

The effect of sentence splitting on cohesion in German business translations

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Structure

SENTENCE SPLITTING AND COHESION IN GERMAN TRANSLATIONS

Sentence-
splitting in
translation

Corpus details

Method

Findings

References

- 1 Sentence-splitting in translation
- 2 Corpus details
- 3 Method
- 4 Findings

What is sentence splitting?

- (1) 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
the functional-staffers deferred REFL often to-the

Fachvorgesetzten in der Konzernzentrale statt
higher-ups in the headquarters instead-of
*dem Leiter des eigenen Geschäftsbereichs. **Denn***
the leader of-their own division since
die Funktionsleiter in der Zentrale waren für
the functional-leaders in the head-office were for
Beförderungen zuständig. (HBM 9/08,58)
promotions responsible

Theoretical assumptions about sentence splitting

- ‘a translation strategy enforced by differences in structural conventions between the languages’¹

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²(see Fabricius-Hansen 1996, 1999; Ramm 2008; Solfeld 2008)

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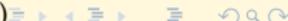
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 - ‘grammatical possibilities and peculiarities of German favour a more hierarchical sentence construction than is feasible in English’³.
- ↪ Translating *into* a high informational density language should require the opposite strategy to sentence splitting!

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Corpus architecture

Source: *Harvard Business Manager, Harvard Business Review*

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Size of the translation and comparable corpus

	English STs	TTs	CC	Total
1982-3	251,148	246,341	145,715	643,204
2008	258,589	260,261	88,312	607,162

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Size of pre-edited corpus

	2006–11
English Source texts	104,678
Pre-edited German translations	106,829
Published German translations	104,448
Total size	315,955

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

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 - ↳ Full stops in abbreviations (‘U.S.’) or enumerations (‘1., 2.’) were manually removed in advance.

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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

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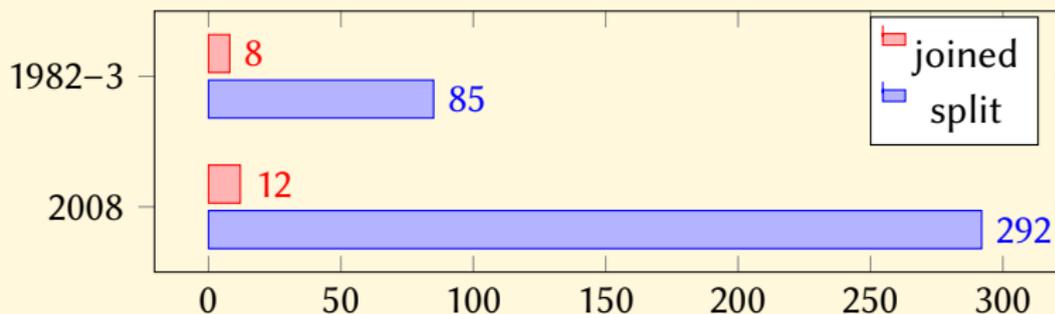
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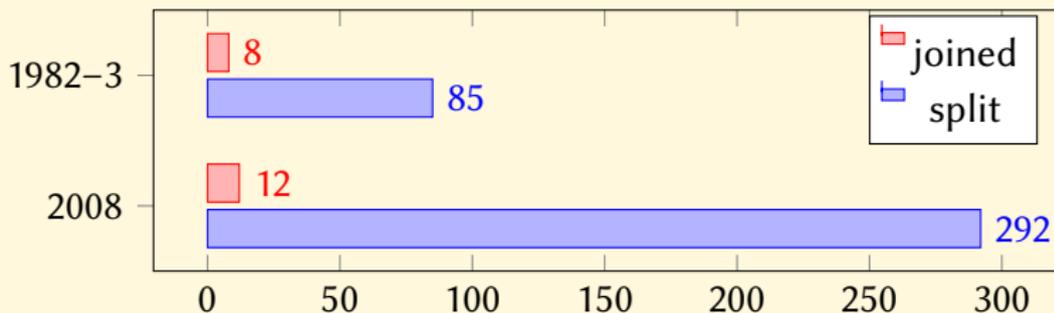
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Analysis: Translation and pre-edited corpora



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

Anaphoric reference—Relative pronoun

- (2) 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

- (3) 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

- (4) 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

- less often on the clause level by hypotactic or paratactic conjunctions or relative pronouns
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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!

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Thank you for your attention!

Read more:

Bisiada, Mario. 2014. “Lösen Sie Schachtelsätze möglichst auf”:
The impact of editorial guidelines on sentence splitting in
German business article translations’. *Journal of Applied
Linguistics*. Advance online access.

→ [doi:10.1093/applin/amu035](https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu035)

References



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— 1999. 'Information packaging and translation: aspects of translational sentence splitting (German–English/Norwegian)' in Doherty, Monika (ed.) *Sprachspezifische Aspekte der Informationsverteilung*. Akademie Verlag.

Fabricius-Hansen, Cathrine and Wiebke Ramm. 2008. 'Subordination' versus 'Coordination' in *Sentence and Text: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. John Benjamins.

Ramm, Wiebke. 2008. 'Upgrading of non-restrictive relative clauses in translation: a change in discourse structure?' in Fabricius-Hansen, Cathrine and Wiebke Ramm (eds.):

Solfjeld, Kåre. 2008. 'Sentence splitting—and strategies to preserve discourse structure in German–Norwegian translations' in Fabricius-Hansen, Cathrine and Wiebke Ramm (eds.):