

Translation or mediation features? An empirical study of verb-second coordination in German and Dutch

This paper aims to contribute to bridging the gap between research on translation-specific features in the field of corpus-based translation studies on the one hand and the foreign language acquisition research tradition based on learner corpora on the other. In particular, I examine whether and to what extent the features of explicitation and normalisation as well as their counterparts, implicitation and shining-through, which are considered to be translation specific, could be primarily the result of a mediation process that is common to different kinds of mediated language. In Becher's (2011, S. 18) definition, explicitation occurs when a target text is more explicit than the corresponding source text, i.e. when information is verbalised which the reader would have been able to derive without this verbalisation; implicitation, in contrast, occurs when a target text is less explicit than the corresponding source text. In Baker's (1996, S. 183) view, normalisation is observed when a translation tends to show linguistic patterns that are typical of the target language; if this happens excessively, the phenomenon is called over-normalisation. Conversely, shining-through, as proposed by Teich (2003, S. 207), occurs when the translation is more oriented towards the source language, i.e. when the source language 'shines through'. Kruger (2012) found almost no evidence for a mediation effect that is shared by translated and edited language in relation to the linguistic features investigated in her paper.

In my study, non-translated German texts written by Dutch-speaking learners at C2 level and, German texts translated from Dutch by Dutch-speaking learners at C2 level are compared as two different forms of language mediation; non-translated German texts written by native German speakers serve as a tertium comparationis. The comparison relates to coordinate constructions as in examples (1) to (5):

- (1) Gisteren ging **de jager** naar het bos **en** ving een haas.
(2) Gestern ging **der Jäger** in den Wald **und** fing einen Hasen.
'Yesterday went **the hunter** into the wood **and** caught a hare.'¹
(3) Gisteren ging **de jager** naar het bos **en** (-) ving **ij** een haas.
(4) *Gestern ging **der Jäger** in den Wald **und** (-) fing **er** einen Hasen.
'Yesterday went **the hunter** into the wood **and** (-) caught **he** a hare.'

¹ The English equivalent is not meant as a gloss but as a translation, although it retains the Dutch and/or German constituent order, which is ungrammatical in English.

- (5) Die Fliegeralarmsirenen hören **sie** **oder** (-) hören **sie** nicht.
 (NTNL-WM-ID 2649²)
 ‘The air raid warning sirens hear **they** **or** (-) hear **they** not.’

Examples (1) and (2) show a pattern in which the subject in red appears after the finite verb in the first clause (i.e. inversion) and is not repeated in the second one. Höhle (1983) coined the term SGF coordination for this pattern, which stands for subject gap in finite/frontal clauses. In the following, I will refer to this pattern as type 1. Type 1 alternates with another pattern that shows inversion in the first clause and a tacit sentence-initial constituent in the second, as in examples (3) to (5). I will refer to this pattern as type 3. As I have shown in Stuyckens (2014, S. 51–52), the distribution of types 1 and 3 constitutes one of the core differences between German and Dutch syntax: type 3 occurs in one quarter of the cases in Dutch but only in less than 5% of the cases in German. Accordingly, the post-verbal subject (PVS) pattern is more restricted in German. In this language, the sentence-initial constituent always seems to be valency dependent in syndetic coordination, as in example (5) while example (4) is impossible. In Dutch, the first constituent may be valency dependent but is mostly valency independent, as in example (3). In a direct comparison of the two types, type 3 is more explicit than type 1 in three respects. First, the second subject is explicit. Second, the sentence-initial constituent undoubtedly has scope over the second clause due to the post-verbal position of the second subject. Third, following Kehler’s (2002) classification of coherence relations between utterances, type 3 hides a possible cause-effect or contiguity coherence relation between the clauses in favour of the resemblance relation.

We expect non-translated and translated German learner language to show shining-through and explicitation in that type 3 occurs more often in learner language than in native German. If the features are mediation related, we expect them to appear both in the translated learner texts and in the non-translated ones. However, we expect them to appear more often in the translated texts than in the non-translated texts because learners are probably more tempted to maintain the structure of a given Dutch source construction of type 3 than to produce a type 3 construction without a visible Dutch source structure.

In relation to both non-translated German learner language and native German, type 3 is the least frequent construction in the typology (2%). It is an outlier in the learner language (18%), where it occurs about twenty times more frequently than in the native language (<1%). In this respect, non-translated learner language indeed shows shining-through and explicitation. The other main difference between both varieties is to be found in type 1. This type is the second most frequent construction (16%) and appears about six times less frequently in learner language (3%) than in native language (17%).

The relative frequency of type 3 hardly differs between non-translated (18%) and translated learner language (16%). As type 3 constructions in translated German learner language normally go back to the same Dutch source structure, i.e. in 28 out of 33 instances (85%),

² The code after the instances refers to the relevant corpus example: the letters NTNL (**n**on-**t**ranslated **n**ative language), NTLL (**n**on-**t**ranslated **l**earner language) and TLL (**t**ranslated **l**earner language) refer to the subcorpus. In the case of the NTNL subcorpus, the hyphen is followed by the initials of the author, e.g. WM stands for **W**alser, **M**artin, and the identification number (ID) of the example in the subcorpus concerned. In the case of an example from the TLL subcorpus, a number in square brackets is added to the usual code. This number refers to the Dutch source text, followed by the number of the German translation (T). Bibliographical details of selected corpus texts can be found at the end of this paper.

it can be concluded that, contrary to expectations, a visible original of type 3 does not facilitate the occurrence of this type in learner German. In this respect, shining-through and explicitation seem to be mediation related rather than translation specific. Type 1 is relatively rare in non-translated learner language (3%) and does not occur at all in the translated variety. To some extent, this is probably due to the fact that type 1 is not represented in the Dutch source structures.

It seems that normalisation appears when learners opt for type 1 although type 3 would be possible in native Dutch and therefore could have been incorrectly transferred to German. This is the case in not more than 7 out of 80 non-translated type 1 or 3 instances in all (8.75%). Hence, there seems to be a low mediation-related normalisation tendency in non-translated learner German. A direct comparison of type 1 and type 3 is not possible for the translated variety as this subcorpus does not contain any type 1 instances.

From a qualitative point of view, the second subject in type 3 structures with reference-identical subjects is, almost as a rule, a pronoun or another strongly referential nominal phrase, both in non-translated and translated learner German. Type 3 with reference-different subjects either allows for an expletive *es* in the initial position of the second clause or not. If it does so, the second clause is characterised by the avoidance of agent reference and is often a passive or passive-like construction. If it does not, the second subject exhibits a certain degree of reference avoidance in the form of genericity or weak referentiality.

We can draw the following three conclusions:

- First, shining-through and explicitation are mediation related with regard to the use of type 3 in German learner language. A visible Dutch source structure of type 3 does not facilitate the occurrence of this type in learner German.
- Second, considering the ratio between the instances in which learners use a type 1 construction in German, although the type 3 alternative would be possible in native Dutch, and bearing in mind the total number of type 1 and 3 constructions used, there seems to be a low mediation-related tendency of normalisation in learner German.
- Third, type 3 confirms its position as an outlier in German learner language. With reference-identical subjects, the second subject is strongly referential; with reference-different subjects, either the second clause allows for expletive *es* in its initial position and avoids agent reference, or its subject avoids reference in the form of genericity or weak referentiality.

Selected corpus references

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- [3] Hausaufgabe 10.2014: *Film Fest Gent 2013* (3.10.2013) (www.nl.universcience.be/artikels/film-fest-gent-2013).
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