

# Language change through language contact in English–German translation

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  - 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?



## 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.']

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['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

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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*<sup>1</sup>

- Genre: Popular science
- Corpus: 1978–1982 and 1999–2002
- 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?’

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<sup>1</sup>see [Svenja Kranich. 2014. Translation as a locus of language contact. In Juliane House \(ed.\), \*Translation: A multidisciplinary approach\*, 96–115. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.](#)



## Previous research

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

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Lang. contact in trans.

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**Corpora & method**

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○○

Causals

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**Corpora & method**

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# Methodology

## Research Method

Combining corpus linguistics and translation studies

⇒ Diachronic translation corpora

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⇒ 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

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↳ determine diachronic variation/change in a specific feature

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 ↪ are these patterns exclusive to translated language or are they also found in non-translated language?

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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?**
  - 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

	<b>1982/83</b>	<b>2008</b>
English source texts	251,148	258,589
German translations	246,341	260,261
German non-translations	145,715	88,312
<b>Total size</b>	<b>643,204</b>	<b>607,162</b>

## 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

	1982-3			2008		
	n	f	p	n	f	p
Hypotaxis	373	151.4	82%	248	95.3	63%
Parataxis	41	16.6	9%	83	31.9	21%
Other	42	17.0	9%	64	24.6	16%
Total	456	185.1		395	151.8	

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- 19pp decrease in hypotaxis
- **12pp increase in parataxis**

## Findings: comparable corpus

### Frequencies of tactic causal conjunction types in the CC

	1982-3			2008		
	n	f	p	n	f	p
Hypotaxis	251	172.3	79%	120	135.9	60%
Parataxis	68	46.7	21%	80	90.6	40%
Total	319	218.9		200	226.5	

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- 7pp increase in 'other constructions'

## Constructions classed as ‘other’

- (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

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House (2011):

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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)

	1982-3		2008	
	n	f	n	f
<i>weil</i>	313	127.1	137	52.6
<i>da</i>	60	24.4	111	42.6
<i>denn</i>	28	11.4	50	19.2

### Frequencies of causal conjunctions (Comparable Corpus)

	1982-3		2008	
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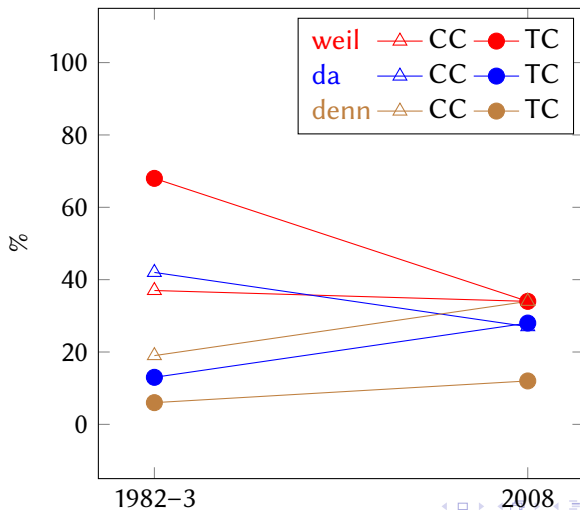
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# Diachronic development of the proportional frequency of *da*, *weil* and *denn*





# Pragmatic differences among German conjunctions

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

**factual** ('sachthematisch'), 'real-world causality'

**epistemic** ('reflexionsthematisch'), deductive inference

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**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 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

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

# Conclusion

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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

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## Concessives

Parallel corpus

Sentence-initial concessives

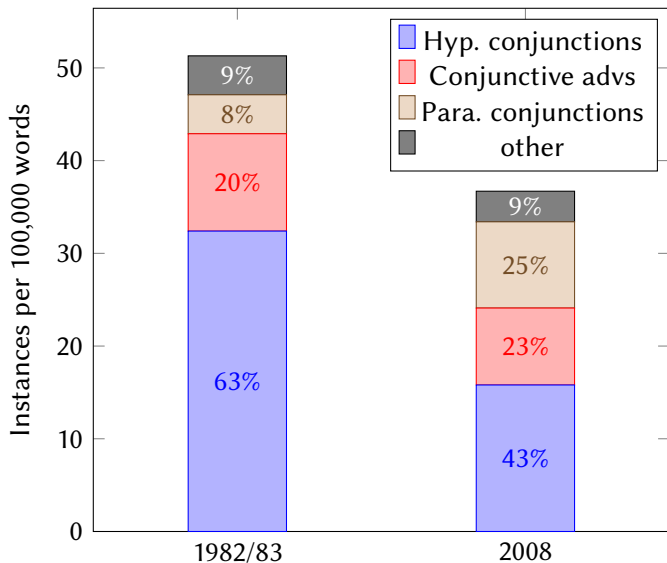
Comparison with existing results

## Sentence-splitting in translation





## Analysis of the parallel corpus



## 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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	1982/3	2008
<i>obwohl</i>	1.8	4.0
<i>auch wenn</i>	1.8	3.1
<i>doch</i>	0.8	4.0

## 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*)

*f*

1982/3	35.0	14%
2008	52.1	15%
<b>Change</b>	+17.1	+1pp

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

1982/3	195.6	76%
2008	221.9	63%
<b>Change</b>	+26.3	-13pp

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

1982/3	28.8	10%
2008	77.0	22%
<b>Change</b>	+48.2	+12pp

## 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 **jedoch** nicht nur um den physischen Abstand, [...].*

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

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['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*

	1982/3		2008	
	<i>f</i>		<i>f</i>	
<i>Aber</i>	30.0	48%	21.8	38%
<i>Doch</i>	5.2	8%	18.7	33%
Conj. adv.	20.9	34%	11.6	20%
omitted	4.8	8%	3.7	6%
other	1.0	2%	1.7	3%
<b>total</b>	61.9	100%	57.4	100%

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- strongest frequency increase: sentence-initial *Doch*
- sentence-initial conjunctions more popular than internal adverbs

## Findings in the comparable corpus

	1982/3		2008	
	n	<i>f</i>	n	<i>f</i>
<i>Aber</i>	24	16.5	45	60.0
<i>Doch</i>	5	3.4	63	71.3
<b>total</b>	29	19.9	108	122.3

- *Aber* and especially *Doch* increase significantly

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  - 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

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↪ at the same time: hypotactic conjunctions frequently introduced – counterevidence to decreasing use

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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)
  - 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

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○

Lang. contact in trans.

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○○○

Corpora & method

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○○

Causals

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Concessives

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Sentence-splitting in translation

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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’<sup>2</sup>

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  - ‘grammatical possibilities and peculiarities of German favour a more hierarchical sentence construction than is feasible in English’<sup>4</sup>.
- ↪ Translating *into* a high informational density language should require the opposite strategy to sentence splitting!

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# Corpus

## Size of pre-edited corpus

**2006–11**

English Source texts	104,678
Pre-edited German translations	106,829
Published German translations	104,448
<b>Total size</b>	<b>315,955</b>

## 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

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- ↳ 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

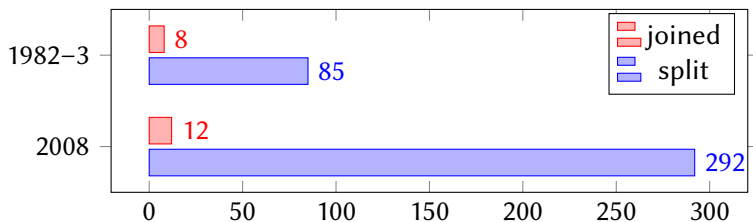
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#### Step 2—Comparable corpus

Are the observed phenomena characteristic of translated text or can they also be found in non-translated texts?

# Analysis: Translation and pre-edited corpora







## Anaphoric reference—Relative pronoun

- (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...’

## Anaphoric reference—Pronominal adverb

- (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.
- b. Johnson & Johnson legte Ende 2004 ein Angebot über 68 Dollar je Guidant-Aktie vor. **Darin** war kaum ein Aufschlag auf den damaligen Kurs der Aktie enthalten.

‘(Therein) / In that / That contained...’

## Translation & comparable corpus

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

		1982-3		2008	
		n	i/htw	n	i/htw
TC	<i>Das</i>	18	3.6	94	18.1
	<i>Dies/e/es/er</i>	25	5.0	109	21.0
	Pronominal adverb*	0	0.0	28	5.4

\*darin, daraus, darum, darüber hinaus, darauf(hin), darunter, daran

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CC	<i>Das</i>	64	43.9	86	97.4
	<i>Dies/e/es/er</i>	429	294.4	158	178.9
	Pronominal adverb	25	17.2	13	14.7

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## 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?

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Expression of logical interrelationships in translation

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↔ 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!

[Mario Bisiada. 2013.](#) Changing conventions in German causal clause complexes: A diachronic corpus study of translated and non-translated business articles. *Languages in Contrast* 13(1). 1–27

[Mario Bisiada. 2014.](#) “Lösen Sie Schachtelsätze möglichst auf”: The impact of editorial guidelines on sentence splitting in German business article translations. *Applied Linguistics* 36(3). 354–376

[Mario Bisiada. 2016.](#) Structural effects of english–german language contact in translation on concessive constructions in business articles. *Text & Talk* 36(2). 133–154