An investigation of diachronic change in hypotaxis and parataxis in German through language contact with English in translation

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Diachronic Corpora, Genre and Language Change
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Hypotaxis and Parataxis

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Comparison with existing results
Although strategy had considerable breadth then, it didn’t have much rigor.

Das Thema Strategie *hatte* damals zwar eine gewisse Bandbreite, *doch* es *mangelte* an Disziplin. (translator’s draft)

[‘The topic of strategy did have a certain breadth then, but it lacked discipline.’]
Although strategy had considerable breadth then, it didn’t have much rigor.

*Das Thema Strategie hatte damals zwar eine gewisse Bandbreite, doch es mangelte an Disziplin.* (translator’s draft)

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

*Obwohl das Thema Strategie damals umfangreich behandelt wurde, mangelte es ihm an Stringenz.* (published version)

[‘Although the topic of strategy was treated in depth then, it lacked rigour.’]
Aim of the study

to investigate a trend towards an increasing use of paratactic constructions in German concessive constructions
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)

Example

Bisiada (2013): decrease of hypotactic structures from 80% to 60% in causal constructions in translated and non-translated business articles.
Similar results for Italian (Musacchio 2005), German (Becher 2011) and Portuguese (Bennett 2013).

Issue:

Does variation arise from contact with texts translated written in that language?
Language contact in translation

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Issue: does variation arise from contact with texts translated from language X? written in that language?
Diachronic translation corpora

1. Compare translations and source texts from two time periods → determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature

→ 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 concessive conjunctions found in step 1 (and thus the structure they demand) occur more frequently?
Diachronic translation corpora

1. Compare translations and source texts from two time periods
   \[\rightarrow\text{determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature}\]
   \[\rightarrow\text{translation of concessive conjunctions} \textit{although, (even) though, while} \text{to German}\]
Diachronic translation corpora

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Corpus structure

**Corpora:** 1982/83 & 2008

**Parallel**
- English originals and their published German translations

**Comparable**
- German non-translations

**Texts:**
- *Harvard Business Review*
- *Harvard Business Manager*
## Corpus size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1982/83</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English source texts</td>
<td>251,148</td>
<td>258,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German translations</td>
<td>246,341</td>
<td>260,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German non-translations</td>
<td>145,715</td>
<td>88,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total size</td>
<td>643,204</td>
<td>607,162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the parallel corpus

Instances per 100,000 words

- Hyp. conjunctions
- Conjunctive advs
- Para. conjunctions
- Other

1982/83:
- Hyp. conjunctions: 63%
- Conjunctive advs: 20%
- Para. conjunctions: 8%
- Other: 9%

2008:
- Hyp. conjunctions: 43%
- Conjunctive advs: 23%
- Para. conjunctions: 25%
- Other: 9%

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

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)
Do translators introduce conjunctions?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1982/3</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>obwohl</strong></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>auch wenn</strong></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>doch</strong></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 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?
## Analysis of the comparable corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1982/3</th>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th></th>
<th>Change</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hyp. conjunctions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>+17.1</td>
<td>+1pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunctive advs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>195.6</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>221.9</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>+26.3</td>
<td>-13pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Para. conjunctions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>+48.2</td>
<td>+12pp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Findings: comparable corpus (step 2)

- hypotactic structures remain stable/increase somewhat
- decrease 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?
But it’s not just the physical attributes of a space that influence informal interactions; [...] (HBR 7/11,102)

Beim Aspekt der Nähe und dessen Einfluss auf informelle Kontakte geht es jedoch nicht nur um den physischen Abstand, [...] (translator’s draft) ['The aspect of proximity and its influence on informal contacts, however, is not just about physical distance.']
But it’s not just the physical attributes of a space that influence informal interactions; [...] (HBR 7/11,102)

Beim Aspekt der Nähe und dessen Einfluss auf informelle Kontakte geht es jedoch nicht nur um den physischen Abstand, [...] (translator’s draft)

[‘The aspect of proximity and its influence on informal contacts, however, is not just about physical distance.’]

Aber nicht nur die physischen Eigenschaften eines Raums beeinflussen die Häufigkeit zufälliger Begegnungen. (published version)

[‘But not only the physical attributes of a room influence the frequency of random encounters.’]
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>f</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>f</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aber</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doch</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>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<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>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Translations of sentence-initial *But*

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<tr>
<td></td>
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- strongest frequency increase: sentence-initial *Doch*
- sentence-initial conjunctions more popular than internal adverbs
Findings in the comparable corpus

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aber</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doch</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>108</td>
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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?
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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

- 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
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

Hypotactic conjunctions frequently introduced – no evidence of 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
Discussion: Non-translated texts

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- but no general increase in parataxis due to decreasing use of conjunctive adverbs

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Discussion: Non-translated texts

- no decrease: more hypotactic structures in 2008 than in 1982/3
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- contrary to popular science observations (cf. Becher 2011)
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- paratactic conjunctions used more often
- but no general increase in parataxis due to decreasing use of conjunctive adverbs
- contrary to popular science observations (cf. Becher 2011)
- due to sentence splitting? (encourages use of aber; see Bisiada 2014)
Discussion: Conclusions

→ decrease in hypotaxis: hypotaxis not unpopular, but readability concerns 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?
Thank you!

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