Sentence-initial adversative connectives in Slovene-English translation of academic discourse: A corpus study

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Povzetek

Raziskave retorike akademskega diskurza so pokazale, da so medkulturne razlike med jeziki/kulturami precej velike, to pa pogosto predstavlja poseben izziv za prevajalce akademskih besedil, ki morajo te razlike poznati in se nato odločiti, ali naj sledijo izvirniku ali naj se prilagodijo konvencijam ciljnega jezika/kulture. V pričujočem prispevku je predstavljena študija medpovednih protivnih konektorjev. Študija se osredotoča na vprašanja, ali obstajajo medkulturne razlike pri rabi medpovednih protivnih konektorjev v slovenskem in angleškem akademskem pisanju, kako se te potencialne razlike odražajo pri prevodu akademskega besedila v angleščino in ali se prevedena angleška akademska besedila razlikujejo od primerljivih izvirnikov v angleščini. V ta namen je analiziran korpus znanstvenih člankov s področja geografije, ki je sestavljen iz podkorpusa izvirnih slovenskih člankov, podkorpusa njihovih prevodov v angleščino ter podkorpusa primerljivih angleških člankov. Rezultati pokažejo precejšnje razlike med podkorpusi tako v pogosti rabe kot v diskurznih funkcijah medpovednih protivnih konektorjev.

Ključne besede: medpovedni protivni konektorji, prevajanja akademskega diskurza, kontrastivno jezikoslovje, korpusna študija

1   INTRODUCTION

Research in the rhetoric of academic discourse has identified considerable intercultural differences in rhetorical conventions (cf. Williams 2006, Dahl 2004, Vassileva 2001, Mauranen 1993, etc.). Such conventions often present a particular challenge for translators of academic discourse who need to recognize the differences in conventions and decide whether to adhere to the source text or adapt the target text to the conventions of the target lingua-culture.

A number of studies examining intercultural rhetorical differences and their implications for translators (e.g., Hirci and Mikolič Južnič 2014, Mussachio and Palumbo 2010, Becher 2009, Altenberg 1998, etc.) have focused on elements in cohesive and/or discourse-organizing function, identifying a number of specific differences between lingua-cultures and subsequent issues arising in translation, but these studies have mostly focused on non-academic genres.

Sentence-initial adversative connectives have been recognized as a noteworthy cohesive device (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976; Giacalone Ramat and Mauri 2011) because of their frequent use, variety of forms and different discourse roles. It is therefore interesting that there have yet been no studies of the impact of intercultural rhetorical differences on the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in translations of academic discourse.

The present paper attempts to establish whether there are intercultural differences in the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in Slovene and English academic writing, to examine how these potential differences are dealt with in Slovene-English translation and to analyze whether the translated English texts differ from comparable English originals in terms of sentence-initial adversative connective use. For this purpose, the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives functioning as cohesive devices is examined in a 500,000-word corpus of geography research papers comprising original Slovene texts, their English translations and comparable original English texts.

2   CONNECTIVES AS A COHESIVE DEVICE

Successful use of cohesive devices is of utmost importance in text organization: connectives have long been recognized as an important class of cohesive resources (cf. conjunction in Halliday and Hasan 1976). Different models assume different definitions of connectives: Halliday and Hasan (1976) focus on intersentential links, while Gutwinski (1976) and Van Dijk (1979) include

both intrasentential and intersentential ties. Conjunctive cohesion is generally classified into four categories: additive, adversative, causal and temporal (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976; Schiffrin 2003).

Intercultural rhetorical research has shown that there are important differences between different languages in the use of connectives (e.g., Altenberg 1999, Ramm and Fabricius-Hansen 2005, Pit 2007). Since much research attention has been given to connectives in academic discourse, it is not surprising that various studies have also highlighted interdisciplinary differences in the use of connectives (e.g., Hyland and Tse 2004, Bondi 2004).

The issue of connectives in Slovene has been addressed from various perspectives among others by Gorjanc (1998), who focuses on the use of connectives in Slovene academic writing, Schlamberger Brezar (1998), whose study examines the role of connectives in discourse, Smolej (2004), whose research combines discourse analysis with grammatical analysis and Žele (2012) who explores connectives from a semantic and syntactic point of view. Several intercultural rhetorical studies have shown that there are considerable differences between the use of connectives in Slovene and other languages in various genres (cf. Schlamberger Brezar (2000) for differences between Slovene and French; Pisanski Peterlin (2010) for differences between Slovene and English in popular science discourse; Hirci and Mikolič Južnič (2014) for Slovene, English and Italian literary texts, Balažic Bulc and Gorjanc (2015) for Slovene and Croatian academic discourse).

2.1 Sentence-initial adversative connectives

Previous research into intercultural differences in the use intersentential and intrasentential *and* in popular science texts clearly identified pronounced differences between the English and Slovene texts (Pisanski Peterlin 2010). Furthermore, studies of the use of connectives in the writing of non-native speakers of English (cf. Granger and Tyson 1996), as well as contrastive studies (e.g., Altenberg 1998) and translation-based studies (e.g., Mussachio and Palumbo 2010) for various pairs of languages, also identify sentence-initial connectives as a cohesive device that merits particular attention in interlingual communication. It therefore seems that the use of intersentential connectives (or conjunction in the sense of Halliday and Hasan 1976) may be of particular interest in the context of Slovene-English rhetorical differences.

The present study thus focuses on the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in academic discourse. Adversative connectives, i.e., connectives expressing contrast, are especially interesting for cross-linguistic comparison be-

cause they show a high degree of "intra-linguistic variation" (Giacalone Ramat and Mauri 2011: 657), i.e., there tend to be a number of adversative connectives "partly overlapping in their functions" (Giacalone Ramat and Mauri 2011: 657) in a language.

While there have been a number of studies on the use of connectives in academic discourse (e.g., Hyland and Tse 2004, Bondi 2004), there have been no studies focusing on the pragmatic functions of sentence-initial adversative connectives in academic genres. Bell's (2007) analysis of the discourse functions of sentence-initial *but* in academic writing is the most thorough analysis of the pragmatics of this type of connective. Bell (2007) identifies three main functions of this adversative connective: marking off idea units by adding the final element in a list, shifting the topic domain and argument development. Although the use and function of the various adversative connectives is only "partially overlapping" (Giacalone Ramat and Mauri 2011: 657) and there are clearly syntactic and prosodic features characteristic of specific adversative connectives, Bell's (2007) three discourse functions of sentence-initial *but* seem to be general enough to be likely candidates for the main discourse functions of all sentence-initial adversative connectives.

Bell's (2007) model of the discourse functions of sentence-initial *but* is briefly outlined below:

a) **Adding the final element in a list.** By adding the final element in a list, an idea unit is marked off. The passage below is one of the examples provided by Bell (2007: 195) to illustrate this type of use:

    People cannot make use of a technique unless the technique really works, and that it works at least to the extent it is believed to work. This is the second criterion. **But** *there is one more thing to consider in a definition of usefulness.*

b) **Topic shift.** In some cases, the sentence-initial connective introduces a new topic. The text organizing function of the connective is particularly salient. Again, the passage below is one of the examples given by Bell (2007: 196):

    The second, I think more interesting, interpretation allows that Hegel escapes from a "specular" ideology, something we can "see through," but accuses him nevertheless of falling into a purely "linguistic" ideology, language pretending to be and do other than it is and does. **But** *before taking up de Man's charges, I shall run through Hegel's account.*

c)   **Argument development.** The previous argument is refined or cancelled. Bell (2007) observes that this is the most frequent use of sentence-initial *but* in his corpus. Once again, Bell's (2007: 196) example is given below to illustrate his point:

I am not suggesting that war equaled a pleasure trip. **But** *it did introduce many German men (and some women), willingly or not, to new experiences, cultures, landscapes, foods and customs.*

3   CORPUS AND PROCEDURE

The 500,000-word corpus comprises 90 geography research articles grouped into three subcorpora: original Slovene research articles (30 texts), their English translations (30 texts) and comparable English research articles (30 texts). All the texts were published between 2000 and 2006 in two peer-reviewed journals indexed in international databases. An overview of the size of the three subcorpora is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Size of subcorpora

	Slovene Originals	English Translations	English Originals
Number of words	130,000	150,000	200,000

First, electronic corpus analysis was used to identify all the instance of sentence-initial adversative conjunctions in the corpus; the analysis was carried out using WordSmith Tools 5.0 (Scott, 1996). For English, the search words/phrases were: *But, However, Yet, On the other hand, Nevertheless* and *In contrast;* for Slovene, the search words and phrases were *A, Ampak, Vendar, Toda, Pa, Po/Na drugi strani, V nasprotju* and *Nasprotno.* The frequencies were then normalized to 10,000 words to allow comparison.

Subsequently, sentence-initial adversative connectives in the Slovene originals and their matching English translations were compared to establish the degree of correspondence. Since the Slovene originals and their corresponding English translations had already been aligned at sentence level using DéjàVu (2007), the search for corresponding expressions was automatic; ParaConc (Barlow, 2003) was used for this purpose.

Finally, the concordances for the individual search words were examined in terms of their discourse function using Bell's (2007) model proposed for sentence initial *but* to establish potential differences in pragmatic functions of sentence-initial adversative connectives in the three subcorpora.

4   RESULTS

The results of the analysis are presented below in terms of the frequency of use of sentence-initial adversative connectives (4.1), shifts in translation involving these connectives (4.2) and the discourse functions (4.3).

4.1   Frequency of use

Table 2 below presents the results of the corpus analysis in terms of the raw frequency and the overall frequency of sentence-initial adversative connectives per 10,000 words for the three subcorpora.

Table 2: Sentence-initial adversative connectives per 10,000 words

	Slovene Originals	English Translations	English Originals
Total number	61	105	288
Per 10,000 words	4.7	7.0	14.4

4.2   Shifts in translation

The degree of correspondence in the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives between the Slovene originals and their English translations is presented in Table 3 below. For each subcorpus, the total number of sentence-initial adversative connectives is broken down into the number of matches (i.e., corresponding adversative connectives found in both the originals and the translations), and unique items occurring in one of the subcorpora only, i.e., omissions and additions. Omissions are defined as sentence-initial adversative connectives that only occur in the Slovene originals and are omitted in the English translations, while additions are defined as sentence-initial adversative connectives that only occur in the English translations and have no corresponding sentence-initial adversative connective in the source text, i.e., they are added

in translation. For each category, the ratio relative to the total number of items (percentage) is specified.

Table 3: Degree of correspondence between the Slovene originals and their translations

	Slovene Originals	English Translations
Matches	44 (72.1%)	44 (41.95%)
Omission / Additions	17 (27.9%)	61 (58.1%)
Total number	61 (100%)	105 (100%)

A more detailed examination of the sentence-initial adversative connectives omitted in translation shows that only four of them are full omissions where no substitute item is used to replace the connective from the original. In two other cases the order of clauses is reversed and an adversative connective (*but* and *however*) is used intrasententially. In all other cases a different type of sentence-initial connective (for instance *and* or *furthermore*) is used.

A more detailed examination of the sentence-initial adversative connectives added in translation reveals that the vast majority of additions (46) occur where there was no sentence-initial connective device used in the original. There are, however, nine instances which involve changes in the order of clauses: in those cases the original contained some sort of an intrasentential adversative (*pa*) or concessive (*čeprav*) conjunction. There are also six cases where a different type of sentence-initial connective device (*nadalje, kljub temu da*) is used in the original.

4.3   Discourse functions

An analysis of the discourse functions of the sentence-initial adversative connectives identified in the corpus reveals that the vast majority of them are used for argument development. Examples 1 and 2 below illustrate this type of use in the Slovene and English originals respectively:

(1)   *Pri proučevanju degradacije prsti z izbrano metodo smo naleteli na vrsto težav, ki se odražajo tudi v rezultatih. Metoda kot taka se je za proučevanje degradacije prsti izkazala kot uspešna, kar potrjuje njena široka in vedno pogostejša uporaba v svetu. **Vendar** potrebujemo za kvalitetno izvedbo tudi zelo kvalitetne, natančne in obsežne podatke. Teh v Sloveniji vsekakor primanjkuje ali pa so nedostopni. Posledice se odražajo v končnemu rezultatu, ki je sicer relevanten, a premalo konkreten in kvantitativno opredeljen.*

(2)   *Problems associated with conventional drainage methods. Theoretically, the negative impacts of precipitation should be regulated by the land use planning system, utilising methods such as building regulations and advice from the EA and other consultees.* **Yet**, *despite the existence of land use controls since 1947, England and Wales have been afflicted with what appears to be an increasing incidence of problems associated with the management of precipitation.*

The other two discourse functions were only found in four examples in the Slovene originals. An overview of the concordances shows that only *Na drugi strani* and *Po drugi strani* were used for discourse organization, i.e., to add a final point to a list and for topic shift. The two examples below (3-4) illustrate adding a final point and topic shift respectively in the Slovene originals.

(3)   *Pri vrednotenju rezultatov regionalnega razvoja mora biti glavni poudarek namenjen uspešnosti in učinkovitosti, saj sta oba indikatorja primerna za presek stanja na katerikoli stopnji izvajanih aktivnosti. Obenem dajeta koristno informacijo upravljavcem programa in njihovim ocenjevalcem pri oblikovanju čim boljših programskih odločitev (ibid.). Proučevanje učinkovitosti odpira vprašanja, kot sta: ali bi lahko isti rezultat dosegli z manj vložkov in ali bi z enako količino sredstev lahko dosegli več ciljev.* **Na drugi strani** *je proučevanje uspešnosti usmerjeno predvsem na spremljanje pričakovanih učinkov, manjši poudarek pa je namenjen morebitnim nepričakovanim pozitivnim ali pa negativnim učinkom (ibid.).*

(4)   *Če izhajamo iz predpostavke, da je geografija veda, ki preučuje tiste dejavnike, ki oblikujejo pokrajino, in se obenem zavedamo dejstva, da je najpomembnejši preoblikovalec pokrajine človek, lahko kaj hitro uvidimo pomen posameznih državnih politik. Te imajo pri iskanju vzročnih povezav in razlag za razmere v prostoru prav posebno mesto, ki pa ga geografija do sedaj ni dovolj upoštevala. Predstavljajo namreč okvir za človekove posege v prostor.* **Po drugi strani** *predstavlja prostorska politika le eno od zanimanj analize politik. Ta preučuje prostorsko politiko z vidika njenega izvajanja, torej kot proces sam po sebi, manj pa njene dejanske učinke in če že, ne v iskanju vzročne povezanosti z ostalimi prostorskimi elementi.*

The majority of the sentence-initial adversative connectives found in the English originals were also used in the function of argument development, but the two other functions were not as infrequent as in the Slovene originals. In addition, various forms of sentence-initial adversative connectives were used to add a final point and for topic shift, which is unlike the Slovene originals, where these two discourse functions were only realized through the two sentence-initial adversative connectives discussed above. Example 5 illustrates adding a final point, while example 6 illustrates topic shift in the English originals.

(5) *Researchers from the Stockholm Environment Institute-York (SEI-Y), with the Sociology Department at the University of York found that the public had meaningful knowledge about technical subjects (Yearley, Forrester and Bailey, 2001). Further, they found that the focus group, especially when moderated by an independent facilitator, held promise as a tool for generating policy-orientated dialogue around environmental issues (Forrester, 1999) and could provide a platform for non-experts to interact with professionals on a more equal footing.* **Nevertheless**, *the knowledge was largely created in a sphere outside of that within which policy actors and local authority scientists normally worked.*

(6) *Point distributions can be analysed in a number of ways; for example, to consider whether the pattern is clustered, random or regular.* **However**, *the present paper focuses on whether there is variation in the relative extent to which farms within the Scenic Areas and the buffer zones around them have diversified into the tourist accommodation market. In other words, it is a question of determining the level of uptake of this phenomenon within the farm populations of these areas.*

The discourse functions of the sentence-initial adversative connectives in the English translations that had corresponding equivalents in the source texts obviously matched those of the Slovene originals. However, an overview of the items added in translation shows that although the majority were used for argument development, as in example 7, there were also several instances of sentence-initial adversative connectives used to add the final point, as in example 8 or for shifting the topic, as in example 9. The corresponding originals are provided in examples 7a, 8a and 9a.

(7) *For each layer it can be presumed that the density within this layer does not change.* **However**, *if the layer was big enough and if it was likely that the density from the upper part of one layer differed from the lower part, two samples of this layer were taken.*

(7a) *Privzeli smo, da se gostota znotraj plasti ne spreminja. Če je plast zelo debela (več kot 40 m), lahko vzamemo več vzorcev in ugotovimo znotraj nje nove plasti.*

(8) *A benefit of the latter is the relatively high inflow into the city coffers, since income tax is one of the principal sources of financing for Slovenia's municipalities. A further advantage of jobs in public administration is their relative stability and security. As a strong employment center, Ljubljana has attracted workers from the entire country for a long time including from the marginal areas of Slovenia and generally employs the better-educated population.*

__However__, while the concentration of population reduces the per capita cost of public services, it also increases the pressure on the environment, which can lead to the occurrence of diseconomies or other negative effects resulting from such concentration.

(8a) *Slednje se ugodno kaže v relativno visokih prilivih v mestno blagajno, saj je dohodnina eden poglavitnih virov financiranja slovenskih občin. Naslednja prednost delovnih mest v javni upravi je tudi njihova relativna stabilnost in gotovost. Kot možno zaposlitveno središče je Ljubljana že dalj časa privabljala prebivalstvo iz celotne države tudi z obrobnih območij Slovenije, pri tem pa se v mestu zaposlujejo bolje izobraženi prebivalci. Nadalje se z zgoščevanjem prebivalstva zmanjšujejo stroški javnih storitev na prebivalca, povečujejo pa pritiski na okolje, kar lahko vodi v nastanek disekonomije, oz. negativnih učinkov, ki jih prinaša zgoščevanje prebivalstva.*

(9) *The advantage of the D-16 method is obvious; there are 16 directions instead of 8, and thus the computed trajectory is approximated to the actual fall-track. __However__, the method has a systematic weakness in skipping the surrounding area of cell S of window 3 × 3, thus we may ask ourselves whether these cells have higher height above the sea level than cell S.*

(9a) *Prednost metode D16 je jasna: namesto 8 imamo 16 smeri in s tem dosežemo, da se računska pot približa dejanski poti padanja. Metoda ima tudi sistemsko slabost, da preskoči okolico celice S okna 3 × 3, zato se moramo vprašati, ali nimajo mogoče te celice višje nadmorske višine kot celica S.*

5   DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the corpus analysis are discussed from the point of view of Slovene-English intercultural rhetoric (5.1), Slovene-to-English translation analysis (5.2) and the language of translations (5.3).

5.1   Slovene-English intercultural rhetoric

A comparison of the frequency of use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in Slovene and English academic writing reveals that the ratio is approximately 1:3. This means that while the original Slovene texts contain on average 4.7 instances of sentence-initial adversative connectives per 10,000 words, the comparable English originals contain on average 14.4. Furthermore, the

findings show that that the discourse functions of sentence-initial adversative connectives are more limited in Slovene than in English. In both sets of originals, argument development is the main discourse function of sentence-initial adversative connectives, yet in the English originals, there were also a number of instances of the two text-organizing functions, i.e., adding the final item to a list and topic shift. In the Slovene originals, instances of these two functions were very rare.

These findings stand in marked contrast to the results of intercultural rhetorical studies involving English and Romance languages, such as English and Italian (cf. Mussachio and Palumbo (2010: 3) for a brief summary of contrastive studies for this combination of languages) or English and French (for an overview of contrastive studies in this field, see Granger and Tyson 1996: 19), but very much in accordance with the claims of Becher et al. (2009) who observe in their study that sentence-initial concessive connectives are more common in English than in German. They suggest that one of the reasons for this is different textual norms, claiming that "while English (spoken and written) discourse may be characterized as interactional, dialogous and addressee-oriented, German discourse has been described as 'transactional', monologous and content-oriented" (Becher et al. 2009: 125). The findings of the present study are therefore very much consistent with the claims of a strong influence of the German intellectual tradition (cf. Pisanski Peterlin 2005: 311; 2006: 140).

5.2   Slovene-to-English translation analysis

The omissions and additions of sentence-initial adversative connectives identified in translation from Slovene into English suggest, in accordance with previous studies, that translation of connectives tends to involve a considerable number of translation shifts (cf. Altenberg 1999, Musacchio and Palumbo 2010). The translation analysis of the corpus used in the present study showed that there were more additions than omissions in translation: 27.9% of the instances of sentence-initial adversative connectives found in the Slovene source texts were omitted in translation, while 58.1% of the instances of sentence-initial adversative connectives found in translations had no corresponding equivalents in the Slovene source texts and were therefore additions. This suggests that there was an attempt to adapt the text to the conventions of the target culture, taking into account the intercultural rhetorical differences discussed in 5.1.

The fact that some of the additions were also used in the text-organizing function (adding the final item to a list and topic shift) furthermore reflects adaptation to the target culture conventions. This is very much in accordance with the

suggestions that translated academic texts need to adhere to the conventions of the target culture found in the literature (e.g., Siepmann 2006; Williams 2007).

5.3.   The language of translations

The results of the present study show that the translators attempted to adapt the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in the target text to the target lingua-cultural conventions in terms of frequency and discourse functions. However, the quantitative results show that the differences between the translated English texts and the comparable English originals in the frequency of use of such connectives are nevertheless quite pronounced. In the translated English texts, 7.0 sentence-initial adversative connectives were used on average per 10,000 words, while the comparable English originals contained twice as many instances of such connectives (14.4 per 10,000 words). This corroborates the findings of a number of studies showing that translated texts tend to differ from comparable originals in the target language in terms of the use of various rhetorical elements (e.g., possessive pronouns in original and translated Italian economic articles (Musacchio 2005), thematic items in original and translated Spanish medical research articles (Williams 2005), connectives in a bidirectional parallel German and English corpus (Becher (2011), causal connectives in a bidirectional parallel French and English corpus (Zufferey and Cartoni 2012), to name just few). In fact, corpus-based research in translation studies focusing on the characteristics of translated language has consistently shown that translated texts tend to exhibit very specific characteristics and that they can be regarded as a type of hybrid texts (see Mauranen (2004) for a detailed discussion of the topic).

6   CONCLUSION

The study presented in this paper aimed to examine whether there are intercultural differences in the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives in academic writing between Slovene and English: the results confirm that there are significant differences between the two lingua-cultures both in terms of frequency and discourse function. The study furthermore attempted to determine how these differences are dealt with in Slovene-English translation: the findings show that there is a considerable degree of omissions and additions of sentence-initial adversative connectives in translation, very likely reflecting the translators's attempt to adapt the text to the conventions of the rhetorical conventions of the target culture. Finally, the study focused on the question whether differences between the translated and the original English academic texts can be observed: the results confirm that there are in fact significant differences between the translated and the non-translated texts.

The findings of the study raise several interesting questions. First, to what extent are the results obtained limited to the discipline of geography? A follow-up study comprising translated academic texts from different disciplines would be needed to show whether the results can be generalized across different disciplines. Second, to what extent are the translators' decisions concerning shifts in translation deliberate and intentional? A discourse-based interview study would shed light on whether translators of academic discipline deliberately intervene in the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives to adapt the target text to the target lingua-culture. And finally, can similar intercultural differences in the use of sentence-initial adversative connectives be observed between English and other languages that have been influenced by the German intellectual tradition? To establish this, parallel studies for different pairs of languages focusing on sentence-initial adversative connectives would be necessary.

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