

# Translations of Czech Literature in Mexico

Karolína Strnadová  
Charles University, Czech Republic  
karoli.strna@gmail.com

## Abstract

This historiographical paper is based on the Rigorosum Thesis *Translations of Czech Literature in Mexico and Translations of Mexican Literature into Czech* (Strnadová 2021), defended at the Institute of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, and offers a diachronic view of the publication of Czech literature in Mexico from the first translation (1942) until 2019. The aim of the paper is to introduce the topic of translations of Czech literature in Mexico in the context of the polysystem theory, to explain the research methodology, and to present a summary of the compiled corpus of translations and its analysis. We provide insight into the selected topics of translation of Czech literature in Mexico which can be summarized by the main research question: What is the representation of Czech translation literature in the Mexican book market? This paper also compares our findings with the results of Nováková's research (2015), which deals with translations of Czech literature in Argentina.

## 1. Introduction and review of previous research on the subject

The first translations of Czech literature into Spanish appeared as early as the beginning of the 20th century, and it is not surprising that these translations were made by Czech translators, mostly by Rudolf Jan Slabý (Hermida de Blas, Gonzalo de Jesús 2007, 187). The polysystem of Czech literature has had less opportunity to develop and influence other literary and cultural polysystems, while, in comparison, Spain became a country that culturally influenced many conquered and colonized territories. Because of the larger size of the Spanish speaking territory, the number of Spanish speakers has always been higher than the number of Czech speakers. Consequently, the cultural exchange between these two language areas through translation is affected by the phenomenon of larger versus smaller culture reflected in many aspects, as confirmed by the works of Uličný (2005, 014) and Vavroušová (2016): 1) the Spanish-speaking world has more authors and literary works than the Czech cultural polysystem, 2) the number of native Czech translators who translate from/into Spanish is higher than the number of translators from/into Czech whose mother tongue is Spanish, and by analogy, 3) the number of Czech translations of Spanish-language literature is higher than the number of translations of Czech literature into Spanish.

All these aspects are directly related to the Theory of Polysystems, proposed by Even-Zohar (2004) who says that all literary phenomena, including translation, should be regarded as a part of a network. In this sense, literary system is "the network of the relations that is hypothesized to obtain between a number of activities called 'literary', and consequently these activities themselves observed via that network" (ibid., 28). This means that the translations are embodied in the polysystem of translation, subordinated to the polysystem of literature which is part of the polysystem of culture. Each system is in constant interaction with other systems and, at the same time, affected by them (ibid.). Polysystem is a useful concept in the research of literary translation between two languages and cultures. By taking a broader view of translation as a product of a particular context, which is determined by many cultural, social, political or ideological aspects, it is easier to understand the meaning and the role of literary translation as communication between two cultural polysystems.

Although the interaction between Czech and Mexican polysystems have not long history, we provide a brief historical and cultural resume, based on Opatrný (2011), in order to point out fruitful periods for the literary and translation production in Mexico and interpret our findings in relation to the polysystems of the source and target culture. After the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the political and economic cooperation with Mexico was established, and one of the most important people who supported Czech-Mexican relations, also in the cultural and academic sphere, was the ambassador Vlastimil Kybal. During the Second World War there were many Czechs exiled in Mexico, for example, Czech writers with Jewish origin Ervin Kisch and Lenka Reinerová. After the war the interaction between the two countries declined, nevertheless, the Czech diplomat and cultural attaché Norbert Frýd shared with Czechoslovaks his diplomatic and life experience in Mexico through lectures, radio broadcasts and a book of travels (*Mexiko je v Americe*, 1952), he is also an author of an essay about Mexican art (*Mexická grafika*, 1955) and a novel about Mexican history (*Císařovna*, 1972). In the 1960s, a significant number of Mexican authors were translated into Czech and published in Czechoslovakia, which is probably related to the Latin American Boom. In 1968, the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes visited Prague, met the Czech writer Milan Kundera and officially expressed disagreement with the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, later elaborated in his essay *Los 68. París-Praga-México* (2005). In the following two decades, many Czech musicians and artists visited Mexico attending various cultural festivals. The Mexican ambassador Sergio Pitol, who spent several years in Prague in 1980s, published an essay book about his experience (*El arte de la fuga*, 1997/*The Art of Flight*, 2015). The political change in Czechoslovakia in 1989 provided new business, academic, cultural and literary opportunities, and various associations have been founded, for example, the organization *Latinskoamerická společnost* (*Latin American society*) which still currently exists and aims to support the cultural relationship between Mexico and Czech Republic. International cultural cooperation is nowadays based on

academic exchanges, cultural and literature promotional projects, festivals, exhibitions, and also translation.

The mutual influence of the Spanish and Czech polysystems on the literary translation of Czech works into Spanish was elaborated by Cuenca (2014), who studied the topic of translations of Czech literature published in Spain. Since Cuenca proved that Spain is an important producer of translations of Czech literature in the market of books written in Spanish, it is therefore suggested to extend the research of translation of Czech literature to Spanish-speaking areas of Latin America where we find a very different cultural context. Until now, the only works that deal with the translation production of Czech literature in Hispanic countries are Nováková's (2015) and our research (Strnadová 2021), respectively focused on Argentina and Mexico, the countries with the largest book markets in Latin America. Many parallels can be observed between the findings of the two investigations, for example, in terms of the diachronic evolution of translation production and the ratio of total translations to the size of the book market. But there are significant differences as well, such as the ratio of indirect translations, the literary genre of translations, etc. These comparisons are included in the conclusion of this paper.

Based on our research (Strnadová 2021) and taking into account the possible comparison with the findings of Nováková (2015), the aim of this paper is to answer the following research questions: What works of Czech literature translated into Spanish are available to Mexican readers? What is the predominant literary type and genre of translated literature and who is the author of the originals? Who made these translations and who published them? What is the importance of "imported translations" in the Mexican book market? How many translations are indirect?

## **2. Methodology**

Our historiographical research maps the translations of Czech literature into Spanish published in Mexico, i.e., the translation of domestic literature into a foreign language in a region not yet explored. The research looks at translation from the dual perspective already mentioned in Levý (1963): translation as a product and translation as a process. The focus of the present paper is primarily on the first perspective: we studied translation as an artefact at the boundary between two cultures, i.e., a cultural artefact which is transmitted from the source literature to the target one.

The primary aim of the research was to compile a corpus of translations of Czech literature published in Mexico. First, it was necessary to define the desired material: we sought translations of Czech literature into Spanish that were published in Mexico in book form up to 2019. The research was conducted in four parts 1) a search of electronic sources (databases, catalogues of Mexican, Spanish and Czech libraries, publishers' websites, etc.) in order to compile a corpus of translations and obtain the corresponding paratexts for subsequent 2) physical consulting of the

translated works<sup>1</sup>. Afterwards, we made 3) macro and micro analysis of the translated texts and critical analysis of the paratexts of the translations with the aim of obtaining as much information as possible about each translation in our corpus (author of original, author of translation, source text, year and place of publication, literary type and genre, etc.). In the case of different editions of the same translation, we performed a comparative analysis of selected parts of the translated texts to describe the possible translation-publishing process. With the purpose of completing the work and using all available sources of information, we approached contemporary authors of the translations of our corpus and conducted 4) remote interviews (or electronic correspondence) with the following translators: Fernando de Valenzuela, Ludmila Holková, Odile Cisneros, Jorge Simón, Alexandra Šapovalová.

The combination of the selected methods proved to be ideal for translational-historiographical research, as the information obtained from one source could be confirmed or refuted by another. One of the most productive methods, which yielded very valuable and interesting information on the translation-publishing process, translator-publisher collaboration, obstacles to the publication of a translation in Mexico, etc., was the method of interviews with the translators.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 What works of Czech literature translated into Spanish are available to Mexican readers? What is the importance of "imported translations" in the Mexican book market?**

We managed to compile a corpus of 41 translations of Czech literature into Spanish published in Mexico (including subsequent editions), which we divided into two groups according to the place of first publication for subsequent data comparisons. Thus, we included in the corpus both purely "Mexican" translations, i.e., translations originally published in Mexico, and thus mostly produced by Mexican translators, and "imported" translations, i.e., translations firstly published in another Hispanophone country and later published in Mexico in the original or revised version. In total, we compiled a list of 28 titles of Czech literature that were published in Mexico either once or repeatedly, and presented them in two tables:

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<sup>1</sup> The material was collected mainly in libraries in Mexico, Spain and the Czech Republic.

<sup>2</sup> We do not deal with the interviews with translators in this paper, but transcriptions of the interviews in Czech or Spanish can be found in the appendices of Strnadová's thesis (2021).

## 1. "Mexican" translations<sup>3</sup>

	Author	Title of translation	Title of original	Translator(s)	Publication year	Publication place and publisher	Genre
Translations made and/or published originally in Mexico	Čapek Karel	<i>Tomas G. Masaryk</i>		Luis Lladó	1942	México: Ediciones Minerva	prose (anthology of essays)
	Kosík Karel	<i>Dialéctica de lo concreto: estudio sobre los problemas del hombre y el mundo</i>	<i>Dialektika konkrétního (Studie o problematice člověka a světa)</i>	Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez	1967	México: Grijalbo	prose (essay)
	Richta Radovan	<i>La civilización en la encrucijada: Implicaciones sociales y humanas de la revolución científicotécnica</i>	<i>Civilizace na rozcestí – společenské a lidské souvislosti vědecko-technické revoluce</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1971	México: Siglo XXI Editores	prose (essay)
	Fišer Ladislav, Bureš Milan, Frič Jaromír	<i>Carreras atléticas de fondo y medio fondo</i>	<i>Mílaři a vytrvalci</i>	Karel Wendl	1973	México: Pax México	prose (non-fiction)
	Kožík František	<i>Comenio: Ángel de la paz</i>	<i>Anděl míru</i>	Ludmila Holková	1993	México: Trillas	prose (essay)
	Kožík František	<i>Comenio: Ángel de la paz</i>	<i>Anděl míru</i>	Ludmila Holková	1996	México: Trillas	prose (essay)
	Seifert Jaroslav	<i>Na vlnách TSF = En las ondas de la TSF</i>	<i>Na vlnách TSF</i>	Odile Cisneros	2000	México: CONACULTA	poetry
	Blatný Ivan	<i>Lejos en octubre</i>	(Anthology of poetry of <i>Básně z rukopisů</i> )	Alexandra Šapovalová	2005	Morelia: Secretaría de Cultura Michoacán	poetry
		<i>Poetas checos del siglo XX</i>	(Anthology of Czech poets from XX <sup>th</sup> century)	Juliana Benešová, Miguel Ángel Flores	2006	México: Editorial Letras Vivas	poetry (anthology)
	Holan Vladimír	<i>Encima de la muchacha dormida y otros poemas: antología</i>	(Anthology of poetry)	Běla Mrkosová, Miguel Ángel Flores	2007	Oaxaca: CONACULTA, Calamus Editorial	poetry
	Havel Václav	<i>La inauguración</i>	<i>Vernisáž</i>	David Psalmon, Alena Pavelková	2011	México: Ediciones TeatroSinParedes	drama
	Kosík Karel	<i>Reflexiones antediluvianas</i>	<i>Předpotopní úvahy</i>	Fernando Valenzuela	2012	México: Editorial Itaca	prose (essay)
	Sedláček Tomáš	<i>Economía del bien y del mal</i>	<i>Ekonomie dobra a zla: Po stopách lidského tážání od Gilgameše po finanční krizi</i>	Adolfo García de la Sienra	2014	México: Fondo de Cultura Económica	prose (essay)
	Blatný Ivan	<i>Codornices de plata. Antología poética</i>	(Anthology of <i>Básně z rukopisů</i> and other poems)	Alexandra Šapovalová	2016	Morelia: LunaMía EDICIONES	poetry
Ryšavý Martin	<i>Siberia</i>	<i>Cesty na Sibiř</i>	Jorge Simón	2018	México: Elefanta del Sur	prose	

Table 1. Translations of Czech literature published originally in Mexico

<sup>3</sup> Re-editions are marked in green.

Based on the corpus of Mexican translations, we observe that the first translation of Czech literature was published in Mexico in 1942; it is a translation of writings and essays entitled *Tomas G. Masaryk*, by the Spanish artist Luis Lladó. Three other translations were also published during the 1960s and 1970s. The philosophical essay *Dialektika konkrétního* (*Dialectic of the Concrete*)<sup>4</sup> by the Czech philosopher Karel Kosík was translated from the Italian by the Spanish-Mexican philosopher Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, and the collected essays *Civilizace na rozcestí* (*Civilization at the Crossroads*), compiled by Radovan Richta, was translated by the renowned Spanish-born translator Fernando de Valenzuela. An interesting position in the corpus of translations is occupied by the collective work *Mílaři a vytrvalci* on the techniques of running, produced by Czechoslovak professional athletes and translated by the Czech athlete Karel Wendel, since it is, apart from the essays, the only translation of Czech non-fiction ever published in Mexico. For twenty years, the publication of Czech literature in Mexico ceased, and in the 1990s, the biographical work of J. A. Komenský, *Ánděl míru* (*Angel of Peace*), translated by Ludmila Holková and written by František Kožík, was published twice. After the turn of the century, Czech poetry by Jaroslav Seifert, Ivan Blatný, Vladimír Holan was finally translated in Mexico by translators of Mexican or Czech origin: Odile Cisneros, Alexandra Šapovalová, Miguel Ángel Flores, Juliana Benešová, Běla Mrkosová. In 2011, the first and so far the only dramatic play was published in Mexico: Václav Havel's *Vernisáž* (*Vernisage*), translated by David Psalmon and Alena Pavelková for the Mexican theatre TeatroSinParedes. The second decade of the 21st century brought translations of two Czech essays, *Předpotopní úvahy* by Karel Kosík and *Ekonomie dobra a zla* (*Economics of Good and Evil*) by Tomáš Sedláček. In 2016, a new edition of Ivan Blatný's poetry was published, enriched with translations of other poems. Two years later, the first work of fiction was originally published in Mexico: the novel *Cesty na Sibiř* (*Journeys to Siberia*) by Martin Ryšavý, translated by Jorge Simón.

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<sup>4</sup> In quotation marks we give the English title only if the book has been translated into English.

## 2. "Imported" translations<sup>5</sup>

	Author	Title of translation	Title of original	Translator(s)	Publication year	Publication place and publisher	Genre
Translations made and/or published originally out of Mexico	Zelený Jindřich	<i>La estructura lógica de el Capital de Marx</i>	<i>O logické struktúře Marxova Kapitálu</i>	Manuel Sacristián	1974	México: Ediciones Grijalbo	prose (essay)
	Kundera Milan	<i>La vida está en otra parte</i>	<i>Život je jinde</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1982	México: Editorial Planeta	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>La broma</i>	<i>Žert</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1984	México: Seix Barral	prose
	Čapek Karel	<i>Apócrifos</i>	<i>Kniha Apokryfů</i>	Ana Orozco de Falbr	1987	México: Ediciones y Distribuciones Hispánicas	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>La broma</i>	<i>Žert</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1987	México: Editorial Planeta	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de la risa y el olvido</i>	<i>Kniha smíchu a zapomnění</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1987	México: Seix Barral	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de amores ridículos</i>	<i>Směšné lásky</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1988	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de amores ridículos</i>	<i>Směšné lásky</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1989	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>La inmortalidad</i>	<i>Nesmrtelnost</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1990	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose
	Havel Václav	<i>La responsabilidad como destino</i>	(Anthology of essays)	Jana Novotná, Violeta Urribe	1991	México: Fondo de Cultura Económica	prose (essays)
	Čapek Karel	<i>Ocho cuentos del perrito y la gatita</i>	<i>Povídání o pejskovi a kočičce</i>	Clara Janés	1991	México: CONACULTA	prose
	Hrabal Bohumil	<i>Una soledad demasiado ruidosa</i>	<i>Příliš hlučná samota</i>	Monika Zgustová	1991	México: Editorial Planeta Mexicana	prose
	Hašek Jaroslav	<i>Las aventuras del buen soldado Schweik durante la guerra mundial</i>	<i>Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války</i>	Rubén Martí (Cuba)	1992	México: CONACULTA	prose
	Kundera Milan	<i>La vida está en otra parte</i>	<i>Život je jinde</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	1992	México: Seix Barral	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La insoponible levedad de ser</i>	<i>Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2002	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose	

<sup>5</sup> Re-editions are marked in green.

Čapek Karel	<i>Nueve cuentos y uno de propina de Josef Čapek</i>	<i>Devatero pohádek a ještě jedna od Josefa Čapka jako přivažek</i>	Jitka Mlejnková, Alberto Ortiz	2004	México: Ediciones Siruela	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La despedida</i>	<i>Valčík na rozloučenou</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2006	México: Tusquets Editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de amores ridículos</i>	<i>Směšné lásky</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2008	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose
Čapek Karel	<i>La guerra con las Salamandras</i>	<i>Válka s mloky</i>	Mauricio Amster (Chile)	2009	México: Siglo XXI	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La despedida</i>	<i>Valčík na rozloučenou</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2009	México: Tusquets Editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de la risa y el olvido</i>	<i>Knih smíchu a zapomnění</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2013	México: Tusquets Editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La vida está en otra parte</i>	<i>Život je jinde</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2014	México: Tusquets Editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La broma</i>	<i>Žert</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2015	México: Tusquets editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>El libro de amores ridículos</i>	<i>Směšné lásky</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2016	México: Tusquets Editores México	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La insoporable levedad de ser</i>	<i>Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2016	México: Tusquets Editores	prose
Kundera Milan	<i>La vida está en otra parte</i>	<i>Život je jinde</i>	Fernando de Valenzuela	2016	México: Tusquets Editores	prose

Table 2. Translations of Czech literature published originally out of Mexico



The first translation that was originally published in another Hispanophone country, and thus was “imported” to Mexico in 1974, is the essay *O logické struktuře Marxova Kapitálu* (*The Logical Structure of Marx’s Capital*) by Jindřich Zelený; the translation made by Manuel Sacristián appeared the first time in Spain in 1968. The boom of imported translations occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, thanks mainly to Fernando de Valenzuela’s Spanish translations of Milan Kundera’s novels. During this time, the Spanish publishers Seix Barral and Tusquets Editores began to set up branches in Mexico and extensively published all seven Spanish translations of Kundera’s novels, some even in numerous subsequent editions<sup>6</sup>. The next most frequently published titles are the books by the important Czech playwright, novelist, poet and translator Karel Čapek. In Mexico there are available translations of his philosophical and fairy-tale prose, which was translated by Spanish and Czech translators and originally published in Spain, and his famous novel *Válka s mloky* (*War with the Newts*), translated by Mauricio Amster and originally published in Chile. The list of translations imported in the 1990s also includes translations of Václav Havel’s essays, Bohumil Hrabal’s novel *Příliš hlučná samota* (*Too Loud a Solitude*), both authors translated by Spanish and Czech translators, and Jaroslav Hašek’s world-famous *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (*The Good Soldier Švejk*), translated by Ruben Martí and originally published in Cuba. In figure 1, we notice that the ratio of imported translations (15) to translations originally published in Mexico (13) is surprisingly very comparable, but from a diachronic point of view, the evolution of the publication of Czech literature in Mexico of the two groups of translations is different:

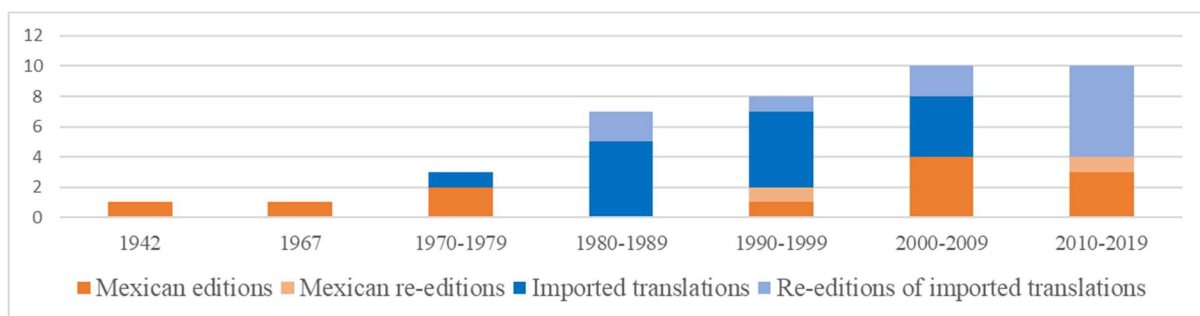


Figure 1. Mexican and imported translations in a diachronic overview

<sup>6</sup> A very interesting case is that of the novel *Nesmrtelnost* (*Immortality*), which was written in the late 1980s and published in Mexico in Spanish translation in 1990, although the Czech original was not published by Atlantis until 1993. Since the translator, Fernando de Valenzuela, was a close friend of Milan Kundera, it is likely that he had a Czech manuscript or copy available before the publication of the Czech original.

This chronological overview of the publication of Czech literature in Mexico shows that until the 1990s, Czech literature in Mexico was translated and originally published only sparsely, with a larger number of Czech works beginning to appear after the turn of the century. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a period of imported translations, mainly from Spain, which filled in for the lack of translation production in Mexico. Since the turn of the century, the ratio of Mexican to imported translations has been very balanced, but in the last decade, new translations have not been imported in Mexico, only Kundera’s novels have been republished.

### 3.2 What is the predominant literary type and genre of translated literature and who is the author of the originals?

The following figure shows the proportion of prose, poetry and drama in the entire corpus of 42 translations, with the prose genre divided into fiction and nonfiction/essay.

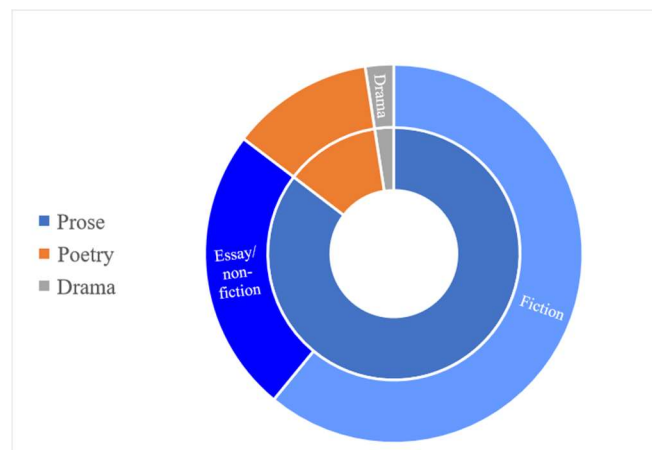


Figure 2. Literary type and genre of translations

Table 3 below shows the number of translated titles within the three literary-type groups, with the distinction of nonfiction/essay and fiction, the number of original Mexican translations and the total number of books published, including re-editions.

Genre	Total number of published titles	Number of titles published originally in Mexico	Number of published books (incl. re-editions)
<b>Prose</b> – fiction	14	1	25
<b>Prose</b> – essay, non-fiction	9	7	10
<b>Poetry</b>	4	4	5
<b>Drama</b>	1	1	1

Table 3. Number of translations published by literary type

The representation of literary types and genres in Mexican translations is very interesting: the essay genre predominates, while fiction is very underrepresented. Czech poetry has been published in Mexico in five collections, while drama is represented by only one translation.

Compared to the Mexican translations, the imported translations show homogeneity in literary types and genres: no translations of drama or poetry have been imported into Mexico, since all the imported translations are of the prose genre, largely fiction. It is worth recalling that translations of Milan Kundera’s novels represent more than half of the corpus of imported translations.

### 3.3 Who made these translations and who published them?

The authorship of the translations logically depends on the source and target language of the translation and the country of original publication. The origin of translators of Czech literature published in Mexico is as follows:

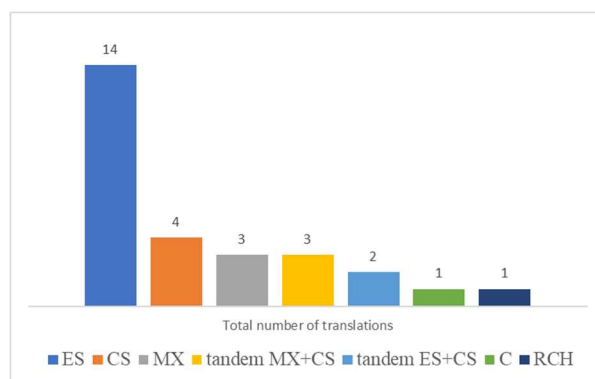


Figure 3. Nationality of translators

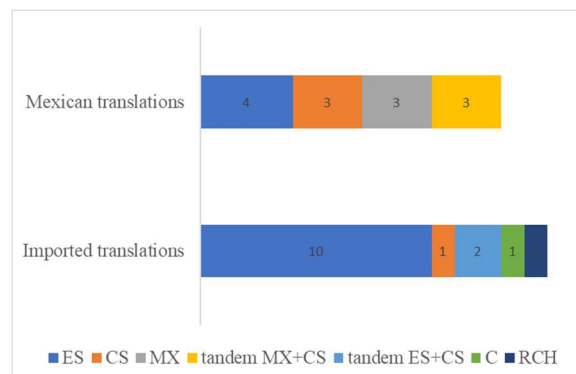


Figure 4. Nationality of translators and Mexican vs imported translation

The largest number of translations available in Mexico were made by Spanish translators, due to the significant importation of translations from Spain. To a lesser extent, there is a presence of translators of Czech and Mexican origin and translations produced in Czech-Mexican and Czech-Spanish tandem translation. There was only one translation by a Chilean and one by a Cuban translator that had been published in Mexico. It should be noted that the most important translator in terms of the total number of translations is Fernando de Valenzuela, who has published a total of seven novels by Milan Kundera in eleven editions (imported translations), as well as translations of essays by Karel Kosík and Radovan Richta (Mexican translations). Translations originally published in Mexico are often the work of translators of Mexican origin (Miguel Ángel Flores, Odile Cisneros, Jorge Simón) and Czech or Spanish translators who have been living in Mexico for a long time (Alexandra Šapovalová, Ludmila Holková, Adolfo García de la Sienra) or who had lived there in the past (Karel Wendl, Luis Lladó, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez). Additionally, some translations are the result of Czech-Mexican cooperation (David Psalmon and Alena Pavelková, Miguel Ángel Flores and Czech Hispanists).

In the case of Mexican translations, whose paratexts or translators provided more information, it was possible to determine who specifically initiated the translation of the Czech book. In our corpus, we encountered three possibilities: 1) the translator had a personal interest in translating the work, 2) another person or entity motivated the translation of the work for its subsequent use as an artistic rendering, and 3) the translation was commissioned by the publisher. We consider it surprising to find that the initiation of the first two types in the case of translations of Czech literature in Mexico is extensive.

If we look at the publishing houses that publish Czech literature in Mexico, besides the already mentioned Spanish Seix Barral and Tusquets Editores, Mexican publishers Editorial Planeta and Siglo Editores XXI also supply Czech literature to Mexican readers. The publication of a significant number of translations has been supported by the Mexican state institutions CONACULTA<sup>7</sup>, Secretaría de Cultura and Fondo de Cultura Económica, which, among other things, support the Mexican book market and the production of translations. In the case of Mexican translations, we observe a greater presence of small independent publishing houses, such as Trillas, Elefanta del Sur, Pax México, Editorial Letras Vivas, Editorial Itaca, which, according to our study (Strnadová 2021, 24–28) of the Mexican book market, are growing in importance and becoming a significant driver of non-commercial translations from smaller languages.

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<sup>7</sup> CONACULTA stands for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (National Council for Culture and the Arts).

### 3.4 How many translations are indirect?

Indirect translation, or the so-called second-hand translation, i.e., translation based on the translated version of the original (Popovič 1983), is rare in our corpus. Most of the imported and originally Mexican translations were based on the Czech originals; of the 28 titles, only four were translated indirectly. Among the titles originally published outside of Mexico are two indirect translations: Zelený's essay *O logické struktuře Marxova Kapitálu* (*The Logical Structure of Marx's Capital*), translated by Manuel Sacristián from the German translation, and Čapek's novel *Válka s mloky* (*War with the Newts*), which was first published in Chile in a translation by Mauricio Amster based on the German translation. Two translations originally published in Mexico were also translated indirectly: Kosík's essay *Dialektika konkrétního* (*Dialectic of the Concrete*), translated by Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez from the Italian translation, and Sedláček's essay *Ekonomie dobra a zla* (*Economies of Good and Evil*), translated into Spanish by Adolfo García de la Sienra from the English translation.

For the sake of interest, we should also mention that the anthology of Czech poets, *Poetas checos del siglo XX*, and the collection of poems by Vladimír Holan, *Encima de la muchacha dormida y otros poemas*, were prepared by Miguel Ángel Flores together with Czech Hispanists, who provided him with a so-called "podstročnik" (Popovič 1983), i.e., a philological translation, which was subsequently adapted into poetic form by the Mexican translator.

## 4. Comparison of the translation production of Czech literature in Mexico and Argentina

The comparison of the translation production of Czech literature in Mexico and Argentina is valuable because these are the two Hispanophone countries with the largest book markets in Latin America. Here we look at certain similarities and differences between the polysystems of translated literature in these two countries using the case of Czech literature.

From a diachronic point of view, we observe a comparable development of translation production in Mexico and Argentina until the end of the 20th century: there is a lack of translations until the 1970s and a rapid increase in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Nováková (2015), new translations of Czech literature have not been published in Argentina since the beginning of the 21st century, while translation imports from Spain have been significant, however, in Mexico, new translation production has currently had a significant presence.

Both in Argentina and Mexico there have been translated Czech titles of all literary genres: prose (fiction and nonfiction or essays), poetry and drama. The Mexican production of translations of Czech written literature is half as much compared to Argentina (Strnadová 2021, 113), but the genre representation is similar: translations of Czech fiction are the most

numerous, while translations of poetry and drama are underrepresented in both countries. In the case of Mexican translation production, it is worth noting that translations of works by Czech philosophers are widely published, while in Argentina it is more likely that translations of fairy tales and factual literature, especially about sports, appear. In Mexico, only Kundera's novels, a translation of Kožík's *Anděl Míru* (*Angel of Peace*) and the poetry of Ivan Blatný were published repeatedly, while in Argentina republishing of factual literature and nonfiction is more frequent.

Our research shows that there has been no major translation figure in Mexico who has substantially supported the translation production of Czech literature or its distribution. Miguel Ángel Flores was interested in Czech poetry and translated two collections of Czech poetry that were published in Mexico. Alexandra Šapovalová organized and supported educational and cultural events representing the Czech Republic in Mexico and made the first very first translation of Blatný's poetry into Spanish. Ludmila Holková promotes Czech culture and literature in Mexico, but she is more dedicated to the translation of Mexican literature, which she publishes and disseminates in Czech Republic. While the work of these personalities is impressive, however, from a translational point of view it is not comparable to the work of translator Helena Voldánová in Argentina, who, according to Nováková (ibid.), translated 41 Czech titles, of which only 19 were published for economic and publishing reasons.

The results of our research and Nováková's differ considerably on the issue of the translation template. Out of a total of 28 titles of Czech literature published in Mexico, only 4 titles were translated indirectly, while Nováková (2015, 69–71) presented that out of a total of 48 Czech titles published in Argentina, 14 books were translated indirectly. Of the remaining titles, the source text of 27 translations was the Czech original, and the remaining 7 were unknown). Nováková's hypothesis that translation production for Hispanophone countries is closely related to second-hand translation is not supported by our research; in the case of Mexico, indirect translation is negligible. The high number of translations based on the Czech source is due to the linguistic proficiency of the translators of the works in our corpus. We have encountered the following cases: Czech is the translator's mother tongue, the translator learned Czech by coincidence of life events, or the translator took advantage of the cooperation in a translation tandem with native speakers.

## **5. Conclusion**

Our research shows that between 1942-2019, 28 titles of Czech literature in book form were published in Mexico, i.e., in total 41 translations including new editions and re-edition. The number of imported translations, mainly of Spanish distribution, is almost comparable to the number of translations produced or originally published in Mexico. Based on a diachronic study of Mexican translations, we can observe that a translation production is related to the development of the cultural and

social polysystem of the source and target cultures. The number of translations of Czech literature published in Mexico increased significantly in the 1980s and 1990s, which can be related to the rise of the cultural and academic interaction and economic cooperation between the two countries. It can therefore be argued that translation production plays an important role in literary-cultural communication and is also connected with the cultural-political context of both countries.

Based on the presented corpus, we can say that the Czech essay, mostly published by smaller Mexican publishers, has been widely translated in Mexico. Almost all of the books which fall into the categories of essay, non-fiction, poetry and drama have been translated from the Czech original and published directly in Mexico. Furthermore, a significant proportion of these works of Czech literature have been published in Mexico (originally or imported) thanks to the support of Mexican state institutions. Spanish publishing houses with branches in Mexico import mainly artistic prose, with a great predominance of works by Milan Kundera. Since the translation of Czech literature into Spanish is a transfer from a smaller culture to a larger one, a higher number of indirect translations of Czech literature in Mexico could be expected. Nevertheless, most Czech literature published in Mexico has been translated directly into Spanish. Thanks to valuable interviews with some of the translators, we found out that some translations were motivated by the artistic-creative intention of the translator or artist, while others were translated on the order of a publisher, and yet others were published in Mexico just by a coincidence of life. Interviews with these translators proved to be one of the most valuable tools for historiographical research, and the data obtained complemented our research presented in this paper.

According to our findings, we conclude that the representation of Czech literature in the Mexican market during the 20th and early 21st centuries has been influenced by the socio-cultural context of both countries, the publishing and financial situation in Mexico, and the absence of a major translation figure. Although the number of titles translated and published in Mexico is not as high as in Argentina, the story of each translation demonstrates the interest of various persons and entities in Czech literature.

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