to developers of these resources, as well as language and special course teachers. Moreover, Latvian students' dictionary use habits and skills are also very rare as a research topic. At present, more and more attention is being paid to this topic, not only within educational or research institutions but also between them. There are specific conferences held specifically dedicated to dictionary didactics issues, such as the conference "New Challenges in Dictionary Teaching" (organised by Università degli Studi Roma Tre in October 2021), as well as papers presented at conferences dealing with specific translation issues, such as "Meaning in Translation: Illusion of Precision" (organised by Riga Technical University in May 2018).

There are several available studies on the use of dictionaries during the process of learning a foreign language, in which the primary research group are secondary school students

(Dringó-Horváth 2011, 2012, 2014; Hessky 2009; Świątkiewicz-Siklucka 2008). There also exist several studies on how university students, including translators, use dictionaries and other translation tools (e. g., Atkins/Varantola 1998; Hamouda 2013; Hartmann 1987, 2000; Kodura 2016; Paradowska 2020; Tono 2012). However, there is a lack of such data concerning Latvian university students. Additionally, dictionaries containing Latvian as one of the working languages have been less studied in relation to this issue.

Research on dictionary-using strategies in the process of second foreign language acquisition in Latvian secondary schools has shown that the ability to use dictionaries during foreign language lessons has proved to be very useful, as it was concluded that acquired skills apply not only to the learning of a foreign language, but these skills can be of significant help during further studies. In addition, it was concluded that students must first acquire the skill to work with printed dictionaries, which is the very basis for further use of electronic dictionaries. Printed dictionaries should be available in the classroom to make it a habit to use them. In their absence, students should be allowed to use electronic dictionaries. Dictionary-using skills will certainly strengthen self-directed language learning, as those students who have mastered this strategy will be able to continue learning the language outside the classroom and will know how to use a dictionary to support language learning and use. The data of the survey, in which 42 Latvian foreign language teachers participated, shows that it is necessary to start working with a dictionary for learning a foreign language in the 4th grade, and 61.9% of the survey respondents (foreign language teachers in Latvian schools) indicated that they had included the topic *Learning strategy – working with a dictionary* in the curriculum. However, a third of the respondents (31%) had not yet implemented or planned such a topic in the curriculum. As a result of the research, a recommendation has been made to include the work with dictionaries as a language learning strategy in the curricular program of foreign language teachers in Latvian universities, so that teachers can subsequently then transfer this knowledge and skills to students during foreign language lessons. (Sviķe in prep.)

Dictionary-using skills are also mentioned in various documents listing skills and knowledge required for translators. For example, competencies needed for the professional activity of a translator are specified in Paragraph 3 of the Standard for the Profession of Translator. Among other things, Paragraph 3(5) of the Standard specifies the ability to select and evaluate lexicographical resources in order to perform a high-quality translation (The Standard for the Profession of Translator 2012). In The EMT Competence Framework 2017, the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network Board defines five main areas of competence that translation program students need to be taught in universities: language and culture competence, translation competence, technological competence, personal and interpersonal competence, service-providing competence. These competences should be considered complementary and equally important in providing the translation service, which is the main goal of the translation process. (Taudic/Krause 2017) Dictionary-using skills would fall within the translation competence, which describes that students are able to select and critically evaluate resources for translation, choose appropriate translation strategies, and use different translation tools and techniques in translation. (ibid., pp. 7 f.). For students to be able to use these reference materials (i. e., dictionaries) effectively, it is first necessary to get an understanding of how they use these resources in the process of translation and what is their user profile. In this context, the present study was carried out to find out significant data regarding the dictionary-using skills and dictionary usage habits on the part of translation students.

3. Structure of the empirical research

This chapter provides an insight into the structure of the research on dictionary use conducted to elucidate dictionary-using skills of translation students by analysing the data provided by the students of the Faculty of Translation Studies (FTS) of the Latvian regional university Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS). The purpose of this task was to create a profile of the VUAS FTS students as dictionary users, to find out their dictionary-using habits and summarise the main difficulties they encounter when using dictionaries as well as provide possible solutions. The research results could be a good basis for dictionary compilers – lexicographers – to improve dictionaries with Latvian as one of the languages on the one hand, and translation students' educators on the other hand.

To implement this idea, the following tasks were set: to obtain and compile information on translation students' dictionary-using skills (frequency of use, difficulties in the search process, possible causes of these difficulties, the first opportunity to obtain dictionary-using skills, etc.), taking into consideration dictionaries commonly used in language lessons, their benefits, and suggestions on how to improve existing dictionaries.

3.1 Characteristics of the research participants and insight into the content of translation studies

This chapter describes the answers to the survey given to students from the first to the fourth year of VUAS FTS and their evaluation of dictionaries. A questionnaire was used to obtain the research data. A total of 78 translation study students (70% of all VUAS FTS students) responded to the questionnaire. Second-year students need to acquire several courses that include learning different translation strategies and using dictionaries, both printed and electronic (e. g., the course *Terminology and Lexicography*), as well as carry out practical activities using other translation tools (such as CAT tools – *Memsource, SDL Trados Studio*) in the course *Computer-Aided Translation*. Students use different types of dictionaries from the very beginning of their studies when they have mastered both their mother tongue and the first and second foreign languages, as well as completed other theoretical courses. Several practical courses on the use of dictionaries, which evidently require the use of dictionaries and other tools, are also run by the author of this article – such as the practical translation courses *Translation of contracts, Translation of documents*, and *Translation of technical texts*. In the following study, there are also some observations about what the author of the present article has observed and summarised during the courses that require work with dictionaries.

3.2 Methodology of the research

The research questionnaire consists of 28 questions adapted from the R. R. K. Harmann (1999) questionnaire. Students' responses were obtained via survey forms, which were filled in electronically in the spring semester of the 2021/2022 academic year. The responses were analysed using data analysis functions exported to Excel spreadsheets. The content of the questionnaire is as follows:

– Academic information about the respondents

– Types of dictionaries most frequently used

- Reasons for using a dictionary
- Use and knowledge of usage guides
- Frequency, aim and reason of dictionary use
- Main problems and causes of difficulties when searching for information in dictionaries, as well as possible solutions
- Dictionaries recommended by respondents as useful for translation studies

The data obtained was collected electronically and a quantitative and qualitative analysis (described below) was performed. At the end of the research, suggestions for the improvement of existing dictionaries with Latvian are provided. Conclusions drawn during the analysis of the results are also summarised.

3.3 Analysis of the research data

The data obtained during the research provides important information on the dictionary-using habits of translation students, essential both in the development of the content of the first and second foreign language courses, as well as in the evaluation of dictionaries (identifying difficulties, offering solutions), supplementing and improving their content in the light of the results of the data analysis.

Before analysing the answers to the specific questions, basic information about the respondents was summarised. Out of the total number of respondents (78), 24.4% are 1st-year VUAS FTS students, 28.2% are 2nd-year students, 25.6% are 3rd-year students, and 21.8% are 4th-year students. 1st-year respondents might be relatively described as beginners in translation studies, while the rest of the students can be characterized as having an intermediate level. This division is based on the fact that starting from the second year of their studies, students begin to take specialised study courses.

3.3.1 Where and how have respondents learnt to work with dictionaries

Out of the total number of respondents, 57.74% answered that they have mastered the work with dictionaries in VUAS, 21.08% that they have acquired the skill independently, while 14.1% have mastered the work with dictionaries at school and 4% of respondents have admitted to not having yet acquired such skills. All respondents who indicated the answer "I have not mastered the skills to work with a dictionary" are 1st-year students. These results are a clear signal to the creators of study programmes and lecturers of translation studies. As the data shows, the assumption that students arrive at the university with good knowledge in the field of dictionary use, know their types and how to use them, and have the skills to work with them because they learnt it at school, is misleading and erroneous. Although "the ability to translate a word using different digital dictionaries, compare translations and choose the best option" (VISC 2020, p. 27) is mentioned as one of the most important skills in secondary education, it should be noted that this may not be the case, as the survey results prove.

3.3.2 Self-assessment of dictionary use

Respondents' self-assessment of their ability to work with dictionaries according to a scale from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest) is as follows: 2.6% of respondents assess their skills in

working with dictionaries with "2", the same percentage of respondents (42.3%) assess their ability to work with dictionaries with ratings "3" and "4", and only 12.8% of respondents believe they know how to work with dictionaries exceptionally well – "5". The data according to the division of students by levels – beginners (1st year) and intermediate level students (2nd to 4th year) – is shown in Table 1. The self-assessment data of the respondents summarised in the table shows that the level of mastery in using dictionaries is higher in senior courses. It is assessed by the respondents themselves and could be explained by the fact that these skills are indeed developed and improved during the studies, and it is only logical that more frequent work with lexicographic resources would enrich and improve their usage skills.

Self-assessment "How can I work with a dictionary?" (1–5)	1st-year respondents	2nd to 4th-year respondents
1	0%	0%
2	10%	1,7%
3	55%	39%
4	30%	44,1%
5	5%	15,3%

Table 1: Students' self-assessment of their dictionary-using skills

3.3.3 Acquaintance with the preface and users' guide sections of dictionaries

Out of all respondents, 38.5% answered the question "Do you read the preface or users' guide before using the dictionary?" with an affirmative reply, while the majority of respondents (64.1%) chose the answer "No, I do not read the information mentioned in the introduction to the dictionary.". In turn, 2.6% of respondents chose the answer "Other", indicating in the comments that in case of necessity they study the users' guide when using the dictionary if the search principle is not clear. Unfortunately, these percentages are unsatisfactory, as they show once again that, due to a variety of reasons, respondents are reluctant or not interested in reading the users' guide for a particular dictionary, although at the end of the questionnaire they acknowledge that many dictionaries are not easy for users to understand. This would probably not have been the case if students had previously carefully studied the users' guide. An overwhelming majority of 1st-year students (90%) answered that they never read a dictionary's preface or users' guide, while only 55% of respondents in the 2nd to 4th-year group answered "No, I do not read this information". This result certainly indicates that dictionary compilers need to think about how to make this section of the dictionary more "attractive" to users. It should be noted here that several of the bilingual dictionaries available on *Letonika* (https://www.letonika.lv/) do not even have users' prefaces containing explanatory notes and a list of abbreviations employed. Therefore, the skills acquired with printed dictionaries to read the meaning of the explanations they contain to understand the content are the basis for the use of electronic ones. The responsibility for introducing the use of dictionaries, of course, also lies with the lecturers of lexicography and practical translation courses.

3.3.4 Types of dictionaries used, frequency of use and reason for using dictionaries

There were questions about the specific types of printed or electronic dictionaries students use in translation studies (see Table 2). The most commonly used type of dictionary is a bilingual or multilingual dictionary of different languages (87%). In similar studies, bilingual translation dictionaries rank first in terms of usage (Atkins/Varantola 1998, Lew 2004). The next most frequently used dictionary among the respondents is the standard monolingual Latvian dictionary (80%), followed by English-language monolingual dictionaries used by slightly more than half of the respondents, and finally German and Russian monolingual dictionaries (as German and Russian are the second foreign languages for VUAS FTS students). Among other useful literature and tools, dictionaries of various other languages (e. g., Spanish, French or Japanese) were mentioned.

Most used types of dictionaries	Respondents' answers (%)
Bilingual or multilingual dictionaries	87,2%
Latvian monolingual dictionaries	80%
English monolingual dictionaries	55%
German monolingual dictionaries	30%
Russian monolingual dictionaries	5%
Other	2,6%

Table 2: Types of dictionaries most used by FTS students

Table 3 (see below) describes the frequency of use of different types of dictionaries. The data presented in the table shows that intermediate level respondents use different types of vocabulary more often, which can be explained by the fact that they study practical translation courses where it is necessary to use these resources. In the groups of Russian and German dictionaries, the high percentage of infrequent use is made up of students for whom these languages are not the second foreign language (working language).

Frequency of use of dictionaries	1st-year course (%)	2nd to 4th-year course (%)
Bilingual or multilingual dictionaries	Every day – 26,3%; several times a day – 15,8%; once a week – 21,1%; less than once a week – 36,8%	Every day – 34,6%; several times a day – 26,9%; once a week – 23,1%; less than once a week – 17,9%
Standard Latvian monolingual dictionary	Every day – 15,8%; several times a day – 36,8%; once a week – 21,1%; less than once a week – 26,3%	Every day – 23,1%; several times a day – 35,9%; once a week – 24,4%; less than once a week – 17,9%
English monolingual dictionary	Every day – 15,8%; several times a day – 26,3%; once a week – 26,3%; less than once a week – 31,6%	Every day – 24,4%; several times a day – 30,8%; once a week – 23,1%; less than once a week – 21,8%
German monolingual dictionary	Every day – 1,9%; several times a day – 7,1%; once a week – 7,1%; less than once a week – 83,9%	Every day – 9,8%; several times a day – 16,4%; once a week – 9,8%; less than once a week – 63,9%

Frequency of use of dictionaries	1st-year course (%)	2nd to 4th-year course (%)
Russian monolingual dictionary	Every day – 12,5%; several times a day – 0%; once a week – 12,5%; less than once a week – 75%	Every day – 4,2%; several times a day – 5,6%; once a week – 19,7%; less than once a week – 71,8%

Table 3:   Frequency of use of dictionaries

Respondents mostly use bilingual or multilingual dictionaries for translation into a foreign language, while the standard Latvian monolingual dictionary is used for translations into the mother tongue (39.5%). It should be noted that the vast majority of respondents have Latvian as their mother tongue. A relatively similar percentage results for the use of relevant monolingual dictionaries (in English, German, and Russian, which are the languages of specialisation), most commonly used for translating into foreign languages, carrying out written exercises, and reading comprehension tasks. Respondents use all the dictionaries mentioned in the survey much less often for carrying out such tasks as listening and speaking comprehension. The results show that the standard Latvian monolingual dictionary is not used at all when dealing with these types of tasks. This can be explained by the fact that Latvian is the mother language of the majority of respondents. In the largest electronic dictionaries in Latvian or in dictionary sites such as *Tēzaurs* (https://tezaurs.lv/) and *Mūsdienu latviešu valodas vārdnīca* (https://mlvv.tezaurs.lv/) audio recordings or pronunciation are not given. It is possible to listen to the pronunciation of Latvian words in the electronic dictionary *e-PUPA* (http://epupa.valoda.lv/), but the number of words included in this dictionary is very small, so its support in this issue is limited. Adding audio recordings of words would be one of the most pressing tasks for the authors of modern Latvian dictionaries (both general and specialised), as there is a lack of such functionality in electronic Latvian dictionaries.

Aim of use	Bilingual/ multilingual dictionaries (%)	Latvian monolingual dictionary (%)	English monolingual dictionary (%)	German monolingual dictionary (%)	Russian monolingual dictionary (%)
Writing tasks	24,4%	20,9%	18,95%	29%	25,6%
Reading comprehension	8,2%	25,2%	20,05%	21,6%	23,7%
Listening tasks	2,1%	1,9%	7,4%	1%	3,4%
Speaking comprehension	1,2%	-	3,3%	1,8%	0,6%
Translation into the mother tongue	22,45%	39,5%	13,8%	10,9%	21%
Translation into the foreign language	41,65%	12,5%	36,5%	35,7%	25,7%

Table 4:   Aim of dictionary use

The purpose for which bilingual or multilingual dictionaries are used in translation studies is mainly to search for unknown words (92.3%), but a very small number of respondents use these dictionaries to find the pronunciation of words (4.2%) and examples of their use (3.5%). All the monolingual dictionaries mentioned in the questionnaire are mostly used for finding definitions and explanations. Concerning the standard Latvian monolingual dictionary, it has been found that 89.7% of respondents use it to look up definitions and explanations, 73.1% use it to check the spelling of words, while 46.2% look for examples of use. 93.6% of respondents use the English monolingual dictionary to find definitions, explanations, and spelling (64.1%), while 50% of respondents look for examples of use. 78% of respondents use the German monolingual dictionary to search for definitions and explanations of words, 45.8% of respondents use it to check spellings, 42.2% look for examples, and 40.7% of respondents to search for grammatical information. 71.2% of respondents use the Russian monolingual dictionary to clarify definitions, 66.7% to find out the correct spelling, 48.5% to search for grammatical information, and 39% to find examples of use. Given that in this question the respondents could choose several variants as an answer, the results also show that the purpose of using different monolingual dictionaries is often very similar. These results suggest that dictionaries are relatively less used to search for grammatical information. Probably, other more convenient tools and sources like *Grammarly* or *Verbformen* are used for this purpose.

3.3.5   Difficulties during the use of dictionaries and possible causes

In the questionnaire, the respondents had to describe the difficulties they encountered when using a dictionary and had to suggest some possible causes of these difficulties. The most common answer (83.3% of respondents) is that the word or word equivalent searched is not included in the dictionary. Respondents have indicated that often they could not find some specific information (e.g., on domain-specific terms – 61.5%), while the third most frequently mentioned difficulty is that the definition or explanation provided is not clear to the user (38.5%). Possible reasons often include the inability to find the information needed and the lack of experience in searching for such information, as well as the lack of up-to-date information, even in electronic dictionaries. The responses also indicate that some very specific information, such as domain-specific terms, is not included even in modern dictionaries. The same applies to the cases when explanations or equivalents of archaisms are being searched for. Respondents also mention unclear definitions, as well as the fact that dictionaries provide several equivalents in the target language without additional explanation, making it difficult to choose the appropriate translation variant.

Respondents indicate that sometimes dictionaries do not provide explanations of the abbreviations and clarifications used by the compilers. This is the case, for example, of the previously-mentioned resource *Letonika* (https://www.letonika.lv/), which contains several bilingual translation dictionaries with the Latvian language. Another fact deduced from the respondents' answers is important for foreign language teaching. Namely, 5 respondents (representing 6.4% of respondents) mention that they do not know the alphabet of the language of the dictionary, which hinders a quick search in a printed dictionary, which is organized alphabetically. This is a surprising response from translation studies students, but it could be useful for foreign language teachers in shaping the content of their curriculum. This fact illustrates the consequences of a careless attitude toward teaching and learning the alphabet in foreign language courses. Knowledge of the alphabet is a basic condition for

the use of printed alphabetical dictionaries, and its acquisition is useful for further studies, not only for a meaningful use of dictionaries and practical translation.

3.3.6   Evaluation of dictionaries and use of other lexicographic materials in translation studies

The following section of the questionnaire surveys how students rate their most commonly used dictionaries, as well as what other reference materials, especially electronic tools, they use in their translation studies. Here are some of the key findings from students in the 2nd-year to 4th-year courses at VUAS FTS that have already mastered the basic skills of dictionary use and gained insight into the basic questions of lexicography theory. Dictionaries that are used by respondents and are available in the foreign language and translation courses were evaluated according to the criteria developed by Patricia Glowania. Glowania emphasizes that, in evaluating dictionaries, attention must be paid to aspects such as the vocabulary included in the dictionary, the indications of the word class, the explanations of the meanings given in the dictionary and their comprehensibility, as well as the microstructure of the dictionary (Glowania 2014, p. 13). It should be noted that this does not take into account specialised dictionaries or dictionaries of domain-specific terms, where the approach of evaluation is different, including some additional aspects. Although the subjective aspect of the respondents' assessment is not excluded (as they are not yet professionals in the field), these results provide some insight into the dictionaries already employed by translation studies students.

When respondents were asked to indicate only three specific dictionaries that they found particularly useful and would recommend to others, different e-dictionaries were among the most mentioned. 52.56% of the respondents named various electronic dictionaries and websites with several dictionaries as the most useful and most frequently used, as is the case of the consolidated website *Tēzaurs* (https://tezaurs.lv/), which comprises 333 different sources. The next most frequently mentioned recommendation (appearing 35 times in the answers of the respondents) is the digital resource *Letonika* (https://www.letonika.lv/), which contains dictionaries of different types and language combinations. In total, 18 respondents characterized as very useful the Latvian National Terminology Portal (*Latvijas Nacionālais terminoloģijas portals*, https://termini.gov.lv/), which includes collections of various terms in different language combinations. The *Cambridge Dictionary* website (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/) and the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (https://www.merriam-webster.com/), mentioned 16 and 10 times respectively, are also considered to be useful and valuable. *Duden's* electronic dictionary in German (https://www.duden.de/) is also mentioned by 10 respondents. In addition to these frequently mentioned sources, several other electronic dictionaries are named in the questionnaire less than 10 times: e. g., the dictionaries offered by the Latvian language technology company *Tilde* (6 suggestions in the respondents' answers), which are mostly paid products. The *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (*DWDS*, https://www.dwds.de/) is also recommended 6 times.

Despite the common argument that no one will use printed or paper dictionaries in the 21st century, the respondents indicated the significant use of printed dictionaries from different publishing houses and years of publication. These are bilingual translation dictionaries in all language combinations mentioned in the survey: English-Latvian-English, German-Latvian-German, or Russian-Latvian-Russian, as is the case of the bilingual translation dictionaries published by *Avots*. Some questionnaires indicate both the name of the dictionary and

its compiler, for example, *Dzintra Kalniņa's Latvian-English, English-Latvian Dictionary* or *Dictionary of the Russian Language by Ozhegov*. The monolingual German dictionaries of the *Duden* and *Langescheidt* publishing houses are also mentioned, as well as special dictionaries, such as *Svešvārdu vārdnīca* (*The Dictionary of Foreign Words* by J. Baldunčiks, *Jumava* Publishing House). A total of 14 different printed dictionaries are recommended in the questionnaires. It should be noted here that respondents who are intermediate level translation students pay attention to the compiler and publisher of the dictionary, who become the authorities if the dictionary is good and useful for translation studies. This information is important to assess the reliability of the dictionary in the translators' future practice. These examples of dictionaries suggested by students allow concluding that students use both electronic and qualitative printed dictionaries. Undoubtedly, the share of electronic dictionaries is higher, but the number of dictionaries of certain language combinations depends on the working languages of the respective respondents and the frequency of use of these languages within translation studies.

3.3.7 Difficulties in the use of dictionaries: shortcomings and suggestions for their improvement

This section describes the advantages of the dictionaries mentioned in the questionnaires, their specific shortcomings and recommendations for their improvement. The most frequently mentioned shortcoming is that a dictionary does not contain the required information, and does not include a specific word, its translations or explanations. Unfortunately, the purposes of using dictionaries can be very different, so it is difficult to deduce from the respondents' answers exactly what type of information they have been looking for. Perhaps this shortcoming could be overcome by implementing a function in electronic dictionaries that counts, records and collects all words entered in the search box (and searched more frequently), which would allow compilers to quickly supplement the content of dictionaries with words entered as queries by users but not found. The possibility of sending user comments to the dictionary authors could also address this shortcoming. Students of translation studies would certainly be interested in improving and updating the content of dictionaries. Such an initiative is also recommended to students during the VUAS lexicography study course.

Another disadvantage is also the relatively high price of subscribing to an online dictionary, such as *Letonika*, which, according to the survey data, is one of the lexicographic resources most frequently used. Although this resource is often subscribed to by educational institutions, its use after studies should be considered a paid one.

It has also been found that users find the layout of some dictionaries to be confusing and inconvenient. This is indicated regarding both printed and electronic dictionaries (which, of course, have a much more complex structure). The resource *Letonika*, already discussed above, deserves several more critical remarks in the respondents' assessment, as it does not contain explanations of the abbreviations used in the dictionary (which, for example, in the Latvian-German-Latvian dictionary are given in German, as the metalanguage of the dictionary is German). Students do not always know what the abbreviations 'f', 'm' or 'vi' and 'vt' mean, but the explanation is not included in this resource and cannot be found at all. Respondents believe that the explanation of these dictionary metalanguage abbreviations should be given by each word where the abbreviation is used. This would make it much easier to use the dictionary. On the other hand, the dictionary is a tool that requires a min-

imum of linguistic knowledge, and university students should know what these abbreviations mean. Access to the Cyrillic alphabet would be very useful for the Russian-Latvian and Latvian-Russian dictionaries available in *Letonika*. A transliteration table would certainly be efficient, as it would allow entering the searched item in the search box of the electronic dictionary faster since Russian characters are not always available on computer keyboards. Another shortcoming of the dictionaries available in the resource *Letonika* is that the German-Latvian dictionary searches only for the basic forms of words, but if the noun is written in the plural or the past participle of the verb (in German – *Partizip II*), then no match is obtained. However, in other electronic dictionaries, such as *LEO* (https://dict.leo.org/german-english/), words and their translation can be found in any searchable form. An additional advantage of the *LEO* dictionary over the *Letonika* is the audio playback feature, which provides access to the pronunciation of the word for better learning and use. Unfortunately, the *LEO* dictionary does not include the Latvian language.

The type of printed paper dictionaries is often cited as a shortcoming in the questionnaire, as many printed dictionaries (particularly special dictionaries from fields such as construction, machinery or medicine) are still not available in a digital format. Although respondents admit that printed dictionaries sometimes provide more useful information in terms of contents and the information provided is clear, such dictionaries are heavy and inconvenient in the mobile era. They require spending more time to find the information needed and therefore the translation process is less time-efficient. Respondents prefer using sites that combine several dictionaries (e. g., *Tēzaurs, DWDS*), so that each dictionary does not have to be opened and the search query entered separately. As the time-saving aspect of dictionary use is relevant, dictionaries that provide other useful information, such as grammar overview, noun declension or verb conjugation tables and other reference materials, are preferred because there is no need to search for such information in another resource.

4.   Conclusions

This article describes a study that analyses the habits of 78 translation students regarding their use of dictionaries, as it is especially important in the field of translation to be able to use these tools, which have a direct impact on the performance of translators. The results of the study are significant because the assessment of Latvian students' dictionary use habits and skills has not previously been a subject of research. Moreover, the obtained data can subsequently be compared with the experience of other universities, both in Latvia and in other countries. The analysis of translation students' habits helps dictionary compilers to adapt lexicographic publications to the needs of today's generation of users, as well as assess the drawbacks of existing dictionaries.

Although the questionnaire does not include the question suggested by R. R. K. Hartmann (2000, p. 387) about the first dictionary owned by respondents, VUAS TSF students address this question as part of a creative assignment during the course *Terminology and Lexicography*. During the said course, after becoming acquainted with general theoretical aspects, students present an analysis of their first dictionary. According to the author's observations, when working on this assignment students perceive the dictionary completely differently, as they understand the meaning of a dictionary analysis and evaluation through the so-called "I prism". The word *dictionary* is also very important in the 21st century when the fast, but not always reliable, *Google Translate* tool is available. It is worth emphasising once again the pedagogical importance of developing dictionary-using skills among students.

Altogether, the results mirror the findings of other researchers in the field of dictionary use (e.g., Atkins/Varantola 1998; Hamouda 2013; Lew/Galas 2008), confirming the assumption that students do not read dictionary prefaces and users' guides (being therefore unable to properly navigate the dictionary), that they do not take full advantage of the dictionary, that they do not know how to find the required information if several options are provided, etc. Students should be aware that printed dictionaries also need to be consulted occasionally, for example when they cannot find an equivalent in Latvian. This was the case in the practical terminology course with the search for the English word *mural* when the Latvian version was found in the English-Latvian translating dictionary of *Letonika* and also in Jūlijs Anderson's *Mākslas un kultūras vārdnīca* (Dictionary of Art and Culture (Zvaigzne ABC, 2011)).

The results of the research show that VUAS TSF students also need in-depth training on the use of dictionaries, especially considering the enormous changes as a consequence of the technological advances of the 21st century, as well as the rapid development and transformation of various fields, including lexicographic practices. Extensive and in-depth training of potential dictionary users to optimize the use of both printed and electronic dictionaries is needed to be more intensive than before, and the results of the study indicate that there are still many recommendations for improving existing dictionaries with the Latvian language. Similarly, translation courses should evaluate a variety of electronic dictionaries and other electronic resources (Kodura 2016, p. 235). For example, translation courses should also address the evaluation of various electronic resources, such as the online encyclopaedia *Latvijas daba* (https://www.latvijasdaba.lv), environmental dictionary *EnDic2004* (https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/endic/netmot.exe?UI=ened&height=165), professional translators' forums (https://www.proz.com, https://www.translatorscafe.com, https://translatorforum.de), the origin and author of the resource consulted, reliability, country domain, etc. These will be the topics for further research.

It should be noted that this study is a compilation of data analysis of students from a single university and the results can not be generalised. However, the results obtained in this study provide some insight, especially when compared to similar studies in analogous groups of respondents in Latvia and other countries. The results of this research can supplement the current knowledge about the profile of dictionary users, as well as which skills translation students still need to develop, what shortcomings have been identified in the existing dictionaries with the Latvian language, and which difficulties in usage and possible solutions have been analysed. The study also provides an insight into the current situation to promote the development of lexicographical culture in translation studies.

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