

# The editor's invisibility: Changes to nominalisation in the translation workflow



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Translation in Transition 3

14 July 2017

## Toury's (1995) critique

Comparing only source and target text → weakness in discovering translation processes

“no way of knowing **how many different persons** were actually involved in the establishment of a translation playing how many different roles. Whatever the number, the common practice has been **to collapse all of them into [...] ‘the translator’**.”  
(Toury 1995: 183)



# The editor's invisibility

translator's invisibility cultural critique

editor's invisibility methodological critique



# The editor's invisibility

translator's invisibility cultural critique

editor's invisibility methodological critique

- editing and revising: part of translators' daily lives
- ~> yet few studies take into account intermediate versions of translation products
- ~> published translations usually taken to wholly represent translatorial action



# Editorial changes to nominalisation

## Aim of this study

- to investigate editors' motivations to maintain or change nominalisations in translated texts:
  - 1 the process type of the source text verb
  - 2 the information density of the target text nominal group



# Previous research

## Product research

Empirical strength of product research → relies on published sources

- “actual translated texts-in-function” (Holmes 1988: 101)
- “real data” (Baker 1993: 237)
- “language as it is used in the translation product” (Olohan 2004: 16)
- “authentic data, as attested in texts” (Kenny 2009: 59)



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### Problem

Do these sources really represent translators' work?



# Editorial influence in literary translation

## Orality in romance novels (Sinner 2012)

- fictive dialogue in 26 romance novels published between 2003 and 2009





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- ↪ the dialogue, “especially in sex scenes, is far from representing credible orality” (Sinner 2012: 133).



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- ↳ the dialogue, “especially in sex scenes, is far from representing credible orality” (Sinner 2012: 133).
- confirmed by Andújar Moreno (2016) for Spanish → French



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- “bindings” of three 1970s gay fictional texts (English → French)
  - different ideologies and understandings of the homosexual compete in those “bindings”
- “in-house editorial policies make it dangerous to assume that the translator as individual [...] is singly responsible for textual outcomes even in the main body of the text” (Harvey 2003: 69)





# Cross-genre analysis of editorial influence

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

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  - unedited English texts
- academic, instructional, popular and reportage texts
- no evidence of shared “mediation effect”
  - translators favour “explicit and standardised language”
  - editors “introduce collocational variety”



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  - Source texts (English) – 104,678 words



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# Method

## Procedure

- object of study: deverbal nominalisations
  - the most frequent part-of-speech shift in English → German translations (Alves et al. 2010: 116)



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- manually reduce to only have instances where the editor
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- resulting dataset: 11,000 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...’]



- (1) So if there is some chance that a deal between a buyer and a seller can **create** extra value, it's better **to negotiate** than to hold an auction. (HBR 12/09,101)

*Wenn also die Möglichkeit besteht, dass ein Verhandlungsabschluss zwischen einem Käufer und einem Verkäufer zu einer zusätzlichen **Wertschöpfung** führt, sollten **Verhandlungen** statt Versteigerungen stattfinden. (manuscript)*

['If there is a possibility that the closing of a deal between a buyer and a seller will lead to an extra **value creation**, **negotiations** rather than auctions should take place.']

*Wenn also die Möglichkeit besteht, dass ein Geschäftsabschluss zwischen einem Käufer und einem Verkäufer im Fall von Verhandlungen zusätzlichen Wert **schöpft**, sollten Sie **verhandeln**, anstatt eine Auktion durchzuführen. (HBM 6/10,74)*

['If there is a possibility that the closing of a deal between a buyer and a seller will **create** extra value in the case of negotiations, you should **negotiate** instead of conducting an auction.']



# Quantitative analysis

## Quantitative results

- Source text verbs nominalised by translators: 541
  - nominalisations retained in the published document: 339
  - nominalisations changed to verbs: 202
- Are these decisions random or systematic?



└ Qualitative analysis – What makes editors revert the translator's nominalisations?

└ Hypotheses to be tested

# Qualitative analysis

## Hypotheses to explain editors' decisions

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    - increases information density of the sentence



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└ Hypothesis 1: Process type of the source text verb

# What are process types?

## Grammatical metaphor and transitivity

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    - material** processes of *doing*, usually concrete, tangible actions (see Eggins 2004: 215–225)
    - mental** processes describing “what we *think* or *feel*”, about cognition, affection and perception



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# Process type analysis

## Process type analysis

- Each source text verb was attributed to a process type according to
  - list of verbs in Banks (2003)
  - my own **subjective** analysis



Qualitative analysis – What makes editors revert the translator's nominalisations?

Hypothesis 1: Process type of the source text verb

Process type	Nom. retained		Nom. changed	
	n	%	n	%
material	268	79%	159	79%
mental	47	<b>14%</b>	18	<b>9%</b>
behavioural	5	1%	8	4%
verbal	12	4%	12	6%
existential	1	1%	2	1%
relational	6	2%	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100%</b>



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## Interpretation of results

- Mental processes occur more often among the retained nominalisations ( $p=0.04$ )
  - mental processes add affection to author-reader relationship – not enough distance for German communicative norms?



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  - *I think; we believe* → *Meiner Meinung nach; unserer Ansicht nach*
  - *to matter* → ?



- (2) Managers' day-to-day (and moment-to-moment) behaviors **matter** not just because they directly facilitate or impede the work of the organization. (HBR 5/07,72)

*Das kurzfristige Verhalten von Managern ist nicht nur von entscheidender **Bedeutung**, weil es sich direkt hinderlich oder förderlich auf die Arbeit des Unternehmens auswirkt. (manuscript)*

[‘Managers’ short-term behaviour **is** not only **of** decisive **significance** because it directly affects impedingly or supportively the work of the organisation.’]

*Das kurzfristige Verhalten von Managern ist nicht nur von entscheidender **Bedeutung**, weil es sich direkt hinderlich oder förderlich auf die Arbeit innerhalb des Unternehmens auswirkt. (HBM 9/07,48)*

[‘Managers’ short-term behaviour is not only of decisive significance because it directly affects impedingly or supportively the work within the organisation.’]



└ Qualitative analysis – What makes editors revert the translator's nominalisations?

└ Hypothesis 2: Pre- or postmodification of the target text nominalisation

## Hypothesis 2

### Pre- and postmodification

Editors change nominalisations if they are pre- or postmodified (=if the nominal group structure is more complex)



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### Method

- Semantic Role Labeler (Björkelund, Hafdell, et al. 2009; Björkelund, Bohnet, et al. 2010), then manually corrected.
- separate analysis of premodification and postmodification





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## Premodifiers

Premodifier	Nom. retained		Nom. changed		z-ratio	p-value
Article	206	(61%)	132	(66%)	-1.064	0.287
Pronoun	30	(9%)	6	(3%)	2.654	0.008
Adjective	20	(6%)	10	(5%)	0.467	0.641
Adverb	3	(1%)	2	(1%)	–	–
<i>Total</i>	259	(77%)	150	(75%)	0.562	0.574



↳ Qualitative analysis – What makes editors revert the translator's nominalisations?

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## Postmodifiers

Postmodifier	retained		changed		z-ratio	p-value
<b>Genitive attribute</b>	132	(39%)	107	(53%)	-3.179	0.002
Postnominal modifier	52	(15%)	29	(14%)	0.310	0.757
Phrasal genitive	29	(9%)	21	(11%)	-0.715	0.475
Clausal modifier	16	(5%)	14	(7%)	-1.087	0.277
<i>Total</i>	229	(68%)	171	(85%)	-4.383	0.001



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→ nominalisations seem to be changed if they are postmodified by genitive attributes



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- (3) The beauty of the PWP model is that it offers the potential for **using** operational strengths to **expand** into new areas while at the same time **maintaining** the operational excellence [...]. (HBR 9/09,90)

*Die Attraktivität des PWP-Modells ist sein Potenzial bei der **Nutzung betrieblicher Stärken** zur **Expansion** in neue Bereiche bei gleichzeitiger **Wahrung der hervorragenden betrieblichen Leistung**, [...]. (manuscript)*

['The beauty of the PWP model is its potential for the **use of operational strengths** for the **expansion** into new areas with a concomitant **maintenance of the excellent operational performance** [...].']

*Der Charme des PWP-Modells besteht darin, dass es die Möglichkeit bietet, betriebliche Stärken zur **Expansion** in neue Bereiche zu **nutzen** und zugleich die Fähigkeit zu betrieblichen Spitzenleistungen zu **wahren**, [...]. (HBM 12/09,78)*

['The charm of the PWP model lies in the fact that it offers the possibility **to use** operational strengths for the **expansion** into new areas and at the same time **to maintain** the aptitude for operational excellence [...].']



# Conclusions

## Process types

- Some indication that nominalisations of mental processes are retained
  - No difference for material processes, by far the largest group
- No significant overall effect on editors' decisions



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## Nominal group structure

- 1 Premodification
  - Some indication that preceding pronouns may “protect” nominalisations
  - no significant overall effect
- 2 Postmodification
  - genitive attributes seem to motivate editors to change the nominalisation



# Thank you for your attention!

## Read more

- on quantitative findings: Bisiada (2017a)
  - ↪ The Translator; DOI 10.1080/13556509.2017.1301847
- on qualitative findings: Bisiada (2017b)
  - ↪ Perspectives; DOI 10.1080/0907676X.2017.1290121
- are there universals of editing? Bisiada (forthcoming)

## Acknowledgement

Funded by the Spanish  
*Ministerio de Economía  
y Competitividad*



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