Features of mediated discourse
A corpus investigation of translated and edited language

Mario Bisiada

Grup d’Estudis del Discurs (GED)
Research seminar

11 December 2015
Table of Contents

1 Editing and translation
   - Manuscripts in corpus research
   - Research lines: Editing for readability
   - Research lines: Edited language as mediated discourse
   - Corpus details & study objectives

2 Passive voice and discourse structure
   - English-German contrasts
   - Translation and grammatical metaphor
   - The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

3 Preliminary findings: Passive alternatives
   - Passive alternatives
   - Findings on passive alternatives
   - Hypotheses & open questions
Editorial influence in translation

Translated text
Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

Manuscript translation

Published translation
Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

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Features of mediated discourse: A corpus investigation of translated and edited language
## Stages in translated document production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Sub-process</th>
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<tr>
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Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
- “intermediate stages of translation, or how the final product evolves over time” → “explore the process of translation through a retrospective analysis of successive versions of the product” (Baker 1993: 247)
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⇒ process-based research, revision studies
Cognitive approaches to studying translated language

- process-based research (Göpferich & Jääskeläinen 2009; Alves & Vale 2011)
- studies of self-revision (Brunette et al. 2005; Parra Galiano 2005; Künzli 2005)
Manuscripts in corpus research

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

Editors exert influence on translated language

→ corpus research should draw on manuscripts
Applications

Corpus studies of editing

- Utka (2004): “phases of translation corpus”

Main research lines into editing
Applications

Corpus studies of editing

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

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Main research lines into editing

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Main research lines into editing

1. readability studies
2. “mediated discourse”
Research line: Editing and readability

Preliminary findings: Passive alternatives

Research lines: Editing for readability

Editors search for certain anticipated problems, e.g. "overlong sentences", "irrelevant use of impersonal pronouns"

Automatisms in copyediting (Bisaillon 2007; Robert 2014)

minimise reflection time for grammar/syntax problems

50%–75% of recorded editing: immediate solutions

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Research lines: Editing for readability

⇒ pursuing readability with little reflection for discourse matters?
Does editing improve readability?
Research lines: Editing for readability

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Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- 101 original research manuscripts from 1992

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translation, criticism, editing… = rewriting (“mediated discourse”)
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“in some sense, all writing is co-authored” (Schindler & Wolfe 2014: 160)
Are there “mediation universals”?

- “in some sense, all writing is co-authored” (Schindler & Wolfe 2014: 160)
- don’t most texts report on some event or discourse? Which communication is not constrained/mediated?
Investigating the notion of “Mediated discourse”

Kruger (2012): translation universals in “mediated discourse”

- normalisation, explicitation & simplification in “mediated” (translated, edited) and “unmediated” (unedited) text
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  - edited & unedited English non-translations

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  - editors “introduce collocational variety”
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  → no evidence of shared “mediation effect”
  - translators favour “explicit and standardised language”
  - editors “introduce collocational variety”
  ⇮ drawback: no edited translations studied
Some conclusions

- editors make structural changes without much reflection

  “algorithm-like behaviour”: on encountering *because*, split the sentence
Some conclusions

- Editors make structural changes without much reflection
- “Algorithm-like behaviour”: on encountering *because*, split the sentence
- Editing and translating are different mediation processes
- Should be studied separately
- “Mediated discourse” too widely applicable to be useful
Current study

Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process → published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts.
Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process → published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts. ← Studying published translations alone may yield misleading results in studying features of translated language
Current study

Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process → published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts. ↔ Studying published translations alone may yield misleading results in studying features of translated language

Three items of study

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

**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

Supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness

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Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- **Sources:** *Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business Manager*
Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- **Sources**: Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business Manager
- **Genre**: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
# Corpus details

## Corpus architecture

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- **Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)**
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- Sources: *Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business Manager*
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- Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)
  - Source texts (English) – 104,678 words
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  - Source texts (English) – 104,678 words
  - Manuscript translations (German) – 106,829 words
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  - 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.’]
How do HBM editors work?

Do editors consult the source text?

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

What do they look for?

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

[‘...we reformulate nominalisations and passive constructions...’]
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- Translation and grammatical metaphor
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Passive voice and discourse structure

Passive voice changes the mapping of the roles of Actor, Process and Goal “onto the interpersonal functions in the modal structure of the clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 182).
Passive voice and discourse structure

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# English-German passive contrasts

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During their initial training, employees are given the freedom to make judgment calls.

In den Einführungskursen wird Mitarbeitern gestattet, nach eigenem Gutdünken zu entscheiden. ['In the introductory courses, it is permitted for employees to decide for themselves.]

Schon in der Einarbeitungsphase dürfen Mitarbeiter selbstständig entscheiden. ['As early as the initial training, employees may decide autonomously.']
## English-German contrasts II

### English-German passive contrasts

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The legitimacy to chart such a radical path forward is not conferred by title alone; it must be earned.

Die Legitimation für die Beschreibung eines derart radikalen Wegs ist nicht allein durch einen Titel gegeben; sie muss verdient werden.

[‘The legitimation for charting such a radical path is not conferred by title alone; it must be earned.’]
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Source text

To solve such problems, plants have evolved two strategies which they superimpose upon photosynthesis.

Target text

Zur Lösung solcher Probleme haben sich bei den Pflanzen zwei Mechanismen herausgebildet, von denen die Photosynthese überlagert wird.

[‘For the solution of this problem, two mechanisms have evolved in plants by which photosynthesis becomes overlaid.’]

---

3 Example taken from Steiner (2004: 145).
The passive allows the language user to vary the mappings of participant roles in order to allow non-Actors to become the Theme of a sentence.
The voice system and the textual metafunction

- The passive allows the language user to vary the mappings of participant roles in order to allow non-Actors to become the Theme of a sentence.

**Voice system, Theme/Rheme**

- serve to structure discourse according to given and new information
- part of the textual metafunction in SFL (Eggins 2004: 296)
The textual metafunction and metaphoricity

The textual metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 30)

Mode of meaning which relates to the construction of text, [...] build[ing] up sequences of discourse, organizing the discursive flow and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves along.
The textual metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 30)

Mode of meaning which relates to the construction of text, [...] build[ing] up sequences of discourse, organizing the discursive flow and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves along.

decreased use of textual metafunction

↓

incongruency (metaphorical use)
Grammatical metaphor

Metaphorical realisation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 593)

“expanding the meaning potential of the language [to] creat[e] a more complex relationship between semantics and lexicogrammar”
Grammatical metaphor

Metaphorical realisation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 593)

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Ideational

People strongly believe that...
The strongest belief of all is that...
Grammatical metaphor

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People strongly believe that…
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→ re-mapping between groups and clauses
Grammatical metaphor

Metaphorical realisation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 593)
“expanding the meaning potential of the language [to] creat[e] a more complex relationship between semantics and lexicogrammar”

Ideational
People strongly believe that...
The strongest belief of all is that...
→ re-mapping between groups and clauses

Interpersonal
I think it’s going to rain.
It is probably going to rain.
Grammatical metaphor

Metaphorical realisation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 593)
“expanding the meaning potential of the language [to] creat[e] a more complex relationship between semantics and lexicogrammar”

Ideational
People strongly believe that…
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**Ideational**
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→ re-mapping between groups and clauses

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It is **probably** going to rain.
→ modal expression shifted outside the clause

**Textual**
Not defined by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004)
The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

- Manipulating the voice system by selecting active or passive constructions may metaphorise the text.
- Creating a texture that exhibits a “marked information focus” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 232).
The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

- Manipulating the voice system by selecting active or passive constructions.
- May metaphorise the text.
- Creating a texture that exhibits a “marked information focus” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 232).

But are passive constructions textual metaphors?
What makes textual metaphor?

An incongruent realisation in terms of voice (Lassen 2003)

Medium = subject; medium ≠ complement
Agent ≠ subject

→ “thematic tension caused by the fusion of Agency and Medium/Subject features.” (Lassen 2003: 46)
What makes textual metaphor?

An incongruent realisation in terms of voice (Lassen 2003)

Medium = subject; medium ≠ complement
Agent ≠ subject

→ “thematic tension” caused by the fusion of Agency and Medium/Subject features.” (Lassen 2003: 46)

~~ Active/Passive dichotomy too simple

~~ Is “thematic tension” not rather caused by unexpected Theme/Rheme progression?
The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

Grammatical metaphor and translation

Translation as de-metaphorisation (Steiner 2001)

- understand meaning – recreate the understood meaning
The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

Grammatical metaphor and translation

Translation as de-metaphorisation (Steiner 2001)

- understand meaning – recreate the understood meaning
  → necessarily involves de-metaphorisation.
Grammatical metaphor and translation

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- understand meaning – recreate the understood meaning
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- To what extent do translators metaphorise their texts?
Grammatical metaphor and translation

Translation as de-metaphorisation (Steiner 2001)

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  → “here the process of re-metaphorisation is cut short below the degree to which it might otherwise go” (Steiner 2001: 15)
Grammatical metaphor and translation

Translation as de-metaphorisation (Steiner 2001)

- understand meaning – recreate the understood meaning
  → necessarily involves de-metaphorisation.
- To what extent do translators metaphorise their texts?
  → “here the process of re-metaphorisation is cut short below the degree to which it might otherwise go” (Steiner 2001: 15)
  ⇒ lower frequency of metaphorisation in translations (2001: 11)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text (active)</th>
<th>Target text (passive)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have disguised all names and other identifying information about the people and their company.</td>
<td>Die Namen und andere Daten, anhand derer die Mitarbeiter identifiziert werden könnten, wurden geändert.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Passive use and textual metaphor: examples

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↑

Metaphorical?
When something happens at work, it immediately triggers cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes.

Depending on what happens with these cognitive and emotional processes, motivation can shift.

We discerned these processes in the diaries of every team we studied and in most of the people who worked on those teams.
Some conclusions

- Passive use is not necessarily metaphorical/incongruent
The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

Some conclusions

- Passive use is not necessarily metaphorical/incongruent

Are passive constructions harder to process?
Some conclusions

- Passive use is not necessarily metaphorical/incongruent

Are passive constructions harder to process?

- No clear answer given, variable hard to isolate (overview in Rhodes 1997)
Some conclusions

- Passive use is not necessarily metaphorical/incongruent

Are passive constructions harder to process?

- No clear answer given, variable hard to isolate (overview in Rhodes 1997)
- using passive forms increases
  ... reading time (Müller-Feldmeth et al. 2015: 251)
  ... processing difficulty (Gorin 2005)
1 Editing and translation
- Manuscripts in corpus research
- Research lines: Editing for readability
- Research lines: Edited language as mediated discourse
- Corpus details & study objectives

2 Passive voice and discourse structure
- English-German contrasts
- Translation and grammatical metaphor
- The passive as textual grammatical metaphor?

3 Preliminary findings: Passive alternatives
- Passive alternatives
- Findings on passive alternatives
- Hypotheses & open questions
Passive alternatives

- used increasingly often in professional and scientific discourse to keep language economical
- more frequent in German non-translated texts than in English ones (Teich 2003: 181)
Passive alternatives

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3 passive alternatives studied

impersonalisation man
Passive alternatives

- used increasingly often in professional and scientific discourse to keep language economical
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- impersonalisation *man*
- modal passives *lassen* (‘to let’) + reflexive verb
Passive alternatives

- used increasingly often in professional and scientific discourse to keep language economical
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3 passive alternatives studied

- impersonalisation *man*
- modal passives *lassen* (‘to let’) + reflexive verb
- modal infinitives *sein* + infinitive phrase
Dieze Tür kann man nicht öffnen.

- One cannot open this door.
1. *man*

Diese Tür kann *man* nicht öffnen.

- **One** cannot open this door.
- **On** ne peut pas ouvrir cette porte.
Passive alternatives

1. **man**

Diese Tür kann **man** nicht öffnen.

- **One** cannot open this door.
- **On** ne peut pas ouvrir cette porte.
- **No se** puede abrir esta puerta.
2. Modal passive

Der Text liest sich leicht.

The text reads easily.
2. Modal passive

Der Text liest sich leicht.
- The text reads easily.
- The bunkhouse sleeps ten.
2. Modal passive

Der Text liest sich leicht.

- The text reads easily.
- The bunkhouse sleeps ten.
- The surface cleans easily with soap and water.
2. Modal passive

Der Text liest sich leicht.

- The text reads easily.
  - The bunkhouse sleeps ten.
  - The surface cleans easily with soap and water.

- El texto se lee fácilmente.
Customer equity has the added benefit of being a good proxy for the value of the firm.

Die Betrachtung des Werts der Kunden hat einen weiteren Vorteil, denn an ihm lässt sich gut der Wert des Unternehmens ablesen.

Wer den Wert der Kunden betrachtet, erhält auch Informationen über den Wert des Unternehmens.

[‘Considering customer equity has another benefit because the value of the company can be read from it.’]  

[‘He who considers the value of the client also receives information about the value of the company.’]
3. Modal infinitive

Die Aufgabe ist bis 3 Uhr zu lösen. (passive)

- The task **is to be** solved by 3 o’clock.
3. Modal infinitive

Die Aufgabe **ist** bis 3 Uhr **zu lösen**. (passive)

- The task **is to be** solved by 3 o’clock.
- Hay que resolver la tarea antes de las 3.
3. Modal infinitive

Die Aufgabe ist bis 3 Uhr zu lösen. (passive)

- The task is to be solved by 3 o’clock.
- Hay que resolver la tarea antes de las 3.

- “El futuro es para ser vivido, nada está preestablecido” —Luke Skywalker (“The future is to be lived” → translationese?)
Passive alternatives: Modal infinitive

Having articulated the value proposition for the customer, companies **must** then **consider** the key processes needed to deliver that value.

Sobald das Nutzenversprechen für den Kunden steht, **ist zu überlegen**, welche Schlüsselprozesse erforderlich sind, um [...].

[‘As soon as the value proposition for the customer stands, it is to be considered which key processes are required to.’]

Sobald das Nutzenversprechen für den Kunden definiert ist, **sollte überlegt werden**, welche Schlüsselprozesse erforderlich sind, um [...].

[‘As soon as the value proposition for the customer is defined, it should be considered which key processes are required to.’]
Findings on passive alternatives

**Mean normalised frequency**

Instances per 10,000 words

- TR: 28.26
- TR+ED: 25.43
- ED: 25.34

n = 27

error bars: SE

F(2,78)=0.39, p > 0.05
Mean normalised frequencies separated

Instances per 10,000 words

\begin{align*}
\text{man:} & \quad F(2,78)=7.96, \\
& \quad p < 0.001 \\
\text{modal inf.:} & \quad F(2,78)=12.26, \\
& \quad p < 0.001
\end{align*}
Universals of translation or mediation?

1 Explicitation

2 Normalisation/conservatism

3 Simplification
Universals of translation or mediation?

1. Explicitation
   - More complete/less economical surface realisation in translation
   - More explicit relations between conceptual propositions in text

2. Normalisation/conservatism

3. Simplification
Universals of translation or mediation?

1. Explicitation
   - More complete/less economical surface realisation in translation
   - Frequency of use of *dass* (‘that’)
   - More explicit relations between conceptual propositions in text

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     - Conjunction vs preposition ratio

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2 Normalisation/conservatism
   - Degree of unconventional language use

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Universals of translation or mediation?

1. Explicitation
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     - Frequency of use of \textit{dass} (‘that’)
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2. Normalisation/conservatism
   - Degree of unconventional language use
   - Frequency of lexical bundles

3. Simplification
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     - Frequency of use of *dass* (‘that’)
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2. Normalisation/conservatism
   - Degree of unconventional language use
   - Frequency of lexical bundles
   - Passive alternatives

3. Simplification

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Features of mediated discourse: A corpus investigation of translated and edited language

Mario Bisiada | @MBisiada | mariobisiada.de
Universals of translation or mediation?

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   - More complete/less economical surface realisation in translation
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2. Normalisation/conservatism
   - Degree of unconventional language use
   - Frequency of lexical bundles
   - Passive alternatives

3. Simplification
   - Lexical diversity
   - Mean word and sentence length
Universals of translation or mediation?

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   - More complete/less economical surface realisation in translation
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2. Normalisation/conservatism *(ED diff. to TR and TR+ED)*
   - Degree of unconventional language use
   - Frequency of lexical bundles
   - Passive alternatives

3. Simplification
   - Lexical diversity
   - Mean word and sentence length
Universals of translation or mediation?

1. Explicitation (No difference)
   - More complete/less economical surface realisation in translation
     - Frequency of use of *dass* (‘that’)
   - More explicit relations between conceptual propositions in text
     - Frequency of linking adverbials
     - Frequency of pronominal adverbs
     - Conjunction vs preposition ratio

2. Normalisation/conservatism (ED diff. to TR and TR+ED)
   - Degree of unconventional language use
   - Frequency of lexical bundles
   - Passive alternatives

3. Simplification (TR different to TR+ED and ED)
   - Lexical diversity
   - Mean word and sentence length
Possible Hypotheses

Mediation universals

- little support for mediation universals
Possible Hypotheses

Mediation universals

- little support for mediation universals
- normalisation/conservatism confirmed as translation universal
Possible Hypotheses

Mediation universals

- little support for mediation universals
- normalisation/conservatism confirmed as translation universal
- editors’ influence strongest in simplification universal
  ⟷ readability
Possible Hypotheses

Passive constructions

- greater amount of modal passives in translations
Possible Hypotheses

Passive constructions

- greater amount of modal passives in translations
- non-translated German articles use *man* more often
Possible Hypotheses

Passive constructions

- greater amount of modal passives in translations
- non-translated German articles use *man* more often
  - due to source texts? (more passive/modality in English?)
Possible Hypotheses

Passive constructions

- greater amount of modal passives in translations
- non-translated German articles use *man* more often

→ due to source texts? (more passive/modality in English?)

→ differing perception of *man/modal forms* (acceptability, formality…)?
Current work: true passives

Open questions

- Are passive forms textual metaphors?
Current work: true passives

Open questions

- Are passive forms textual metaphors?
- How about middle passives?
Community peer review session

Join my Academia.edu discussion

https://www.academia.edu/s/ba9ea02c95

- read the full paper reporting the study of mediation universals
- help improve the paper by commenting on the draft
Thank you for your attention!

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Slides:
mariobisiada.de/talks.html
Hypotheses & open questions

References I


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References III


References IV


References V


