Language change through language contact in English–German translation

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Grup d’Estudis del Discurs
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Grup de Lingüística Formal Research Seminar
11 October 2017
Objectives of the talk

1. Is there a diachronic increase in the use of parataxis in German business article translations of constructions that are...
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2. is this development a case of convergence with the source language English?
Objectives of the talk

1. is there a diachronic increase in the use of parataxis in German business article translations of constructions that are
   1.1 causal
   1.2 concessive

2. is this development a case of convergence with the source language English?

3. if not, what other explanations can be resorted to?
**Source**

Although strategy had considerable breadth then, it didn’t have much rigor.

---

**Tr (para) → coordinated main clauses**

_Das Thema Strategie hatte damals _zwar_ eine gewisse Bandbreite, _doch_ es _mangelte_ an Disziplin._

[‘The topic of strategy did have a certain breadth then, but it lacked discipline.’]
Example

Source
Although strategy had considerable breadth then, it didn’t have much rigor.

Tr (para) → coordinated main clauses
Das Thema Strategie *hatte* damals *zwar* eine gewisse Bandbreite, *doch* es *mangelte* an Disziplin.
[‘The topic of strategy did have a certain breadth then, but it lacked discipline.’]

Tr (hypo) → main clause + subclause
*Obwohl* das Thema Strategie damals umfangreich behandelt *wurde*, *mangelte* es ihm an Stringenz.
[‘Although the topic of strategy was treated in depth then, it lacked rigour.’]
Introduction

Lang. contact in trans.
  Basic issues
  Previous research

Corpora & method

Causals

Concessives

Sentence-splitting in translation
Language contact in translation

Degree of standardisation of the languages involved determines the outcome of contact in translation (Kranich 2014)

Ancient languages
degree of standardisation: low
→ syntactic innovations, borrowings

Modern languages
degree of standardisation: high
→ influence limited to frequency shifts
Language contact in translation

**Mechanism:**
Structures/patterns that are conventionally infrequent in the TL → used more frequently (assimilation to SL norms) (Koller 1998)
Language contact in translation

Mechanism:
Structures/patterns that are conventionally infrequent in the TL → used more frequently (assimilation to SL norms) (Koller 1998)

Example

• decrease of hypotactic structures in translated and non-translated business articles in Italian (Musacchio 2005), German (Becher 2011) and Portuguese (Bennett 2013)
Language contact in translation

**Mechanism:**
Structures/patterns that are conventionally infrequent in the TL used more frequently (assimilation to SL norms) (Koller 1998)

**Example**

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**Issue:**
does variation arise from contact with texts

- **translated** from language X?
- **written** in that language?
Previous research

Study to be replicated:

*Covert Translation* project

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

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

---

Becher (2011):

- In translated German concessive constructions, parataxis has become more frequent than hypotaxis
- The same happened in the corpus of non-translations, 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.
Introduction

Lang. contact in trans.

Corpora & method
  Method
  Corpus

Causals

Concessives

Sentence-splitting in translation
Methodology

**Research Method**

Combining corpus linguistics and translation studies

⇒ Diachronic translation corpora
Methodology

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
Diachronic translation corpora

1. Compare translations and source texts from two time periods

→ determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature
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   \[\rightarrow\] determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature
   \[\rightarrow\] translation of concessive conjunctions *although*, *(even) though*, *
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   ↝ determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature
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Diachronic translation corpora

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2. Investigate comparable corpus for similar patterns
   → are these patterns exclusive to translated language or are they also found in non-translated language?
Diachronic translation corpora

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   → translation of concessive conjunctions *although, (even) though, while* to German
   → translation of causal conjunctions *because, since, as* to German

2. Investigate comparable corpus for similar patterns
   → are these patterns exclusive to translated language or are they also found in non-translated language?
   → do the German conjunctions found in step 1 (and thus the structure they demand) occur more frequently?
Corpus structure

Corpora:

Parallel
English originals and their published German translations

Comparable
German non-translations

Texts:

English

Harvard Business Review

German

Harvard Business Manager
Corpus size

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>English source texts</td>
<td>251,148</td>
<td>258,589</td>
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<tr>
<td>German translations</td>
<td>246,341</td>
<td>260,261</td>
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<td>643,204</td>
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Introduction

Lang. contact in trans.

Corpora & method

Causals

Findings

English–German convergence?

Pragmaticisation of conjunctions

Concessives

Sentence-splitting in translation
## Findings: translation corpus

**Frequencies of tactic causal conjunction types in the TC**

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## Findings: translation corpus

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- 19pp decrease in hypotaxis
## Findings: translation corpus

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

Frequencies of tactic causal conjunction types in the CC

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- 19pp decrease in hypotaxis
# Findings: comparable corpus

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- 19pp decrease in hypotaxis
- 19pp increase in parataxis
1. Have German causal clause complexes in translations of business articles become more paratactic over time?
Conclusion

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   - A development from hypotaxis to parataxis can be observed
Conclusion

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2. Can this be construed as a case of convergence with the source language English?
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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 und indeed only for the simple reason that to-them

die Existenz dieser Rechte nicht bekannt war. the existence of-these rights not known was
(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?

House (2011):

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

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- In many English genres, ‘a fixed set of routine formulas tends to be preferred’
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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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Frequencies of causal conjunctions (Comparable Corpus)

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## Detailed results

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Diachronic development of the proportional frequency of *da*, *weil* and *denn*
Köller (2004): semantic differentiation (English terms and examples from Sweetser 1990)

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

- **epistemic** (‘reflexionsthematisch’), deductive inference
Köller (2004): semantic differentiation (English terms and examples from Sweetser 1990)

- **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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Köller (2004): semantic differentiation (English terms and examples from Sweetser 1990)

**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.

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

- John didn’t love her, because he didn’t come back.
- John liebte sie nicht, da (?weil) er nicht zurückkam. / 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?

**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

**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?
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   - A development from hypotaxis to parataxis can be observed

2. 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
Introduction

Lang. contact in trans.

Corpora & method

Causals

Concessives

Parallel corpus
Sentence-initial concessives
Comparison with existing results

Sentence-splitting in translation
Analysis of the parallel corpus

- Hyp. conjunctions: 63% in 1982/83, 43% in 2008
- Conjunctive advs: 20% in 1982/83, 23% in 2008
- Para. conjunctions: 9% in 1982/83, 25% in 2008
- Other: 8% in 1982/83, 9% in 2008
Do translators introduce conjunctions?

Translators’ use of concessive conjunctions where the source text does not have them:

Example

However, the councilmen desired to continue the new budget system **despite** a lack of significant cost savings or cost reallocations. (HBR 6/77,76)

*Die Stadträte wünschten aber, am neuen Budgetierungssystem festzuhalten, **obwohl** es zu keiner signifikanten Einsparung oder Neuverteilung von Mitteln gekommen war.* (HBM 1/83,13)
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1982/3</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obwohl</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auch wenn</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doch</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: parallel corpus (step 1)

- strong decline in hypotactic structures, but also introduced frequently
- no statistically significant increase in frequency in paratactic structures
  - proportional share of paratactic translation choices increased due to decline in the use of conjunctions in the source texts?
### Analysis of the comparable corpus

#### Hypotactic conjunctions (e.g. *obwohl*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982/3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>+17.1</td>
<td>+1pp</td>
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</table>

#### Conjunctive adverbs (e.g. *aber*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982/3</td>
<td>195.6</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>221.9</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>+26.3</td>
<td>−13pp</td>
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</table>

#### Paratactic conjunctions (e.g. *aber*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982/3</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>+48.2</td>
<td>+12pp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: comparable corpus (step 2)

- strong decline in hypotactic structures, but also introduced frequently
- no notable increase in frequency in paratactic structures
  - proportional share of paratactic translation choices increased due to decline in the use of conjunctions in the source texts?
- hypotactic structures remain stable
  - decline noted in translated texts not corroborated
- general increase in concessive conjunctions (viz. decrease in translated text)
  - difference in the expression of concessive meaning relations between English and German?
Sentence-initial concessive conjunctions

Source

**But** it’s not just the physical attributes of a space that influence informal interactions; […]. (HBR 7/11,102)

---

**Tr (adv)**

*Beim Aspekt der Nähe und dessen Einfluss auf informelle Kontakte geht es **jedochnicht nur um den physischen Abstand, […]*.  
[‘The aspect of proximity and its influence on informal contacts, however, is not just about physical distance.’]
Sentence-initial concessive conjunctions

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**But** it’s not just the physical attributes of a space that influence informal interactions; [...] (HBR 7/11,102)

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*Beim Aspekt der Nähe und dessen Einfluss auf informelle Kontakte geht es *jedochnicht nur um den physischen Abstand, [...] ['The aspect of proximity and its influence on informal contacts, however, is not just about physical distance.'][

**Tr (SICC)**

*Aber nicht nur die physischen Eigenschaften eines Raums beeinflussen die Häufigkeit zufälliger Begegnungen.* ['But not only the physical attributes of a room influence the frequency of random encounters.']
## Translations of sentence-initial *But*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1982/3</th>
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<th>2008</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>f</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>f</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aber</em></td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Doch</em></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conj. adv.</td>
<td>20.9</td>
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<td>11.6</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>omitted</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>57.4</td>
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- **Strongest frequency increase**: sentence-initial *Doch*
- Sentence-initial conjunctions more popular than internal adverbs
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- strongest frequency increase: sentence-initial *Doch*
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## Findings in the comparable corpus

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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aber</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>63</td>
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<td>108</td>
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- *Aber* and especially *Doch* increase significantly
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- *Aber* and especially *Doch* increase significantly
- 1982/3: both sentence-initial conjunctions used more frequently in translations than in non-translations
  → spread from translated to non-translated language?
Discussion: Translated texts

- diachronic decrease in hypotactic structures in concessive clauses

similar observations made by
Discussion: Translated texts

- diachronic decrease in hypotactic structures in concessive clauses

similar observations made by
  - Becher (2011) for popular science
Discussion: Translated texts

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Discussion: Translated texts

- diachronic decrease in hypotactic structures in concessive clauses

  similar observations made by
  - Becher (2011) for popular science
  - Bisiada (2013) for causal clauses, though less strongly

  at the same time: hypotactic conjunctions frequently introduced – counterevidence to decreasing use
Discussion: Non-translated texts

- no decrease: more hypotactic structures in 2008 than in 1982/3
Discussion: Non-translated texts

• no decrease: more hypotactic structures in 2008 than in 1982/3
• paratactic conjunctions used more often
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- but no general increase in parataxis due to decreasing use of conjunctive adverbs
  - contrary to popular science observations (cf. Becher 2011)
  - what are the causes for this contradictory behaviour?
Discussion: Conclusions

decrease in hypotaxis: hypotaxis is not unpopular, but readability concerns are more important (sentence splitting: Zwar… Aber…)

• difference in genres: overall decrease in conjunctions in source texts?

• Sentence-initial concessive conjunctions increase in translated and non-translated texts (also noted in popular science by Becher, House & Kranich 2009)

⇒ diachronic change through translation?
Introduction

Lang. contact in trans.

Corpora & method

Causals

Concessives

Sentence-splitting in translation

Introduction

Corpus & method

Findings
What is sentence splitting?

(3) Functional staffers often deferred to their higher-ups in corporate rather than their division vice president, since functional leaders were responsible for promotions. (HBR 6/08, 60)

Das Funktionspersonal beugte sich oft den Fachvorgesetzten the functional-staffers deferred REFL often to-the higher-ups in der Konzernzentrale statt dem Leiter des eigenen in the headquarters instead-of the leader of-their own Geschäftsbereichs. Denn die Funktionsleiter in der Zentrale division since the functional-leaders in the head-office waren für Beförderungen zuständig. (HBM 9/08, 58) were for promotions responsible
Theoretical assumptions about sentence splitting

- ‘a translation strategy enforced by differences in structural conventions between the languages’²

²(Fabricius-Hansen 1996: 558)
⁴(Fabricius-Hansen 1999: 203f, Fabricius-Hansen & Ramm 2008)
Theoretical assumptions about sentence splitting

• ‘a translation strategy enforced by differences in structural conventions between the languages’\(^2\)
• translation from a high to a low informational density language (e.g. DE > EN) argued to trigger sentence splitting

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- ‘grammatical possibilities and peculiarities of German favour a more hierarchical sentence construction than is feasible in English’\(^4\).

Translating *into* a high informational density language should require the opposite strategy to sentence splitting!

\(^2\)(Fabricius-Hansen 1996: 558)
## Corpus

### Size of pre-edited corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006–11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Source texts</td>
<td>104,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-edited German translations</td>
<td>106,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published German translations</td>
<td>104,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total size</td>
<td>315,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial guidelines for *HBM* translations

*Bitte übersetzen Sie möglichst textgetreu in einem klaren, verständlichen und lebendigen Deutsch. Lassen Sie keine Sätze oder Satzteile weg, die Ihnen unverständlich erscheinen. Vermeiden Sie Nominalstil, Fachjargon, das Passiv und das Wörtchen ‘man’. Lösen Sie Schachtelsätze, insbesondere dass-Sätze, möglichst auf.*

‘Please translate as true to the original as possible in clear, understandable, and lively German. Do not leave out sentences or parts of sentences that seem hard to understand to you. Avoid nominalizations, subject-specific terminology, the passive, and impersonal constructions using man. *Where possible, dissolve nested sentences, especially those containing dass.*’ (my translation)
Method of analysis

- Sentence-alignment (using the text alignment tool in *Tools*) →
  One-to-two sentence correspondence maintained
Method of analysis

- Sentence-alignment (using the text alignment tool in *Tools*) → One-to-two sentence correspondence maintained
- File converted to *tab-delimited* TXT format → each line contains the corresponding ST and TT items
Method of analysis

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- Search for ‘.’ (full stop followed by space) yields only split/joined TT sentences
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• Search for ‘.’ (full stop followed by space) yields only split/joined TT sentences
  Other full stops occur either at the end of a line or followed by a tab and so were not returned by the search.
• Full stops in abbreviations (‘U.S.’) or enumerations (‘1., 2.’) were manually removed in advance.
Method of analysis

Two-step diachronic corpus analysis

Step 1—Translation corpus

- Differences in frequency of sentence-splitting between 1982–3 and 2008.
- Repeat analysis for the pre-edited corpus — What is the influence of editors on sentence splitting?
Method of analysis

Two-step diachronic corpus analysis

Step 1—Translation corpus

• Differences in frequency of sentence-splitting between 1982–3 and 2008.
• Repeat analysis for the pre-edited corpus — What is the influence of editors on sentence splitting?

Step 2—Comparable corpus

Are the observed phenomena characteristic of translated text or can they also be found in non-translated texts?
Analysis: Translation and pre-edited corpora

1982–3

- 8 joined
- 85 split

2008

- 12 joined
- 292 split
Analysis: Translation and pre-edited corpora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Joined</th>
<th>Split</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982–3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>292</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Translator’s action | Editor’s action          | Occurrences |
---|-------------------|-------------|
Sentence split      | —                 | 542         |
Sentence split      | split reverted    | 26          |
—                    | sentence split     | 296         |
2 sentences joined  | —                 | 20          |
2 sentences joined  | joining reverted   | 0           |
(4) a. Many younger employees find they can complete tasks faster than older workers, perhaps partly because of technological proficiency.

b. Viele dieser jungen Angestellten stellen fest, dass sie Aufgaben schneller erledigen als ihre älteren Kollegen. Das mag zum einen an ihrem technischen Können liegen.

‘That may be due to...’
Anaphoric reference—Demonstrative pronoun

(5)  a. The gift of time—in the form of hours spent on coaching and building networks—is seen as crucial to the collaborative culture at Nokia.

   b. Hier ist Zeit ein Geschenk—in Form von Stunden, die dem Coaching und dem Aufbau von Netzwerken gewidmet sind. **Dieses Geschenk** gilt als entscheidend für die kooperative Unternehmenskultur bei Nokia.

   ‘This gift is seen as...’
(6)  a. Johnson & Johnson offered Guidant shareholders $68 a share in late 2004, which wasn’t much of a premium over the stock’s trading price.


‘(Therein) / In that / That contained...’
### Development of referential items in the TC and CC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1982–3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>i/htw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Das</em></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dies/e/es/er</em></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pronominal adverb</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
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*darin, daraus, darum, darüber hinaus, darauf(hin), darunter, daran*
## Translation & comparable corpus

### Development of referential items in the TC and CC

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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Das</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>43.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dies/e/es/er</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>294.4</td>
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*darin, daraus, darum, darüber hinaus, darauf(hin), darunter, daran
Relative and modal clause constructions \((which, by+\text{part.}, \text{gerund})\) are commonly split and expressed by sentence-initial anaphoric reference. → Change in the marking of cohesion?
Tentative conclusions

Relative and modal clause constructions (*which*, *by*+part., gerund) are commonly split and expressed by sentence-initial anaphoric reference. → Change in the marking of cohesion?

Expression of logical interrelationships in translation

- less often on the clause level by hypotactic or paratactic conjunctions or relative pronouns
- increasingly on the sentence-level by sentence-initial anaphoric reference
- apparently limited to translations
Tentative conclusions

Relative and modal clause constructions (*which*, *by*+part., gerund) are commonly split and expressed by sentence-initial anaphoric reference. → Change in the marking of cohesion?

Expression of logical interrelationships in translation

- less often on the clause level by hypotactic or paratactic conjunctions or relative pronouns
- increasingly on the sentence-level by sentence-initial anaphoric reference
- apparently limited to translations

→ Sentence splitting seems to be a phenomenon of translation that occurs irrespective of the informational density of the target language.
Thank you!

Thank you for your attention!

