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BA Thesis Report:
Petr Louda
“English translation counterparts of the German pronoun *man*”

The thesis discusses the English translation of the German pronoun „man“, a grammatical feature that expresses a general human agent, which has no identical counterpart in English. With the use of two translation corpora, including political speeches and literary prose, it was found that „man“ is most frequently translated as passive voice in English. Other frequent translations included the use of pronouns, such as „we“ and „they“. The thesis is generally well-organized and the methods are appropriate for the research questions.

The introduction is well written and covers all relevant aspects of the topic. The point Malamud (2012) was making about semantic plurality is particularly relevant („man grüßte einander...“) and could have been explored in more detail. In fact, it is becoming more common to use „man“ in a semantic plural, for instance „Man kann wieder ausgehen“ or „Jetzt arbeitet man wieder“. Your corpus texts may date from different decades and changes in meaning may be reflected in the translations.

The sexist connotation (presumably to „der Mann“) has only emerged recently. The use of „frau“ is gradually becoming more common, and there seem to be differences in German varieties. In Austrian German, „frau“ is encountered more commonly, but rarely by itself: it is generally combined with „man“. For instance: „Wenn man/ frau das machen will...“, „das sagt man/ frau jetzt so“. In spoken German, it

can surface as „man oder frau“. This gender issue could have been discussed a little more in depth. What does Matěna say about it? As an aside, the „man“ also appears in „jederman“, and here, „jederfrau“ has also been gaining relevance.

Regarding the methods of the study, a few confounding factors may skew your results. Two literary works were translated by the same translator, as you point out. Idiosyncratic variation in „man“ translations cannot be excluded. In addition, you analyze two works by one author (Kafka), so you are essentially comparing two authors rather than three books. The context of the translations is not mentioned. I assume that the speeches were translated ad hoc; if so, this is a very different process as compared to careful, time-consuming literary translations. This fact could have a crucial influence on how „man“ is translated. The quick ‚default option‘ for simultaneous translations could be to use the passive voice. Your results show that English pronouns were mainly used in the literary texts, which could reflect a more carefully crafted translation.

Readers would appreciate the inclusion of some figures that show the overall distribution of your data, possibly comparing the two data sets.

Minor comments:

How did you select the 40 “man” instances from the FIC? Was it the first 40 of each novel?

There are a few formatting errors/ inconsistencies and typing mistakes, e.g.

- p. 16:

“ungrammatical (in German) (Dušková,2012,p.396).” → consider using [...]

- p. 22: “fait accopmpli”

References:

- Inconsistencies in journal abbreviations, e.g. *J Comp German Linguistics*
- Auwera, et al. (2012): it is not common to provide ResearchGate links in reference lists. Cite the DOI of the article or use the regular journal citation format (issue, volume, page numbers).

Questions for the defence:

1. You are comparing political speeches and literary prose in their use and translations of “man”. What would you predict for spontaneous speech – how would “man” be translated in TV shows, for instance? What findings would you expect in such a study?
2. Given that there are differences in the use of “man” across German varieties, would you expect translation differences according to certain English varieties of the translators?
3. What can you say about the Czech counterpart of “man” and the translation of German “man” into Czech?

The thesis is well-organized, investigates relevant research questions, and presents interesting findings. As I have indicated above, I believe that there are some areas in which the thesis could be strengthened. The main objectives of a B. A. work have been fulfilled. I suggest the thesis to be accepted with a grade of *v ýborn ě*.

Eva Maria Luef, PhD

