

Between source language constructions and target language expectations

An analysis of passive constructions in translated and non-translated Spanish

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This paper is situated within Cognitive Translation Studies (CTS). It follows Halverson's Gravitational Pull Hypothesis (2003, 2010, 2017, 2024), a framework that explains the translation process and its outcome by invoking the cognitive mechanisms of the bilingual mind. The paper adopts the cognitive, multi-method approach of the GPH to describe and compare the use of Spanish passive constructions in a multilingual comparable corpus of translated and non-translated texts. In doing so, it pushes the boundaries of the model by: (a) following an onomasiological rather than a semasiological approach; (b) focusing on constructions rather than lexical items; and (c) explicitly incorporating the aspect of translator socialisation into the hypothesis formulation, thereby taking into account the situatedness of translation. The results provide evidence in support of the GPH, as salience of a construction in the source or target language leads to its overrepresentation in the translated texts, and non-salience leads to its underrepresentation.

Keywords: translation, passive constructions, Gravitational Pull Hypothesis, overrepresentation, underrepresentation, onomasiological salience

1. Introduction

In the linguistic description of an event, the speaker chooses which perspective to adopt, which aspects to foreground, and which constructions to use. In Cognitive Linguistics terms, the speaker's construal (Langacker, 1987) of the event determines how they will communicate it linguistically. An essential factor of event construal is the relative importance attached to each participant (e.g., AGENT,

PATIENT, ACTION, or PROCESS), particularly whether the action is conceptualised from an active or a passive perspective.

The passive construal of events is addressed here from an interlingual and translational point of view. In English, the most prominent construction to express passiveness is undoubtedly the passive voice (“He was found guilty”), alongside less frequent structures such as middle sentences (“This book reads easily”). The other languages considered in the study (German and Spanish) offer a greater variety of constructions to convey a passive construal (cf. Section 5.2.). Given these differences in expressive choice, what will happen to passive constructions in translation? Will translators tend to preserve both meaning (content and construal) *and* form by choosing a structure similar to that of the source text? Or will they try to conform to target language (TL) conventions and use a construction similar in meaning but different in structure from that of the source text? Or might they even adopt a different form of construal, for example, an active perspective?

This paper is set in Cognitive Translation Studies and analyses passive constructions within the theoretical framework of the Gravitational Pull Hypothesis (GPH, Halverson, 2003, 2010, 2017, 2024). Within this context, our corpus-based study has a twofold aim. On a theoretical level, it pursues to apply the principles of the GPH to a category of constructions (passive constructions), thus testing its applicability from an onomasiological point of view. On a descriptive level, it aims to determine whether texts translated into Spanish differ from non-translated Spanish texts in their distribution of passive constructions. In order to reduce the potential impact of any particular source language (SL), two different languages were chosen (English and German), which exhibit a network of passive constructions that contrasts between them and with Spanish.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical background regarding passive constructions in translation, the GPH, and different types of cognitive salience. Section 3 applies the resulting principles and develops an operationalisation of the GPH in an onomasiological context. Section 4 explains the study’s methodology, which consists of two parts. First, passive constructions in the study’s TL (Spanish) and its two SLs (English and German) are analysed to determine their translational salience (Section 5). This forms the basis for Section 6, which analyses passive constructions in translated and non-translated Spanish in a multilingual translation corpus.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Passive constructions in translation

Cognitive Translation Studies (CTS) is a relatively new sub-discipline of Translation Studies that has grown and consolidated rapidly in terms of research methodology and scope over the last few decades (cf. Xiao & Muñoz Martín, 2020; Olalla-Soler et al., 2020). CTS encompasses a wide variety of methodological and theoretical approaches, some of which are explicitly based on Cognitive Linguistics and seek to apply cognitive-linguistic theoretical tools to translation (e.g., conceptual metaphor, frame semantics, conceptualisation, cf. Xiao, 2021, for an overview). For example, Rojo and Valenzuela (2013, p.285) argue that the notion of construction is helpful for translation theorists because it provides “a suitable point for linguistic and semantic equivalence to meet”. In Construction Grammar, “constructions” are defined as pairings of form and meaning, from the simplest (morphemes) to complex syntactic structures (Goldberg, 1995).

Passive constructions have been studied in numerous languages and language combinations and from various linguistic perspectives. For reasons of space, we will only mention five recent studies that are similar to ours in terms of methodology (corpus-based) and focus (translation) and whose findings have, each in their way, helped shape this paper’s research design.

Teich’s (2001) study analyses, among many other features, the frequency of passive constructions in English and German original texts and in EN-DE and DE-EN translations. The findings are that (a) the prototypical analytic passive (*be+PP* / *werden+PP*) is more frequent in English than in German (165 vs 79) – although the sum of analytic passive plus passive alternatives is almost the same in both languages (225 vs 229, 2001, p.176), (b) the frequency of the analytic passive is significantly higher in DE-EN translation than in the English original texts, which is interpreted as a sign of normalisation, and (c) the analytic passive is also more frequent in EN-DE translation than in German original texts, which is attributed to a shining-through of SL features since the analytic passive is less frequent in German than in English (2001, p.182).

Conceptually and methodologically, Teich’s study is a clear precursor to our own. However, the structural differences in the expression of passive construal are greater between the three languages we are analysing than between English and German alone, especially as far as our TL Spanish is concerned. Therefore, we need to focus on the category of Spanish passive constructions as a whole and the distribution of the constructions that make it up.

In an English-Chinese contrastive study, Xiao et al. (2006) find that passive constructions are much more frequent in English than in Chinese (almost ten

times more common, 2006, p.142), which, as we shall see, is similar to the difference between English and Spanish. Most interesting for our study, however, is a brief reference to data on English-Chinese translation, according to which “only about 20% of be passives are translated into Chinese using syntactically marked passive constructions [...]” (2006, p.142). Our study focuses on how such an “overload” of passive constructions in the source texts impacts the distribution of (marked or unmarked) constructions in the Spanish target texts.

Fredriksson’s (2016) book-length study of the passive in translation uses a bidirectional parallel corpus (a subset of the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus, ESPC) to analyse the network of passive constructions in English and Swedish. In this case, the methodology is very similar to ours, but the intention is quite different. Fredriksson aims to provide a contrastive description of passive and related constructions in both languages. The translation corpus is only a tool to draw conclusions about these languages, thus treating the translated texts as “normal” samples of a given language. Our focus is the opposite: We are interested in how the passive construal triggered by the source text (ST) is rendered in the Spanish target text (TT) and whether and how the constructions used to do so might differ from those in non-translated texts.

Kenny and Sathachai (2018) come one step closer to such a comparison in their analysis of passive constructions in a corpus of translated and non-translated Thai legal texts. First, they determine the distribution of translation solutions for the English passive, including several types of Thai passive constructions. Then, they compare the frequencies of those constructions that are specific to Thai in the translated and the non-translated texts. Their results show a substantial overrepresentation of Thai unique items, contrary to the prediction of Tirkkonen-Condit’s (2002) unique items hypothesis (UIH). The authors conclude that “this finding could be due to the source language ‘shining through’ [...] due to the overrepresentation of the passive voice in general in such translations” (2018, p.622). However, “[p]ursuing this idea would require a larger-scale study of passives of all kinds [...]”. This is precisely the aim of our study: to analyse the whole category of Spanish constructions expressing a passive construal.

Bisiada (2019) addresses an interesting additional point: the role of different actors in the translation process and their influence on the outcome. The study analyses passive constructions in a parallel corpus of English business articles, their German translation manuscripts, and the version published by a German business magazine. It finds that “translators render a large number of active constructions as passive in their translations”, whereas “editors intervene in more than one third of cases to change the constructions back into active voice” (Bisiada, 2019, p.17).

While it is unclear whether literary translations such as those in our corpus are as heavily edited as those in Bisiada's corpus, the point that, in an editorial process, the translation outcome is not solely the translator's responsibility is a very valid one. However, given the impossibility of a similar research design involving translators' manuscripts and published versions, we can only acknowledge this complexity. References to "the translation" or "the translator" are therefore simplifications and refer to "the outcome of the translation/editing process" and "the translator/editor".

2.2 Cognitive factors affecting translation

The Gravitational Pull Hypothesis (GPH, Halverson, 2003, 2010, 2017) is rooted in Cognitive Linguistics and aims to provide a cognitive basis for various translational effects, for example, the so-called universal features of translated language, originally proposed by Baker (1993). One of the most widely researched features is normalisation, i.e., the overuse of characteristic traits of the TL. Evidence for the normalisation hypothesis has been collected across several language combinations and for several linguistic structures. Conversely, Tirkkonen-Condit's *Unique Items Hypothesis* (2004) predicts the underrepresentation of those TL items that are specific to a particular language and have no direct counterpart in the SL. The GPH explains this apparent contradiction by appealing to the bilingual mind's cognitive mechanisms, suggesting that over- and underrepresentation of TL items are possible depending on the specific configuration of the bilingual semantic network (Halverson, 2010, p. 352).

Let us first consider the basic principles of the GPH. According to Halverson (2010, p. 356; 2017, p. 14), the outcome of a given translation situation is influenced by three cognitive factors:

- a. *Magnetism*: This factor refers to the cognitive salience of the TL item. If an item is salient, it is assumed that this will pull towards its overrepresentation in translated texts.
- b. *Gravitational pull*: If the SL equivalent of a TL item is salient (i.e., prototypical) in the SL category, this will also potentially lead to overrepresentation of the TL item in translations.
- c. *Patterns of connectivity* in the translator's semantic network: These reflect relationships between SL and TL items ("translation pairs") and can cause over- or underrepresentation depending on the strength of the connections.

Salience – of both TL and SL items – is thus essential to the approach and can be analysed using different types of data (cf. Halverson, 2017). The influence of connectivity patterns is more difficult to predict as it depends on various factors.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of measuring such cognitive effects, we are convinced that magnetism, gravitational pull, and connectivity are helpful concepts for anticipating trends in translated language. In Section 3, we will therefore attempt to operationalise the principles of the GPH for the purpose of analysing a category of constructions.

2.3 Semasiological vs onomasiological salience

Salience is a fundamental concept in Cognitive Linguistics, though it is neither easily nor uniformly defined (cf. Schmid & Günther, 2016; Boswijk & Coler, 2020). According to Langacker (2008, p.31), “[w]hat we experience as the prominence [used here interchangeably with salience] of conceived entities is reasonably ascribed to a high level of neural activation”. Activation, or being easily activated, is thus a central feature of a *salient* item. In Schmid’s words, “[s]ince the use of concepts that are already activated requires minimal cognitive effort, a high degree of cognitive salience correlates with ease of activation and little or no processing cost.” (2007, p.119).

Items can be salient in several ways (Langacker, 2008, p.66), each leading to a different type of salience (cf. Geeraerts, 2009, p.75). The most relevant distinction for our purposes is the one between semasiology – the analysis of an item and its different meanings – and onomasiology – the analysis of a concept (meaning) and the various ways of expressing it. In lexicology, semasiological salience is defined as the “relationship among the various semantic possibilities of a given lexical item” (Geeraerts, 2009, p.79).

Halverson (2017) uses semasiological salience in her analysis of the semantic network formed by the polysemous English *get* and its primary senses (onset of possession, inchoative, movement, etc.) and two Norwegian verbs that overlap semantically with several of these. This study takes the opposite view. Its starting point is meaning (the passive construal of an event), and it looks at how this meaning is expressed through different grammatical structures. It thus focuses on the onomasiological salience of constructions, i.e., it analyses a category of constructions and tries to establish which construction is preferred by language users, thus constituting the prototype.

Another critical and much-debated question is how salience can be measured (cf., for example, Arppe et al., 2010; Schmid, 2010). Following the logic that the frequent use of a unit enhances its entrenchment and that “the most entrenched and most readily activated unit [...] can then be recognised as the category prototype” (Langacker, 2008, p.226), frequency is considered an essential indicator of salience and is often used to measure it (cf. Schmid, 2007, p.125). This applies to corpus studies in general as well as to analyses carried out within the frame-

work of the GPH. For example, Hareide (2017) and Marco (2021) use frequency of occurrence in reference corpora to measure the salience of SL and TL items. Halverson (2017) considers several indicators: frequency in corpus and performance data (frequency of selection) and the order of selection in an elicitation task.

In our study, we are not only interested in the *overall* salience of a given construction – which might be measured by its frequency in a corpus – but in its salience in a particular situation. We want to find out the cognitively most prominent TL construction for a *translator* working with a *specific combination of SL and TL*. To emphasise this specificity, the object of our analysis will be called the *translational salience of a TL construction*.

3. Operationalisation: Adapting the GPH to analyse a category of constructions

Before formulating hypotheses for the quantitative corpus-based study, it is necessary to clarify how the theoretical construct of the GPH will be adapted to the aims of this study. Therefore, we will first look at how the three factors of the GPH will be implemented.

3.1 Magnetism: Onomasiological salience of the TL construction

Onomasiological salience is the preference for one construction over others in the same category. To assess the translational salience of individual constructions, it is therefore essential to look at all the members of the category and understand its structure. Like Halverson's semasiological salience, the onomasiological salience of a TL item is presumed to pull towards its overrepresentation in translated texts. Following Halverson's argumentation, a magnetism effect is only expected if one of the constructions can be considered prevalent (Halverson, 2003, p.222). Our approach assesses TL salience using qualitative and quantitative data encompassing three aspects: prominence, frequency and specificity.

- a. *Prominence* is understood as the relative position of a construction in the relevant literature. Thus, the first step of the analysis is qualitative, aiming to determine how scholars describe the category and its members. In order to evaluate this aspect, information is gathered from reference works (linguistic descriptions, grammar books) to establish a repertoire of constructions in the category and to assess their importance.
- b. The *frequency* of each construction is determined in a corpus (cf. 4.3.1 for details).

- c. *Specificity*: An item's position in the category contributes to its magnetism if there is a strong association between form and meaning. The form-meaning association is considered stronger (a) if the item in question is the only construction carrying a particular meaning (or if other structures are few and infrequent); and (b) if the item has only this one meaning function or if other meanings are marginal.

3.2 Gravitational pull: Salience of matching SL constructions

Even though our primary object of analysis is a TL construction, we must not overlook the influence of its trigger(s). If an SL construction is considerably more frequent than its counterpart in the TL, this can lead to a higher frequency in translated texts. This effect, the overabundance of specific constructions in translated texts due to frequency differences between SL and TL, is well known in Translation Studies and has been referred to as interference, shining-through (Teich, 2003) or, in an English-Spanish context, frequency anglicism (*anglicismo de frecuencia*, cf. Vázquez-Ayora, 1977).

As a first step, the structure of the SL category is established based on its members' prominence, frequency, and specificity. This allows us to ascertain whether the category contains a distinct prototype or whether there are several ways of expressing passive meaning. Following Halverson, the more asymmetric the SL category, the greater the expected pull towards overrepresenting the TL constructions, especially those formally similar to the most salient SL item.

As a second step, comparative frequencies are established between the SL and the TL category. This is done on two levels. First, given that any SL construction reflecting a passive construal could trigger a TL passive construction, we look at the category as a whole, i.e., the sum of all passive constructions. If the overall category is more frequent in the SL than in the TL, this might lead to an overrepresentation of the category in translated texts, especially of its most salient member. Second, individual constructions are analysed in SL and TL to identify formal, semantic, or constructional similarities that might cause a particular attraction between specific SL and TL items. If the SL partner of such a "translation pair" is more frequent than its TL equivalent, the latter is expected to be overrepresented in translated texts.

3.3 Connectivity

According to Halverson, connectivity refers to the connectivity patterns in the translator's semantic network, i.e., the relationships between "translation pairs" consisting of specific SL and TL items. Connectivity is the most difficult to opera-

tionalise of the three factors, as it can only be analysed indirectly due to its cognitive nature. However, when aiming at the prediction of translation effects, its role is essential because the gravitational pull of an SL item can only affect the target text via its connectivity to a TL item.

The most direct way to access these elusive relationships is to study actual translator behaviour, whether online – experimentally – or offline. For example, data from parallel corpora can provide clues as to how SL and TL structures are connected in translators' semantic networks, at least at a supra-individual level. Halverson proposes two indicators to measure the strength of the connection between an SL and a TL item in a parallel corpus: target concentration (the percentage of instances in which the SL item is rendered by the TL item) and, from the opposite perspective, source concentration (the percentage of all occurrences of the TL item that are translations of the SL item). However, as Vandevoorde (2020, p. 203) points out, such a method offers a *post-hoc* explanation rather than a prediction of translator behaviour. Therefore, for hypothesis formulation, we propose using two types of complementary qualitative information to identify connectivity patterns.

As a first resource, experimental data from a translation task carried out by professional translators will be analysed regarding the process and product of the translation when faced with passive constructions in the ST. The rationale is that translators will more easily access more salient options and use them more readily in their translations than less entrenched solutions.

Additionally, contrastive and translation-oriented publications are analysed for scholarly opinion on established translation pairs. This procedure reflects that translators are neither monolingual nor naive language users. Translator trainees are usually exposed to such publications during their training, either directly or through their teachers. The do's and don'ts transmitted during training can either reinforce or weaken the salience of a construction, for example, when warned against using a specific structure as a translation solution. Through repetition, professional practice will reinforce such connections in the translator's schematic networks. Muñoz Martín (2013) calls this the translator's socialisation: "Some translation choices have been clearly imposed upon translators to different degrees, so that many traits of their communicative behaviour may be seen as the consequence of the very process of socialisation they underwent." (2013, p. 85–86).

Furthermore, using these resources adds specificity regarding language combination, as different language pairs may have different translation norms.

4. Materials and methods

The methodology of our study is inspired by previous works applying and testing the GPH, such as Halverson (2017), Hareide (2017a, 2017b), Oster (2019), and Marco (2019, 2021).¹ This section lays the methodological groundwork by defining passive construal and passive construction for our purposes (4.1.), describing the corpus and experimental data (4.2.), and the research procedures (4.3.).

4.1 Object of study: Passive construal and passive constructions

To differentiate between active and passive construal, there must first be an event including the following participants: an ACTION, somebody or something performing the action (the AGENT), and somebody or something affected by it (the PATIENT).² Furthermore, these participants must fulfil the following criteria:

- a. The AGENT is defocused. Nonetheless, it remains present either explicitly (*She was bitten by a dog*) or implicitly (*Rome wasn't built in a day*), cf. Langacker (2008, p.384).
- b. The ACTION is profiled. It is the centre of the event and necessarily present. We do not consider events including a PROCESS rather than an ACTION because these do not include an AGENT. Thus, neither active nor passive construal would be applicable in such a case.
- c. The PATIENT, at least in the prototypical case, is also foregrounded (*The bridge was built*). However, in some of the languages considered in our study, AGENT defocusing can occur even if the ACTION does not require a PATIENT (for example, with intransitive verbs like *dancing* or *working*), as in *Es wurde getanzt* – *Se bailaba* (*It was being danced, i.e., People were dancing).

Following grammatical tradition and reflecting the denomination of its most prototypical construction, we have named the category *passive constructions* (which is short for constructions expressing passive construal). However, it is essential to note that the definition is based on the meaning features described above. Any construction meeting the semantic criteria will be included. For example, the “subtle differences” Langacker describes between passive, impersonal, and middle constructions (2008, p.384–386) are more granular than our approach, in which all three qualify as constructions expressing passive construal.

1. Two recent studies based on the GPH use a slightly different methodology. Data-Bukowska (2021) relies on a parallel corpus design instead of a comparable one. Lefer and De Sutter (2022) add a multifactorial research design to their study of concatenated nouns in different modes of interlingual mediation.

2. Or theme, in Langacker's terms (2008, p.383).

Furthermore, like Shibatani (1985), we understand passive constructions as a category with a prototype structure in which some members are more central than others, and the boundaries are not always clear-cut. The decision to include a construction in the category can thus be somewhat arbitrary. The criteria for this decision are ultimately intended to grasp the essence of passive construal while also providing a common core for the three languages. This means considering their structural differences and striking a balance between different traditions of grammatical description.

4.2 Data

Two complementary types of data (corpus and experimental) were employed. Both sources were carefully designed to provide information on the chosen text type in the same language combinations: literary (narrative) translation from English and German into Spanish.

4.2.1 Corpus data

The corpus data used in this study comes from COVALT, a multilingual, parallel and comparable corpus compiled at Universitat Jaume I. The parallel corpus module (PAR_ES) consists of narrative texts originally written in English and German and their translations into Spanish. The comparable corpus (COMP_ES) module allows the comparison of the Spanish translations (EN-ES (TT)) and DE-ES (TT) with Spanish original literary works (ES). Table 1 lists the corpus sections relevant to this study.³

Table 1. Relevant components of the COVALT corpus and their size

Covalt corpus		
Module	Component	Size (words)
PAR_ES	EN-ES (ST)	1,131,061
	EN-ES (TT)	1,122,299
	DE-ES (ST)	400,209
	DE-ES (TT)	433,952
COMP_ES	ES	4,170,178

3. For more information on the corpus and its compilation, cf. Molés-Cases and Oster (2019). Access for research purposes can be requested through COVALT's website [<http://www.covalt.uji.es>].

4.2.2 Experimental data

For the translation task, ten professional literary translators (5 for EN-ES and 5 for DE-ES) were provided with several fragments in their SL containing descriptions of events including passive construal.⁴ The design of the translation task involved the use of screen recording (OBS), which allows the analysis not only of the definitive translation solutions but also the tracking of changes and modifications added during the translation process.

4.3 Procedure

Two sets of research questions have been formulated to achieve our objectives, each leading to a distinct research phase.

4.3.1 Research Phase I. The establishment of the translational salience of Spanish passive constructions

Research questions:

- Which constructions are used in each language to convey a passive construal of an event, and which are the most salient?
- Which of the TL constructions are most salient for Spanish translators?

To answer these questions, we first identify those constructions in the relevant literature of the three languages that meet our definition of passive construal. Then, according to our operationalisation, the salience of the TL constructions (Section 5.1.) and the matching SL constructions (5.2.1 and 5.2.2) are determined, as well as their comparative frequencies (5.2.3) and their connectivity in translators' networks (5.3).

As the operationalisation has already been explained in the previous section, we will only go into more detail on how the construction frequency is determined. For this purpose, the English and German ST components of COVALT, EN-ES (ST) and DE-ES (ST), as well as the Spanish comparable module (ES), are searched using specific CQP queries.⁵ Based on each construction's absolute fre-

4. More details about the experimental methodology can be found in Marco (2024) and Oster and Navarro (2024). The tasks used in the experiment can be found in Appendix 1a [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974475>] (DE-ES) [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974475>] and Appendix 1b [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974518>] (EN-ES) [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974518>].

5. Querying a corpus for constructions is not as straightforward as searching for lexical items. See Appendix 2 [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974624>] for the search strings [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974624>]. These can be pretty complex and produce a certain amount of noise

quency (AF), two types of relative frequency are calculated. The first is the normalised frequency per one million words (NF pmw), which allows data from corpora of different sizes to be compared. The second is the category-internal frequency, called relative frequency (RF) following Schmid (2010), i.e., the frequency of a construction in relation to the total number of all realisations of the same meaning. This makes it possible to compare the distribution of constructions in a category independently of its overall size (cf. Section 6.2.).

4.3.2 Research Phase II: Quantitative corpus study

Research questions:

- What, if any, are the differences between translated Spanish and non-translated Spanish in terms of the use and frequency distribution of passive constructions?
- Can the GPH predict such tendencies?

Based on the translational salience of the Spanish passive constructions determined in the previous phase, hypotheses are formulated according to the principles of the GPH regarding their over- or underrepresentation in translated Spanish (Section 6.1.). At this point, Phase I has already provided the frequency data for each Spanish passive construction in *original* Spanish texts. Identical searches are now carried out in the *translated* modules of COVALT (EN-ES (TT) and DE-ES (TT)). Both sets of results are compared in Section 6.2.

5. Translational salience of passive constructions

5.1 Onomasiological salience of TL passive constructions

In Spanish, several constructions can express a passive construal. Table 2 gives an overview and examples together with their frequency in the COVALT corpus.⁶ The last two constructions (the impersonal *uno/una* and the impersonal use of the 2nd person in the singular) are much less prominent and extremely rare in

(false positives), especially when a structure has multiple meanings (e.g., not all strings that include *be+PP* are passives). Therefore, results have to be checked manually to eliminate false positives.

6. See Appendix 3 [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974662>] for full frequency tables [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974662>]. Excel files containing the query results for each language or language combination can be found here [<https://zenodo.org/records/10973606>].

the corpus. The salience analysis is therefore restricted to the first three: *ser+PP*, *se*-constructions⁷ and *3rd p. pl.*

Table 2. Spanish passive constructions and their frequency in COVALT

Construction	Example	NF (pmw)	RF
Periphrastic passive (<i>ser+PP</i>)	<i>Las llamas fueron sofocadas.</i> → The flames were extinguished.	537.4	20.2%
Se-constructions	a. <i>Se alquilan habitaciones.</i> → Rooms rented.	926.7	34.8%
a. Reflexive passive	b. <i>Se le castigó por su mal comportamiento.</i> → He was punished for his bad behaviour.		
b. Impersonal reflexive	c. <i>Este libro se lee bien.</i> → This book reads well.		
c. Mediopassive			
Impersonal active (3rd p. pl.)	<i>Llaman a la puerta.</i> → (Someone) is knocking at the door.	1,096.2	41.2%
Impersonal <i>uno/una</i>	<i>Uno también tiene su corazoncito.</i> → One has a little heart, too.	36.4	1.4%
Impersonal 2nd p. sg.	<i>Nunca sabes lo que tienes hasta que lo pierdes.</i> → You never know what you’ve got until you lose it.	62.3	2.3%
		2,659.1	

As explained in Section 2, the onomasiological salience of TL items is measured in terms of their prominence, frequency, and specificity (the degree of association between form and meaning). Even if such an assessment of salience is difficult to quantify and must remain to some extent subjective, in order to base this assessment as far as possible on rational criteria, we have assigned each factor a score from 1 to 5 points (cf. Table 3) according to the following rationale:

- a. Prominence. Aspects considered:
 - Is the construction mentioned in all reference works or only in those that attempt to be exhaustive?
 - Is it mentioned in a prominent place?
 - Is it described as “the most important” or in similar terms?
 - Is its use encouraged or discouraged?

7. The classification of individual constructions is necessarily guided by practical considerations concerning the feasibility of the corpus analysis. For example, the Spanish reflexive passive and impersonal reflexive, treated separately in the literature, are grouped into one type (Spanish *se*-constructions). They are formally so similar that a manual analysis of every instance would be needed to tease them apart in a corpus search.

- b. Frequency
 - Five points are assigned to the most common construction.
 - Other constructions are scored in proportion to their frequency.
- c. Specificity:
 - Is the passive the only meaning of the construction?
 - If not, is it its most prominent meaning?
 - Is this construction the only one that expresses a passive meaning?

Table 3. Salience assessment of TL passive constructions

	Periphrastic passive <i>ser+PP</i>	<i>se</i> -constructions	Impersonal active 3rd p. pl.
Prominence	2	5	1
Frequency	3	4	5
Specificity	4	2	1
	9/15	11/15	7/15

Concerning *prominence*, we find that reference works stress that the Spanish language prefers active over passive constructions and that the periphrastic passive is only one of several possibilities among those constructions that express a passive construal. Many handbooks even discourage its excessive use, often attributed to the influence of English (*anglicismo de frecuencia*, cf. Vázquez-Ayora, 1977). Instead, the structure that is generally considered to be the most prominent is the reflexive passive (*se + V*) (e.g., Cartagena & Gauger, 1989, p.418, echoing Gili Gaya, 1961). According to the *Real Academia Española* (2010, p.784–785), the reflexive passive is more common than the periphrastic passive in written and spoken Spanish. Other constructions (3rd p. pl., *uno/una*, 2nd p. sg.) receive much less attention in the literature.

In terms of *frequency*, the 3rd p. pl. is the most frequent construction, followed by *se*-constructions. The periphrastic passive with *ser+PP* is considerably less frequent.

Regarding *specificity*, only the meaning of *ser+PP* is exclusively passive. In the case of *se+V*, passiveness is one of its primary meanings. However, there are other essential usages such as reflexive constructions (*Se viste* → He/she dresses himself/herself) or reciprocal constructions (*Se saludan* → They greet each other). Finally, the most salient meaning of the 3rd person plural is not the passive but the “normal” active meaning.

5.2 Salience of formally equivalent SL constructions

5.2.1 Structure of the passive category in English

The passive voice is very prominent in English and, as reflected in reference works (e.g., Leech & Svartvik, 1975), the prototypical form in the category of passive constructions is *be+PP*. Despite this predominant position, several less prominent forms can be included (cf. Table 4). For example, in more informal, mainly spoken settings, we find *to get+PP*, which may lend emotional weight to the action (*I was hit* vs *I got hit*). More formally, the middle voice (*This book reads easily*) also meets our definition of passive constructions (ACTION and PATIENT are focused, and the AGENT is defocused).

Table 4. English passive constructions and their frequency in COVALT

Construction	Example	NF (pmw)	RF
<i>be+PP</i>	<i>My wallet has been stolen.</i>	4,585.9	95.6%
<i>get+PP</i>	<i>She got fired last week.</i>	25.6	0.5%
Middle voice	<i>His novels sell well.</i>	0.0	0.0%
<i>One</i>	<i>One does not speak unless one knows.</i>	46.9	1.0%
Generic <i>you</i>	<i>You only live once.</i>	136.9	2.9%
		4,796.2	

Other minor constructions are, similarly to Spanish, the impersonal *one* and the 2nd p. sg. (*generic you*). Another possible parallel to Spanish is the third person impersonal (*they+V*), which is sometimes considered a passive-equivalent construction in English (cf. Siewierska’s (2010) diachronic study on source constructions for the passive). However, this use is restricted to corporate and vague agents, whereas the use with specific agents, which “provides a stepping stone to a passive reanalysis” (Siewierska, 2010, p. 45) and is highly acceptable in Spanish, is at best marginal in English (Siewierska, 2010, p. 43). Therefore, following most reference works, we do not consider it a passive construction in English.

The data from the COVALT corpus confirm an extremely asymmetric category of passive constructions in English due to the predominance of *be+PP* (95.6%). Other constructions are marginal or, like the middle voice, do not appear.

5.2.2 Structure of the passive category in German

The category of the German passive is very complex, and there is no unanimity among grammarians as to its extent or its members. All classifications include several core members that clearly fit our definition of passive construction. In addition, other constructions combine a passive meaning with other semantic components such as obligation or possibility. Table 5 is based on Drosdowski et al. (1984), Engel (1988), Cartagena and Gauger (1989) and Balzer (1999).

Table 5. German passive constructions and their frequency in COVALT

	Construction	Example	NF (pmw)	RF
Bare passive	Passive (werden+PP)	<i>Das Buch wurde verfilmt.</i> → The book was made into a film. <i>Es wird geklatscht.</i> → People are clapping [*It is clapped].	1,301.8	37.67%
	Impersonal active (man)	<i>Man denkt heute anders darüber.</i> → People think differently about it nowadays.	1,894.0	54.81%
	bekommen+PP	<i>Die Firma bekam defekte Ware geliefert.</i> → The company was delivered faulty goods.	5.0	0.14%
	es+V	<i>Es klingelt an der Tür.</i> → Someone is ringing the doorbell.	5.0	0.07%
	S+V+refl. pron.+adj (middle voice)	<i>Das Auto fährt sich gut.</i> → The car drives well.	0.0	0.00%
Passive + add. meaning	<i>sich lassen+INF</i>	<i>Es läßt sich ertragen.</i> → It can be endured.	107.4	3.11%
	<i>gehören+PP</i>	<i>Der Ofen gehört gereinigt.</i> → The oven needs to be cleaned.	2.5	0.07%
	<i>sein/ bleiben+zu+INF</i>	<i>Das war ja zu erwarten.</i> → That was to be expected.	134.9	3.90%
	<i>Gerundivum</i>	<i>der zu erwartende Wetterumschwung</i> → the change in the weather that is to be expected	5.0	0.14%
			3,455.7	

It should be noted that, to comply with the criteria for *passiveness* set out in 4.1, it has been necessary to disregard several constructions that appear in German reference works. The most important of these is the so-called stative passive (*Zustandspassiv*, *sein+PP*), which does not meet the criterion of centrality of the ACTION since the focus of its construal is shifted to the RESULT of the ACTION.

We can conclude that the German passive category is more balanced and is not characterised by a single prototype but by two predominant constructions. On the one hand, *werden+PP* is the most prominent construction in grammar books and is very frequent in the corpus (37.67%). Conversely, *man* is even more frequent in the corpus (54.81%) but less prominent in reference works.

5.2.3 Comparative frequencies

Looking at the total frequency of passive constructions in narrative texts from the three languages (Table 6), Spanish is clearly the least inclined to use passive construal (2,659.1). Moreover, there are considerable differences between the SLs. German is closer to Spanish (3,455.7 pmw, i.e., approximately 30% more), whereas English uses about 80% more passive constructions than Spanish (a total of 4,796.2).

Table 6. Comparative frequencies of English, German and Spanish passive constructions

Language	All passive constructions	Analytic passive
	NF (pmw)	(<i>ser/werden/be+PP</i>) NF (pmw)
English	4,796.2	4,585.9
German	3,455.7	1,301.8
Spanish	2,659.1	537.4

When comparing individual SL and TL constructions that are similar in form and meaning and thus potential triggers for literal translation, the most obvious candidate is the analytic passive. Table 6 shows that the differences are even more noticeable in this case. The English *be+PP* is almost ten times as frequent (4,585.9 pmw) as the Spanish *ser+PP* (537.4 pmw), while German is again in between but closer to Spanish.

Summarising the data on the comparative frequency and category structure as presented in Sections 5.1, 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, it can be said that the analytic passive in English and German is more salient than the Spanish *ser+PP*. This is particularly pronounced in the EN-ES combination due to the highly asymmetric English passive category and the much higher frequency of *be+PP*. The difference is less marked in DE-ES because the frequency differences between German and Spanish are not as large, and the German category of passive constructions does not have a clear prototype.

5.3 Connectivity

In order to identify potential translation pairs and to formulate hypotheses about their entrenchment, two types of information are used (cf. Section 3.3): empirical data from a translation task performed by professional translators and information extracted from bilingual reference works and translation manuals.

Table 7. Translation solutions in the translation tasks

Type of construction	EN-ES (TT)	DE-ES (TT)
A. Periphrastic passive	6.7%	4.0%
B1. <i>se</i> -constructions	20.0%	20.0%
B2. Impersonal active (3rd p. pl.)	20.0%	26.0%
C. Impersonal constructions	–	2.0%
D. Stative passive	3.3%	12.0%
E. Agentive constructions	46.7%	34.0%
F. Non-agentive constructions	3.3%	–
G. Omission	–	2.0%

The results of the translation task⁸ (cf. Table 7) show that many translation solutions do not contain a passive construal at all but an agentive construction (46.7% in EN-ES and 34.0% in DE-ES). Also, passive-equivalent constructions (*se*-constructions and 3rd p. pl.) are used much more frequently than the periphrastic passive, which appears even less frequently than in the Spanish non-translated texts (6.7% in EN-ES and 4.0% in DE-ES). This idea is further supported by the analysis of the translation process (i.e., the changes made by the translators to their text, cf. Table 8). Only three out of ten translators (one EN-ES and two DE-ES) changed one or more of their solutions for SL passive constructions, which could be interpreted as a sign of the entrenchment of these solutions. Moreover, the changes made could be summarised as a search for more active and more concise expressions, as the following examples show:⁹

8. The percentages express the share of each type of solution in the total number of passive constructions to be translated, e.g., 4% of the German passive constructions in the task were translated by a Spanish *ser*+PP. The classification of translation solutions is part of ongoing work (Oster & Navarro-Ferrando in preparation).

9. Appendix 4 [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974684>] contains the complete analysis of the translation task [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974684>].

Table 8. Examples of modified translation solutions

ST segment	First attempt	Final solution
She was awakened by a shock...	la despertaron con un sobresalto (B2, 3rd p. pl.)	la despertó una sacudida (E, agentive) [A shaking woke her up]
ich werde erinnert an meinen Wert [I am reminded of my worth]	se me recuerda mi valor (B1, <i>se</i> -construction)	me recuerdas mi valor (E, agentive) [You remind me of my worth]

The empirical results are supported by the evidence from reference works. Contrastive studies of our language combinations (e.g., Lavid et al., 2010; Valero Garcés, 2012; Hill et al., 2014; Piñero and García, 2012 for EN-ES, and Cartagena and Gauger, 1989 for DE-ES) stress that the Spanish periphrastic passive is only one of several possibilities and that the Spanish language prefers active constructions. Translator-oriented publications, especially translation handbooks (e.g., Rossell Ibern, 1996; López Guix & Minett Wilkinson, 2014; Piñero & García, 2002) therefore recommend the use of alternative forms, primarily the reflexive passive (i.e., a *se*-construction). The periphrastic passive is only recommended for exceptional clarity or rhythmic effect (García Yebra, 1997, p.348). Rossell Ibern (1996, p.100) goes even further, stating that the best solution is often to abandon the passive perspective altogether. The effect of such recommendations on translation students and instructors is confirmed in a survey-based study by Echevarría and González-Fernández (2019), which finds a strong association of the Spanish passive (*ser+PP*) with a negative value and with the idea of anglicism.

The combined evidence thus shows that agentive constructions are the preferred option, and that no particularly powerful connectivity could be established between the English and German analytic passive and any of the Spanish passive constructions. In any case, the connection to the passive-equivalent constructions seems stronger than to *ser+PP*.

6. Quantitative corpus study: Passive constructions in translated and non-translated Spanish

6.1 Hypotheses

The conclusions about the translational salience of the three most frequent Spanish passive constructions lead to the following hypotheses regarding their use in

Spanish translated texts. In all cases, the null hypothesis is that there is no difference in frequency between translated and non-translated texts.

Hypothesis A. The construction *ser+PP* will be overrepresented

This prediction is based on factor 2 of the GPH (salience of matching SL constructions). Section 5.2. has shown that *be+PP* is undoubtedly the most salient English passive construction and that *werden+PP* is one of the two salient structures in German. Furthermore, passive constructions as a whole and the formally equivalent analytic passive constructions are more frequent in English and German than in Spanish. Taken together, this suggests a gravitational pull towards *ser+PP*. However, there is no magnetism effect since the construction is not salient in Spanish. Given the differences in category structure and frequency between the SLs, it is further hypothesised that the effect will be more substantial in translations from English than in those from German.

Hypothesis B. *Se*-constructions will be overrepresented

This outcome is predicted based on factor 1 of the GPH (magnetism of TL items). The reflexive passive was found to be the most salient passive construction in Spanish (cf. Section 5.1.), its magnetism thus presumably leading to overuse in translated texts.

Hypothesis C. The impersonal active (3rd p. pl.) will be underrepresented

There are two bases for this hypothesis: firstly, this Spanish construction does not have an immediate formal trigger in the SLs (absence of gravitational pull and connectivity); secondly, despite the high frequency of the impersonal active in the ES component of COVALT, it was noted in Section 5.1. that it is actually the least salient Spanish construction when considering all the indicators. This leads to an absence of magnetism.

6.2 Results and discussion

Table 9 shows the distribution of passive constructions in Spanish original texts compared to texts translated from English and German into Spanish.

It shows the absolute frequency (AF) and the normalised frequency per one million words (NF pmw). For the sake of completeness, it includes all Spanish passive constructions, even the two minor constructions *uno/una* and the 2nd p. sg. However, due to their low frequency, the analysis focuses exclusively on the three main constructions.

Table 9. Frequency of passive constructions in ES vs EN-ES and DE-ES

Passive construction	ES		EN-ES (TT)		DE-ES (TT)	
	AF	NF pmw	AF	NF pmw	AF	NF pmw
<i>ser+PP</i>	2,241	537.4	869	774.3	165	380.2
<i>se-constructions</i>	3,865	926.7	1,473	1,312.8	494	1,136.2
<i>3rd p. pl.</i>	4,571	1,096.2	754	671.7	228	526.5
<i>uno/una</i>	152	36.4	36	32.1	23	53.0
<i>2nd p. sg.</i>	260	62.3	58	51.9	15	34.0
Total	11,089	2,659.1	3,190	2,842.8	925	2,129.9

The significance of the frequency differences was calculated using loglikelihood (LL, Table 10).¹⁰ For EN-ES, all three hypotheses were confirmed, i.e., overrepresentation of *ser+PP* and *se-constructions* and underrepresentation of the 3rd p. pl. All differences are significant, and the effect size (Bayes factor) is very large.

Table 10. Loglikelihood of differences in normalised frequencies

Passive construction	ES vs EN-ES (TT)			ES vs DE-ES (TT)		
	over / under-use	LL	Bayes factor	over / under-use	LL	Bayes factor
Hyp. A: <i>ser+PP</i>	+	78.90	63.41	–	20.34	5.00
Hyp. B: <i>se-constructions</i>	+	122.19	106.71	+	17.56	3.22
Hyp. C: 3rd p. pl.	–	173.95	158.47	–	20.34	5.00

In DE-ES, hypotheses B and C are confirmed, with the 3rd p. pl. being underrepresented with a very large effect size and *se-constructions* being significantly overrepresented but only with a small effect size (cf. Table 11). However, contrary to our expectations, not only is hypothesis A not confirmed for DE-ES, but *ser+PP* is significantly underrepresented with a moderate effect size.

It should be noted, however, that there are considerable differences in the number of passive constructions pmw in the three subcorpora (cf. Table 9). While

10. Significance and effect size (Bayes factor) were calculated with the SigEff.xlsx spreadsheet, which can be downloaded from <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>. According to this, the critical value of LL for $p < 0.05$ is 3.84 and effect size thresholds are formulated as follows: 0–2: not worth more than a bare mention; 2–6: positive evidence against H_0 ; 6–10: strong evidence against H_0 ; >10: very strong evidence against H_0 .

ES has a total of 2,659.3 passive constructions, in EN-ES translations, there are 11% more (2,842.8), thus following the general trend of overrepresentation of passive construal. In DE-ES translations, however, the number of passive constructions is 18% lower than in Spanish originals (2,175.7 pmw). As shown in Section 5.2.3., this is not due to a lower frequency of passive constructions in German source texts.

In order to avoid overestimating possible tendencies towards overrepresentation in EN-ES (due to the higher number of fragments containing a passive construal) or underrepresentation in DE-ES (due to the lower number of fragments), relative (category-internal) frequencies, as defined in Section 4.3.1., are also calculated (Table 11). This allows us to look at the data from a different angle, as the relative frequency does not focus on how often each construction occurs but on the proportion by which each construction is chosen to express the passive construal of an event.

Table 11. Relative frequencies of passive constructions in ES vs EN-ES and DE-ES

Passive construction	Relative frequency		
	ES	EN-ES (TT)	DE-ES (TT)
<i>ser+PP</i>	20.2%	27.2%	17.9%
<i>se</i> -constructions	34.9%	46.2%	53.3%
<i>3rd p. pl.</i>	41.2%	23.6%	24.7%
<i>uno</i>	1.4%	1.1%	2.5%
<i>2nd p. sg.</i>	2.3%	1.8%	1.6%

Table 12. Significance of differences in relative frequencies

Passive construction	ES/EN-ES (TT)			ES/DE-ES (TT)		
	χ^2	p-value	phi*	χ^2	p-value	phi
Hyp. A: <i>ser+PP</i>	98.1187	< 0.0001	0.18	3.2019	0.0736	0.06
Hyp. B: <i>se</i> -constructions	178.5088	< 0.0001	0.24	138.514	< 0.0001	0.39
Hyp. C: <i>3rd p. pl.</i>	406.2048	< 0.0001	0.36	86.2617	< 0.0001	0.30

* A value of $\phi = 0.1$ is considered to be a small effect, 0.3 medium, and 0.5 large (cf. <https://www.statology.org/effect-size-chi-square/>).

As the comparison of Tables 11 and 12 shows, there is only one minor difference between the statistical results of the normalised frequencies pmw and the category-internal frequencies: the underrepresentation of *ser+PP* in DE-ES (TT) is not confirmed by the comparison of the category-internal frequencies. Apart

from this difference, the remaining results are consistent and can be summarised as follows.

Hypotheses B and C are fully confirmed for both language combinations. *Se*-constructions are significantly more frequent in texts translated from English and German than in original Spanish texts; the *3rd p. pl.* is significantly underrepresented. In the case of hypothesis A, the results must be differentiated according to SL. The overrepresentation of *ser+PP* is confirmed unequivocally for translations from English. More unexpectedly, *ser+PP* is not overrepresented in DE-ES translations. Two aspects may be relevant to the interpretation of this result.

First, a closer look at the salience and connectivity data suggests the structure of the SL category as a possible explanation for this result. As in the other language combination, a gravitational pull was expected in DE-ES since the German *werden+PP* is more frequent than the Spanish *ser+PP*. However, its salience in the category of German passive constructions is not nearly as distinct as that of its English counterpart, which may result in a weaker gravitational pull that is insufficient to outweigh other factors. Moreover, there is evidence that the frequent *man*-construction in German often triggers the Spanish *se*-construction (cf. Oster and Navarro-Ferrando, 2024). This connectivity might explain the pronounced overuse of the latter in DE-ES translations and contribute to the lack of overrepresentation of *ser+PP*.

Second, translation is a professional and social activity, and translators have been taught – directly or indirectly – to follow certain norms: which structures to avoid and which to use instead. This may have impacted our study particularly because passive constructions are a recurring topic in contrastive studies and translation manuals. The ubiquitous warnings against the overuse of *ser+PP* in translation (cf. Rossell Ibern (1996) in Section 5.3.) may have been more influential than was anticipated in our hypothesis formulation. Of course, these warnings also affect EN-ES translators, as is confirmed by their preference for agentive constructions (cf. Table 7). In fact, when comparing the number of English *be+PP* in the original texts and the number of *ser+PP* in the Spanish translations (4,585.9 vs 774.3, cf. Tables 6 and 9), it becomes clear that EN-ES translators also avoid this construction, proportionally even more than DE-ES translators (in 83% of cases in EN-ES vs 71% in DE-ES). However, the sheer frequency of the English analytical passive creates a powerful gravitational pull towards its Spanish counterpart, which outweighs all other factors.

7. Conclusions

This paper set out to achieve two objectives: to compare the distribution of passive constructions in translated and non-translated Spanish literary texts and to test the applicability of Halverson's Gravitational Pull Hypothesis to a category of constructions. In order to capture the effects of such an onomasiological perspective – as opposed to the semasiological approach in Halverson 2017 – an adaptation of the three factors of the GPH has been proposed. Specific indicators have been defined for each factor, resulting in an operationalisation of the *translational salience of a TL construction in a given language combination*. We argue that, for this particular purpose, salience cannot be measured by frequency alone. The approach, therefore, involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses of corpus and experimental data.

Based on the exemplary analysis of the translational salience of the main Spanish passive constructions (Section 5), three hypotheses were formulated regarding their frequency in Spanish translated literary texts: overrepresentation of *ser+PP* due to gravitational pull of SL structures (A), overrepresentation of *se*-constructions owing to the magnetism of the TL structure (B), and underrepresentation of the impersonal active (3rd p. pl.) due to a lack of salience in the TL category of passive constructions (C).

Our analysis of COVALT as a comparable corpus (translated vs non-translated Spanish) provides additional corpus-based evidence for the validity of the GPH. Hypotheses B and C were confirmed for both language combinations. In contrast, evidence for hypothesis A was found in EN-ES but not in DE-ES. This was attributed to (a) weaker connectivity due to the complex structure of the German category of passive constructions and (b) translator socialisation, including insistent warnings against the overuse of *ser+PP*. Further studies on other items for which translation norms are less explicit would help assess more precisely the extent to which translator socialisation impacts the cognitive salience of TL elements.

Furthermore, our results not only confirm the hypotheses arising from the analysis of translational salience but also reveal that tendencies specific to each language combination may go beyond these general predictions and involve a particular link or attraction between certain SL and TL items. Therefore, further analyses are needed to complete the study of the translation of passive constructions and to delve deeper into the tendencies identified here. To this end, and as the next step in our more extensive research project, we have used the parallel, sentence-aligned module of the COVALT corpus to explore the specific connectivity patterns linking SL and TL constructions in translation and to provide an in-depth analysis of translator strategies (Oster and Navarro-Ferrando, 2024).

As has become clear, passive constructions are diverse and complex and lend themselves at best to semi-automatic analysis with considerable manual intervention. Analysing them in a large, multilingual corpus forces the researcher to concentrate on some aspects while leaving others for future investigation. In this case, we have focused on passive constructions in two language combinations and considered only one differentiating aspect: translated vs non-translated texts. However, other factors may influence an author's or translator's decision. Through the qualitative analyses carried out for the different phases of this study, several potential additional factors have emerged but have not yet been systematically analysed. Some of these are intuitive, but others would have been more difficult to predict. We would therefore like to conclude by listing those that seem most promising for further research:

On a macro level:

- Literary subgenre (e.g., adventure, historical, romance).
- Author or translator preferences.

On a micro level:

- The type of agent in the ST (explicit vs. implicit, individual vs. generic).
- Semantic prosody. A striking number of the verbs used with the construction *ser+PP* in the corpus of non-translated Spanish have a negative, often violent connotation (as can be seen in Appendix 5 [<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10974699>], similar to what Xiao et al. (2006) call an inflictive meaning and which, according to these authors, is much less the case with the English *be+PP* than with its Chinese counterparts. Thus, the content of the ST verb (i.e., a negative, neutral or positive connotation) could also influence the translator's decision.

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