

Precision or readability? On the influence of editors in English-German business translation

Mario Bisiada

Departament de Traducció i Ciències del Llenguatge
Universitat Pompeu Fabra



Meaning in Translation: Illusion of Precision
Riga Technical University

13 May 2016

Table of Contents

Editing and translation

- Manuscripts in corpus research

- Editing for readability

- Edited language as mediated discourse

Corpus details & objects of study

- Corpus & research aims

- German passives

Findings & discussion

- Findings

- Hypotheses & open questions

Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

Manuscript
translation

Published
translation

Editorial influence in translation

Translated text

Manuscript
translation



Published
translation

Stages in translated document production

Stage	Sub-process	Agent	Product
Writing ¹	Planning	Original author	Source text
	Translating	Original author	
	Reviewing	Original author	
Translation ²	Orientation	Translator	Draft Manuscript
	Drafting	Translator	
	Revising	Reviser	
Publication	Stylistic editing	Editor	Target text 
	Copyediting	Editor	
	Structural editing	Editor	
	Content editing	Editor	
	Publication	Publisher	

¹adopted from Hayes et al. (1987)

²adopted from Jakobsen (1999)

Stages in translated document production

Stage	Sub-process	Agent	Product
Writing ¹	Planning	Original author	
	Translating	Original author	
	Reviewing	Original author	Source text
Translation ²	Orientation	Translator	
	Drafting	Translator	Draft
	Revising	Reviser	Manuscript
Publication	Stylistic editing	Editor	
	Copyediting	Editor	
	Structural editing	Editor	
	Content editing	Editor	
	Publication	Publisher	Target text

¹adopted from Hayes et al. (1987)

²adopted from Jakobsen (1999)

Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- ▶ “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)

Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- ▶ “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
- ▶ “intermediate stages of translation, or how the final product evolves over time” → “explore the process of translation through a retrospective analysis of successive versions of the product” (Baker 1993: 247)

Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- ▶ “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
- ▶ “intermediate stages of translation, or how the final product evolves over time” → “explore the process of translation through a retrospective analysis of successive versions of the product” (Baker 1993: 247)
- ▶ “interim solutions” (Toury 1995: ch. 9)

Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- ▶ “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
- ▶ “intermediate stages of translation, or how the final product evolves over time” → “explore the process of translation through a retrospective analysis of successive versions of the product” (Baker 1993: 247)
- ▶ “interim solutions” (Toury 1995: ch. 9)
- ▶ “valuable [...] window into the working practice of a translator” (Munday 2013: 126)

Manuscript-based corpus research

Proposals in the literature

- ▶ “successive stages of individual attempts” (Hartmann 1981: 206)
- ▶ “intermediate stages of translation, or how the final product evolves over time” → “explore the process of translation through a retrospective analysis of successive versions of the product” (Baker 1993: 247)
- ▶ “interim solutions” (Toury 1995: ch. 9)
- ▶ “valuable [...] window into the working practice of a translator” (Munday 2013: 126)

↔ process-based research, revision studies

Product-based research

empirical strength: “authentic data attested in texts” (Kenny 2009)

↔ published sources

Product-based research

empirical strength: “authentic data attested in texts” (Kenny 2009)

↔ published sources

↗ neglects linguistic interventions made at editing stage

Product-based research

empirical strength: “authentic data attested in texts” (Kenny 2009)

↔ published sources

↗ neglects linguistic interventions made at editing stage

Main argument

Editors may have significant influence on translated language

↔ corpus studies should draw on manuscripts

Applications

Corpus studies of editing

- ▶ Utka (2004): “phases of translation corpus”
- ▶ UPF research on editing
 - ▶ in literary texts: Sinner (2012)
 - ▶ on sentence splitting: Bisiada (2014)
 - ▶ in French–Spanish translation: Andújar Moreno (Forthcoming)
 - ▶ on mediation universals: Bisiada (Forthcoming)

Applications

Corpus studies of editing

- ▶ Utka (2004): “phases of translation corpus”
- ▶ UPF research on editing
 - ▶ in literary texts: Sinner (2012)
 - ▶ on sentence splitting: Bisiada (2014)
 - ▶ in French–Spanish translation: Andújar Moreno (Forthcoming)
 - ▶ on mediation universals: Bisiada (Forthcoming)

Research on editing has so far focussed on

1. readability studies
2. “mediated discourse”

Research line: Editing and readability

“Strategy of anticipation” (Bisaiillon 2007)

Editors search for certain anticipated problems, e.g. “overlong sentences”, “irrelevant use of impersonal pronouns”

Research line: Editing and readability

“Strategy of anticipation” (Bisaillon 2007)

Editors search for certain anticipated problems, e.g. “overlong sentences”, “irrelevant use of impersonal pronouns”

Automatisms in copyediting (Bisaillon 2007; Robert 2014)

- ▶ minimise reflection time for grammar/syntax problems
- ▶ 50%–75% of recorded editing: immediate solutions

⇒ pursuing readability with little reflection for discourse matters?



Does editing improve readability?

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
- ▶ before and after peer review/editing process

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
- ▶ before and after peer review/editing process
- ▶ Gunning fog index of readability (cf. New York Times: 11; legal contract: 18)

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
- ▶ before and after peer review/editing process
- ▶ Gunning fog index of readability (cf. New York Times: 11; legal contract: 18)
- ▶ 17.16 before, 16.85 after editing

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
- ▶ before and after peer review/editing process
- ▶ Gunning fog index of readability (cf. New York Times: 11; legal contract: 18)
- ▶ 17.16 before, 16.85 after editing
- ▶ published texts longer by 2.6%

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
- ▶ before and after **peer review/editing process**
- ▶ Gunning fog index of readability (cf. New York Times: 11; legal contract: 18)
- ▶ **17.16** before, **16.85** after editing
- ▶ published texts longer by 2.6%

- ▶ does this reflect peer review or editing?

Does editing improve readability?

Editing in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Roberts et al. 1994)

- ▶ 101 original research manuscripts from 1992
 - ▶ before and after peer review/editing process
 - ▶ Gunning fog index of readability (cf. New York Times: 11; legal contract: 18)
 - ▶ 17.16 before, 16.85 after editing
 - ▶ published texts longer by 2.6%
 - ▶ does this reflect peer review or editing?
- No evidence in favour – more studies are needed!

Research line: Translating, editing...: → mediation?

“Constrained communication” (Chesterman 2004: 10f)

“communicating in a **non-native language** [...] or any form of communication that involves **relaying messages**, such as **reporting** discourse, even journalism” (emphasis mine)

Research line: Translating, editing...: → mediation?

“Constrained communication” (Chesterman 2004: 10f)

“communicating in a **non-native language** [...] or any form of communication that involves **relaying messages**, such as **reporting** discourse, even journalism” (emphasis mine)

“Mediated discourse” (Ulrych & Murphy 2008)

translation, criticism, editing... = rewriting (“mediated discourse”)

Research line: Translating, editing...: → mediation?

“Constrained communication” (Chesterman 2004: 10f)

“communicating in a **non-native language** [...] or any form of communication that involves **relaying messages**, such as **reporting** discourse, even journalism” (emphasis mine)

“Mediated discourse” (Ulrych & Murphy 2008)

translation, criticism, editing... = rewriting (“mediated discourse”)
 ↪ “processed, or rewritten, for particular audiences and thus mediated for a purpose”

Research line: Translating, editing...: → mediation?

“Constrained communication” (Chesterman 2004: 10f)

“communicating in a **non-native language** [...] or any form of communication that involves **relaying messages**, such as **reporting** discourse, even journalism” (emphasis mine)

“Mediated discourse” (Ulrych & Murphy 2008)

translation, criticism, editing... = rewriting (“mediated discourse”)

↔ “processed, or rewritten, for particular audiences and thus mediated for a purpose” → “*mediation universals*”

Research line: Translating, editing...: → mediation?

“Constrained communication” (Chesterman 2004: 10f)

“communicating in a **non-native language** [...] or any form of communication that involves **relaying messages**, such as **reporting** discourse, even journalism” (emphasis mine)

“Mediated discourse” (Ulrych & Murphy 2008)

translation, criticism, editing... = rewriting (“mediated discourse”)

↔ “processed, or rewritten, for particular audiences and thus mediated for a purpose” → “*mediation universals*”

↔ Which communication is not constrained/mediated?



Current study

Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process

- ▶ published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts

Current study

Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process

- ▶ published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts
- ↔ how reliable are they to study features of translated language?

Current study

Research assumptions

Several agents participate in the (holistic) translation process

- ▶ published translations may differ significantly from manuscripts

↪ how reliable are they to study features of translated language?

Three items of study

- ▶ sentence splitting (see Bisiada 2014)
- ▶ grammatical metaphor (nominalisations)
- ▶ passive constructions

ModevigTrad

ModevigTrad

Title Evidencialidad y epistemicidad en textos de géneros discursivos evaluativos. Análisis contrastivo y traducción (FFI2014-57313-P)

PI Montserrat González Condom

Genre Discourse genres that show a high degree of metaphorical language and modalisation

Funded by the Spanish
*Ministerio de Economía
y Competitividad*



Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
- ▶ Dates: 2006–2011

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
- ▶ Dates: 2006–2011
- ▶ Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
- ▶ Dates: 2006–2011
- ▶ Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)
 - ▶ Source texts (English) – 104,678 words

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
- ▶ Dates: 2006–2011
- ▶ Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)
 - ▶ Source texts (English) – 104,678 words
 - ▶ Manuscript translations (German) – 106,829 words

Corpus details

Corpus architecture

- ▶ Sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Harvard Business Manager*
- ▶ Genre: Business studies, approaches to management, opinion articles
- ▶ Dates: 2006–2011
- ▶ Tripartite corpus (315,955 words)
 - ▶ Source texts (English) – 104,678 words
 - ▶ Manuscript translations (German) – 106,829 words
 - ▶ Published translations (German) – 104,448 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.’]

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.’]

What do they look for?

“...formulieren [wir] Substantivierungen und Passivkonstruktionen um...”

[‘...we reword nominalisations and passive constructions...’]

Passive forms in English & German

English

- ▶ form of *to be*

German

- ▶ form of *werden* or *sein*
- ▶ 3 passive alternatives

impersonalisation *man*

modal passives *lassen* ('to let') + reflexive verb

modal infinitives *sein* + infinitive phrase

Passive alternatives

man

Diese Tür kann **man** nicht öffnen. – (**One** cannot open this door.)

Passive alternatives

man

Diese Tür kann **man** nicht öffnen. – (One cannot open this door.)

Modal passive

Der Text **liest sich** leicht. – (El texto **se lee** fácilmente.)

- ▶ ?The text reads easily.
- ▶ The bunkhouse **sleeps** ten. / The surface **cleans** easily.

Passive alternatives

man

Diese Tür kann **man** nicht öffnen. – (One cannot open this door.)

Modal passive

Der Text **liest sich** leicht. – (El texto **se lee** fácilmente.)

- ▶ ?The text reads easily.
- ▶ The bunkhouse **sleeps** ten. / The surface **cleans** easily.

Modal infinitive

Die Aufgabe **ist** bis 3 Uhr **zu lösen**. – (The task **is to be** solved by 3)

- ▶ **Hay que** resolver la tarea antes de las 3.
- ▶ ?“El futuro **es para ser** vivido, nada está preestablecido” —Luke

Example of editor's passivisation

During their initial training, **employees are given the freedom** to make judgment calls. (Text 9)

MANUSCRIPT:

*In den Einführungskursen
wird Mitarbeitern gestattet, nach eigenem Gutdünken
zu entscheiden.*

['In the introductory courses, employees are permitted to decide at their discretion.']

PUBLISHED VERSION:

*Schon in der Einarbeitungsphase **dürfen Mitarbeiter** selbstständig entscheiden.*

['As early as the initial training, employees may decide autonomously.']

Mean normalised frequency

ST form	Translator's action	Editor's action	Instances
passive	—	—	250
passive	activation	—	56
passive	activation	re-passivisation	1
passive	—	activation	47
active	passivisation	—	300
active	passivisation	re-activation	189
active	—	passivisation	34

Total

990



Findings

Passive constructions

- ▶ More utterances are passivised than activated

Findings

Passive constructions

- ▶ More utterances are passivised than activated
- ▶ translators and editors activate to a similar extent

Findings

Passive constructions

- ▶ More utterances are passivised than activated
- ▶ translators and editors activate to a similar extent
- ▶ translators passivise much more than editors

Findings

Passive constructions

- ▶ More utterances are passivised than activated
- ▶ translators and editors activate to a similar extent
- ▶ translators passivise much more than editors
- ▶ editors re-activate to a significant extent

Findings

Passive constructions

- ▶ More utterances are passivised than activated
 - ▶ translators and editors activate to a similar extent
 - ▶ translators passivise much more than editors
 - ▶ editors re-activate to a significant extent
- ⇒ translated German (in this genre) contains more passive voice than we conventionally see

Further research

Current questions

- ▶ how to treat nominal forms?

Further research

Current questions

- ▶ how to treat nominal forms?
- ▶ difference between present and past tense?
 - ↪ present utterances are more likely to be passivised

Further research

Current questions

- ▶ how to treat nominal forms?
- ▶ difference between present and past tense?
 - ↪ present utterances are more likely to be passivised
- ▶ semantic restriction of Agents acting as subjects to “animate and conscious participants” in German (Kunz 2010: 166; Teich 2003: 97)
 - ↪ does this encourage passive use?

Thank you for your attention!

Contact

- ▶ mario.bisiada@upf.edu
- ▶ [@MBisiada](#)

Download slides



ersitat
peu Fabra
Barcelona

References I



Andújar Moreno, G. (Forthcoming). “Traducción entregada frente a traducción publicada. Reflexiones sobre la normalización en traducción editorial a partir de un estudio de caso”. *Meta*.



Baker, M. (1993). “Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies. Implications and Applications”. In *Text and Technology. Honour of John Sinclair*. Ed. by M. Baker, G. Francis & E. Tognini-Bonelli. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 233–250. doi: [10.1075/z.64.15bak](https://doi.org/10.1075/z.64.15bak).



Bisaillon, J. (2007). “Professional Editing Strategies Used by Six Editors”. *Written Communication* 24.4, pp. 295–322. doi: [10.1177/0741088307305977](https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088307305977).



Bisiada, M. (2014). “Lösen Sie Schachtelsätze möglichst auf”. The Impact of Editorial Guidelines on Sentence Splitting in German Business Article Translations”. *Applied Linguistics Advance* online access. doi: [10.1093/app1in/amu035](https://doi.org/10.1093/app1in/amu035).



— (Forthcoming). “Universals of Editing and Translation”. In *Empirically Modelling Translation and Interpreting*. Ed. by I. S. Hansen-Schirra, S. Hofmann & B. Meyer. Berlin: Language Science Press.



Chesterman, A. (2004). “Hypotheses about Translation Universals”. In *Claims, Changes and Challenges in Translation Studies. Selected Contributions from the EST Congress, Copenhagen 2001*. Ed. by G. Hansen, K. Malmkjær & D. Gile. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 1–13. doi: [10.1075/bt1.50.02che](https://doi.org/10.1075/bt1.50.02che).



Hartmann, R. R. K. (1981). “Contrastive Textology and Translation”. In *Kontrastive Linguistik und Übersetzungswissenschaften*. Ed. by W. Kühlwein, G. Thome & W. Wilss. München: Fink, pp. 200–208.

References II



Hayes, J. R., L. Flower, K. A. Schriver, J. F. Stratman & L. Carey (1987). "Cognitive Processes in Revision". In *Reading, Writing, and Language Processing*. Vol. 2: *Advances in Applied Psycholinguistics*. Ed. by S. Rosenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 176–240.



Jakobsen, A. L. (1999). "Logging Target Text Production with Translog". In *Probing the Process in Translation. Methods and Results*. Ed. by G. Hansen. Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur, pp. 9–20.



Kenny, D. (2009). "Corpora". In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Ed. by M. Baker & G. Saldanha. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, pp. 59–62.



Kunz, K. A. (2010). *Variation in English and German Nominal Coreference. A Study of Political Essays*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang.



Munday, J. (2013). "The Role of Archival and Manuscript Research in the Investigation of Translator Decision-Making". *Target* 25.1, pp. 125–139. doi: [10.1075/target.25.1.10mun](https://doi.org/10.1075/target.25.1.10mun).



Robert, I. S. (2014). "Investigating the Problem-Solving Strategies of Revisers through Triangulation". *Translating and Interpreting Studies* 9.1, pp. 88–108. doi: [10.1075/tis.9.1.05rob](https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.9.1.05rob).



Roberts, J. C., R. H. Fletcher & S. W. Fletcher (1994). "Effects of Peer Review and Editing on the Readability of Articles Published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*". *Journal of the American Medical Association* 272.2, pp. 119–121. doi: [10.1001/jama.1994.03520020045012](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.1994.03520020045012).



References III



Sinner, C. (2012). "Fictional Orality in Romance Novels. Between Linguistic Reality and Editorial Requirements". In *The Translation of Fictive Dialogue*. Ed. by J. Brumme & A. Espunya. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 119–136.



Teich, E. (2003). *Cross-Linguistic Variation in System and Text*. Berlin: de Gruyter.



Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.



Ulrych, M. & A. Murphy (2008). "Descriptive Translation Studies and the Use of Corpora: Investigating Mediation Universals". In *Corpora for University Language Teachers*. Ed. by C. T. Torsello, K. Ackerley & E. Castello. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, pp. 141–166.



Utka, A. (2004). "Phases of Translation Corpus. Compilation and Analysis". *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 9.2, pp. 195–224. doi: [10.1075/ijc1.9.2.03utk](https://doi.org/10.1075/ijc1.9.2.03utk).

