

# Editors' influence on passive use in English-German business translation



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# Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

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## Stages in translated document production

Stage	Sub-process	Agent	Product
Writing <sup>1</sup>	Planning	Original author	Source text
	Translating	Original author	
	Reviewing	Original author	
Translation <sup>2</sup>	Orientation	Translator	Draft Manuscript
	Drafting	Translator	
	Revising	Reviser	
Publication	Stylistic editing	Editor	Target text
	Copyediting	Editor	
	Structural editing	Editor	
	Content editing	Editor	
	Publication	Publisher	

<sup>1</sup>adopted from Hayes et al. (1987)

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↔ process-based research, revision studies

## Product-based research

empirical strength: “authentic data attested in texts” (Kenny 2009)

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## Main argument

Editors may have significant influence on translated language

↔ corpus studies should draw on manuscripts

# Applications

## Corpus studies of editing

- Utka (2004): “phases of translation corpus”
- UPF research on editing
  - in literary texts: Sinner (2012)
  - on sentence splitting: Bisiada (2014)
  - in French–Spanish translation: Andújar Moreno (Forthcoming)
  - on mediation universals: Bisiada (Forthcoming)



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## Research on editing has so far focussed on

- 1 readability studies
- 2 “mediated discourse”

└ Editing and translation

└ Editing for readability

## Research line: Editing and readability

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### Automatisms in copyediting (Bisailon 2007; Robert 2014)

- minimise reflection time for grammar/syntax problems
- 50%–75% of recorded editing: immediate solutions

⇒ pursuing readability with little reflection for discourse matters?



└ Editing and translation

└ Editing for readability

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- does this reflect peer review or editing?
- No evidence in favour – more studies are needed!

└ Editing and translation

└ Edited language as mediated discourse

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↔ Which communication is not constrained/mediated?

# Current study

## Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process

- published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts

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## Three items of study

- sentence splitting (see Bisiada 2014)
- grammatical metaphor (nominalisations)
- passive constructions

# ModevigTrad

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**Title** Evidencialidad y epistemicidad en textos de géneros discursivos evaluativos. Análisis contrastivo y traducción (FFI2014-57313-P)

**PI** Montserrat González Condom

**Genre** Discourse genres that show a high degree of metaphorical language and modalisation

Funded by the Spanish  
*Ministerio de Economía  
y Competitividad*



# Corpus details

## Corpus architecture

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  - Manuscript translations (German) – 106,829 words

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  - Manuscript translations (German) – 106,829 words
  - Published translations (German) – 104,448 words

## How do HBM editors work?

### Do editors consult the source text?

**Yes**—“...legen wir uns in der Regel den Originaltext aus der Harvard Business Review daneben und vergleichen beides Satz für Satz.”

[‘...we usually have the source text from the HBR next to us and compare both texts sentence by sentence.’]

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### What do they look for?

“...formulieren [wir] Substantivierungen und Passivkonstruktionen um...”

[‘...we reword nominalisations and passive constructions...’]



# Passive forms in English & German

## English

- form of *to be*

## German

- form of *werden* or *sein*
- 3 passive alternatives
  - impersonalisation *man*
  - modal passives *lassen* ('to let') + reflexive verb
  - modal infinitives *sein* + infinitive phrase

## Example of editor's passivisation

During their initial training, **employees are given the freedom** to make judgment calls. (Text 9)

MANUSCRIPT:

*In den Einführungskursen  
**wird Mitarbeitern gestattet**, nach eigenem Gutdünken  
zu entscheiden.*

['In the introductory courses,  
employees are permitted to  
decide at their discretion.']

PUBLISHED VERSION:

*Schon in der Einarbeitungs-  
phase **dürfen Mitarbeiter**  
selbstständig entscheiden.*

['As early as the initial train-  
ing, employees may decide  
autonomously.']

## Passive alternatives

*man*

Diese Tür kann **man** nicht öffnen. – (**One** cannot open this door.)

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Modal passive

Der Text **liest sich** leicht. – (El texto **se lee** fácilmente.)

- ?The text reads easily.
- The bunkhouse **sleeps** ten. / The surface **cleans** easily.

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Modal infinitive

Die Aufgabe **ist** bis 3 Uhr **zu lösen**. – (The task **is to be** solved by 3)

- **Hay que** resolver la tarea antes de las 3.
- ?“El futuro **es para ser** vivido, nada está preestablecido” —Luke Skywalker → translationese? (“The future is to be lived”)

## Mean normalised frequency

ST form	Translator's action	Editor's action	Instances
passive	—	—	250
passive	activation	—	56
passive	activation	re-passivisation	1
passive	—	activation	47
active	passivisation	—	300
active	passivisation	re-activation	189
active	—	passivisation	34
<b>Total</b>			<b>990</b>

# Findings

## Passive constructions

- More utterances are passivised than activated

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# Findings

## Passive constructions

- More utterances are passivised than activated
  - translators and editors activate to a similar extent
  - translators passivise much more than editors
  - editors re-activate to a significant extent
- ⇒ translated language contains more passive voice than we conventionally see

## Further research

### Current questions

- how to treat nominal forms?
- difference between present and past tense?
  - ↔ present utterances are more likely to be passivised

└ Findings &amp; discussion

└ Hypotheses &amp; open questions

# Thank you for your attention!

## Contact

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- [@MBisiada](https://twitter.com/MBisiada)

## Download slides



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