Diachronic Change in Causal Cohesive Devices in Translated and Non-Translated German Business Articles

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University of Manchester

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University of Kent

7th International Contrastive Linguistics and 3rd Corpora in Contrastive and Translation Studies

12th of July 2013
Objectives of the talk

1. Have German causal clause complexes in translations of business articles become more paratactic over time?
Objectives of the talk

1. Have German causal clause complexes in translations of business articles become more paratactic over time?
2. Can this be construed as a case of convergence with the source language English?
Talk summary

1. Introduction
2. Research outline
   Previous research
   Hypotaxis & parataxis
3. Methodology & data
4. Hypotaxis to Parataxis?
5. English–German convergence?
   Translational variety
   Pragmaticisation of conjunctions
6. Conclusion

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Diachronic change in German causal cohesive devices
Study to be replicated:

*Covert Translation project*\(^a\)

- Genre: Popular science
- Size: 300,000 words in total

\(^a\)kranich12.

‘Can translation as a classic case of language contact act as a trigger for convergence and divergence phenomena between two languages?’
Previous research

Becher¹:

- In German concessive clause complexes, parataxis has become more frequent than hypotaxis
- The same happened in the comparable corpus, but at an earlier stage

Research hypothesis

Hypothesis to be tested:
In contexts where the English source text allows a choice between parataxis and hypotaxis for the German translations of causal clause complexes, translators choose paratactic constructions more frequently now than they did a few decades ago.
Hypotaxis and parataxis in German

‘I recognised the town because I had been there.’
Hypotaxis and parataxis in German

‘I recognised the town because I had been there.’

**Hypotactic Translation**

S \> V \> AkkO
Ich \> **kannte** \> den Ort, \> da \> ich \> dort \> bereits \> **war.**
Hypotaxis and parataxis in German

‘I recognised the town because I had been there.’

**Hypotactic Translation**

S   V   AkkO   S
Ich *kannte* den Ort, da ich dort bereits *war*.
⇒ V2, verb-final

**Paratactic Translation**

S   V   AkkO   S
Ich *kannte* den Ort, denn ich war dort bereits.
⇒ V2, V2

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Diachronic change in German causal cohesive devices
Hypotaxis and parataxis in German

‘I recognised the town because I had been there.’

**Hypotactic Translation**

\[
\text{S} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{AkkO} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{V} \\
\text{Ich} \quad \text{kannte} \quad \text{den Ort}, \quad \text{da ich} \quad \text{dort bereits} \quad \text{war}.
\]

⇒ V2, verb-final

**Paratactic Translation**

\[
\text{S} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{AkkO} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{V} \\
\text{Ich} \quad \text{kannte} \quad \text{den Ort}, \quad \text{denn ich} \quad \text{war} \quad \text{bereits dort}.
\]
Hypotaxis and parataxis in German

‘I recognised the town because I had been there.’

Hypotactic Translation

\[
\text{S} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{AkkO} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{V} \\
\begin{array}{c}
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⇒ V2, V2
Methodology

Research Method

Combining corpus linguistics and translation studies ⇒ Diachronic translation corpora
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Research Method

Combining corpus linguistics and translation studies
⇒ Diachronic translation corpora

Two-step corpus study

- Diachronic comparison of translation choices in parallel translation corpus
- Compare findings with non-translated German texts in comparable corpus
# Corpus Data

## Corpus details

**Genre**  Business and management articles  

**Source**  *Harvard Business Review* and *Harvard Business Manager*  

**Objects**  Causal conjunctions (*because, since, for, as*)  

**Time periods**  1982–3 and 2008

## Corpus size

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translation Corpus</td>
<td>497,489</td>
<td>518,850</td>
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<td>145,715</td>
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# Findings: translation corpus

## Frequencies of tactic causal conjunction types in the TC

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- 19pp decrease in hypotaxis
- 12pp increase in parataxis
Findings: translation corpus

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Conclusion

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- A development from hypotaxis to parataxis can be observed
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Can this be construed as a case of convergence with the source language English?
Findings revisited: translation corpus

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- 7pp increase in ‘other constructions’
(1) [...] simply because they never even knew those rights existed.

Und zwar nur aus dem einfachen Grund, dass ihnen and indeed only for the simple reason that to-them
die Existenz dieser Rechte nicht bekannt war.

the existence of-these rights not known was
Constructions classed as ‘other’

(2) It’s easy to misjudge the role of the chief strategy officer, in part because the title itself is misleading.

*Viele haben eine falsche Vorstellung davon, was ein* many have a wrong impression of-that which a *Chief Strategy Officer eigentlich ist. Daran ist die* chief strategy officer actually is in-this is the *missverständliche Bezeichnung nicht ganz unschuldig.* misleading title not entirely blameless
Variety as resistance?

House²:

- In many English genres, ‘a fixed set of routine formulas tends to be preferred’

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Variety as resistance?

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- Users of German prefer ‘situation-anchored, ad-hoc formulations’ as well as ‘a great variety of expressions adapted *in situ* to the respective contexts and co-texts’.

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- Maintaining this in translation → ‘resistance to Anglophone discourse conventions and preferences’

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‘Risk’ of using ad-hoc formulations rather than *weil* ⇒ Evidence against convergence with English?

## Detailed results

### Frequencies of causal conjunctions (Translation Corpus)

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Diachronic development of the proportional frequency of *da*, *weil* and *denn*
Pragmatic differences among German conjunctions

Köller³ (based on Pasch⁴): semantic differentiation⁵

**factual**  (‘sachthematisch’), ‘real-world causality’

**epistemic**  (‘reflexionsthematisch’), deductive inference


Köller\(^3\) (based on Pasch\(^4\)): semantic differentiation\(^5\)

**factual** (‘sachthematisch’), ‘real-world causality’
- John probably came back because he loved her.
- John kam wahrscheinlich zurück, weil (?)da er sie liebte. / \(?denn er liebte sie\).

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**epistemic** (‘reflexionsthematisch’), deductive inference
- John didn’t love her, because he didn’t come back.
- John liebte sie nicht, da (?weil) er nicht zurück kam. / denn er kam nicht zurück.

---


Why do *weil* and *da* each behave differently in TC and CC?

**Proposed diachronic changes**

1. *weil* and *da* have become differentiated pragmatically in business writing
   - *weil* factual use
   - *da/denn* epistemic use

2. *denn* (paratactic) replaces *da* and *weil* (hypotactic)

**German translations** Currently undergoing step 1—further evidence against convergence with English
Why do *weil* and *da* each behave differently in TC and CC?

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**German non-translations** step 1 completed, currently undergoing step 2?
Conclusion

1. Have German causal clause complexes in translations of business articles become more paratactic over time?
   - A development from hypotaxis to parataxis can be observed

2. Can this be construed as a case of convergence with the source language English?
Have German causal clause complexes in translations of business articles become more paratactic over time?
- A development from hypotaxis to parataxis can be observed

Can this be construed as a case of convergence with the source language English?
- Some evidence that there is no German–English convergence in this genre
Thank you for your attention!

For more information, see


mbisiada@fastmail.fm