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# Syntactic Differences between European Parliament Interpreted and Translated English*

**Yinyin Wu****

*Differences between spoken and written modes condition the way in which information is packaged syntactically. This study aims to examine if syntactic differences between speech and writing (non-mediated discourse) can be seen in interpretation and translation (mediated discourse). Two comparable corpora of interpreted and translated English (18,480 and 19,881 words, respectively) in the context of European Parliament plenary debates were compiled for analysis. Results showed that, similar to non-mediated spoken and written discourse, mediated spoken and written discourse exhibits different information packaging arrangements. The passive and it-extraposition are significantly associated with translation. The passive allows heavy nominal groups to serve as clause subjects, helping to achieve impersonality and cohesion. It-extraposition allows subtle commentary to be made on the information placed in the extraposed clause. On the other hand, the existential there and clefts are more associated with interpretation as the two constructions package information in smaller chunks, easing interpreters' production effort and listeners' processing effort.*

**Keywords: Corpus-based approach, intermodal corpora, information structure, simultaneous interpreting, translation**

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** National Taiwan University, Assistant Professor

# 1. Introduction

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) involves comprehending the source speech while concurrently rendering the message in the target language. The time pressure and cognitive complexity involved in SI have made it an object of investigation in experimental settings, which allow researchers to examine the effects of independent variables on dependent variables, such as interpreting direction on interpreters' strategy use (Chang and Schallert 2007), or syntactic complexity and delivery speed on interpreters' performance (Meuleman and Besien 2009). With technological advancements such as automatic speech recognition, corpus-based interpreting studies have gained momentum and have given insights into the various manifestations of interpreted language in naturalistic conditions (Kajzer-Wietrznya et al. 2022; Sergio and Falbo 2012). Corpora comprising transcripts of SI outputs from authentic interpreting settings have revealed linguistic patterns such as n-grams for interpreter training purposes (e.g., Aston 2018). Parallel corpora of source speeches and SI outputs have allowed the examination of source-target text differences, or shifts, which shed light on interpreters' reformulation strategies (Ma and Cheung 2020), interpreters' explicitating styles (Gumul and Bartłomiejczyk 2022), and interpreting norms (Wang 2012).

From a discourse perspective, SI represents mediated spoken discourse and has been examined in contrast with spoken originals (non-mediated spoken discourse) and/or with translation (mediated written discourse) (e.g., Bernardini et al. 2016; Dayter 2018; Ferraresi et al. 2018; Przybyl et al. 2022; Sandrelli and Bendazzoli 2005). These corpus studies on intermodal differences mainly examined lexical properties such as lexical variety (as indicated by type-token ratio or list head coverage) and lexical density (Bernardini et al. 2016; Dayter 2018; Ferraresi et al. 2018; Przybyl et al. 2022; Sandrelli and Bendazzoli 2005), core vocabulary coverage (Bernardini et al. 2016; Ferraresi et al. 2018;), Parts-of-Speech distribution (Dayter 2018; Przybyl et al. 2022), and mean token length (Przybyl et al. 2022). Results of these lexical analyses showed that interpreted language is generally more simplified than spoken originals (Bernardini et al. 2016; Dayter 2018; Ferraresi et

al. 2018; Przybyl et al. 2022; Sandrelli and Bendazzoli 2005) and translation (Bernardini et al. 2016; Przybyl et al. 2022; Ferraresi et al. 2018). On the other hand, syntactic comparison from the intermodal perspective has received less attention. The only syntactic-related measure examined in the above-cited studies on intermodal differences is mean sentence length. Consistent with the results of lexical analyses, sentences in interpreted language are shorter than those in spoken originals and translation (Bernardini et al. 2016).

Syntactic features of SI in contrast with translation warrant further exploration as the choice of syntactic structures reflects the way information is packaged. In academic research discourse, it has been found that English native speaker scientists are able to manipulate syntactic structures in response to the different contextual requirements entailed in spoken and written modes (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001), whereas non-native speaker scientists, albeit proficient in English and use correct grammar in speaking and writing, may not be sensitive enough to such mode differences and fail to adapt syntactic structures that facilitate processing in real time for the audience, thus compromising clarity and rhetorical persuasiveness in their oral outputs (Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005).

The different information packaging arrangements between spoken and written modes can be approached from the linguistic notions of thematic and information structures (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001; Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005). This study aims to examine if the different information packaging arrangements between spoken and written modes found in non-mediated discourse (i.e., academic speech and writing) can be seen in mediated discourse (i.e., interpretation and translation).

## 2. Thematic and Information Structures

In the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the flow of information can be explained by thematic and information structures. Thematic structure gives the clause its character as a message, which can be divided into Theme and Rheme,

whereas information structure involves the division of what is said into units of information and imposes the functions of Given and New (Fries 1995, 2002; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

Theme provides a framework that can be used to interpret the remainder (the Rheme) of the clause (Fries 2002). It indicates to the receiver that it is used as the "point of departure" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 58) for the clause as message. Generally speaking, the Theme in English often comes at the beginning of a clause and is presented as Given information, which usually contains recoverable elements or presuming reference, whereas the Rheme contains the New information, or the newsworthy part of the clause that the speaker/writer wants the hearer/reader to attend to or to remember (Fries 2002; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

This progression from Theme/Given to Rheme/New where the important information is located at the end of the clause is referred to as *end-focus* (Fries 1992). The gradual rise in information load is compatible with the notion of "communicative dynamism," where the message progresses from low to high information value (Downing and Locke 2006: 240), or with the notion of "information principle," which is the normal, unmarked information structure that "simplifies both the planning of the speaker and the decoding of the hearer" (Biber et al. 1999: 896). The principle of *end-focus* overlaps with the principle of *end-weight* as grammatically complex constructions, which typically carry new information, tend to be placed towards the end of the clause, easing the receiver's comprehension processing effort (Biber et al. 1999; Fries 1992).

While the unmarked syntactic arrangements are often rendered in English by an SVO structure where the grammatical subject provides the thematic anchorage and the verb complex and object constitute the Rheme/New of the clause (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001), English employs various syntactic resources such as the passive voice, extraposition, the existential sentence, and clefting to shift an element to be focused either to the beginning or the end of the clause, the two important positions for communicative effect (Downing and Locke 2006). Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001) argued that while these syntactic resources are available at all times, their use depends on the choice of the

speaker/writer, the mode (spoken or written), and communicative context. They collected nine oral presentations delivered by English native speakers at a physics international conference (a corpus of 19,502 words) and their corresponding articles published in the conference proceedings (19,475 words) and compared the two corpora in terms of the following five specialized syntactic structures: the passive, *it*-extraposition, existential *there*, clefts, and inversion. It was found that these five constructions are strongly mode-dependent: the passive and *it*-extraposition are more strongly associated with the written mode, whereas existential *there*, clefts, and inversion are more typical of the spoken mode. In their subsequent study, Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005) added two more corpora: nine oral presentations delivered by non-native speakers at a physics international conference (a corpus of 15,358 words) and their corresponding proceeding articles (20,265 words). With native speakers' spoken and written corpora serving as the baseline, it was found that in oral presentations, non-native speaker presenters continue to rely on structures characteristic of written articles, i.e., they overuse passive constructions and *it*-extraposition more suitable for academic writing and underuse clefts and inversion that help break down information into smaller and easier-to-process chunks.

The present study aims to build upon the studies of Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001) and Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005) by examining syntactic differences between interpreted and translated English with the purpose of describing how information is conveyed to hearers as opposed to readers. This study aims to answer the following two questions:

1. Are there quantitative differences between interpreted and translated English in terms of the following five specialized constructions: the passive, *it*-extraposition, existential *there*, clefts, and inversion?
2. What are the qualitative differences between the two modes in terms of the five constructions?

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. The Interpreted and Translated English Corpora

The interpreted English corpus in this study is from a larger corpus called European Parliament Interpretation Corpus (EPIC), which is a trilingual (English < > Spanish < > Italian) corpus of European Parliament (EP) speeches and their corresponding simultaneous interpretations delivered at the plenary sessions held in February 2004 (Russo et al. 2005). This study focuses on 35 interpreted speeches from Spanish (18 speeches) or Italian (17 speeches) into English[1]. The transcripts originally contained dysfluency marks such as repetitions, hesitations, fillers, and words half produced, but they were removed for easier comparison between interpreted and translated English in this study, leaving a total of 18,480 words in the interpreted English corpus.

The translated English corpus, comprising the English translation counterparts of the 35 interpreted speeches, contains 19,881 words. The translations were from the final English translated version of the EP's verbatim reports of proceedings[2].

The sources of the interpretations were speeches by Members of the EP (MEPs), who may read out from prepared scripts, deliver impromptu, or their speeches may be a mix between the two. Sixteen interpreted speeches (10,550 words) were based on read-out speeches, accounting for 57% of the words in the interpreted corpus. Eleven interpreted speeches (3,968 words) were based on impromptu speeches, making up 22% of the interpreted corpus. Eight interpreted speeches (3,962 words) were based on mixed speeches, accounting for the remaining 21% of the interpreted corpus. The source texts of the translations were the written-up versions of these

1) There were 38 interpreted speeches into English in EPIC originally. However, three interpreted speeches underwent extreme condensation in their translation counterparts, rendering comparative analysis invalid. Therefore, they were excluded from this study.

2) The EP's English verbatim reports of proceedings in February 2004 can be downloaded from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegistreWeb/search/simpleSearchHome.htm?language=EN, under Documents relating to parliamentary activity > Plenary documents > Verbatim report of proceedings > Report of proceedings, final version (translated).

speeches. According to Bernardini et al. (2016: 69), the translations of the proceedings "resulted from an independently performed translation process based on the revised verbatim reports, without any reference to the interpreters' outputs." The interpreted and translated English corpora were manually aligned before analysis.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The five types of syntactic constructions were identified manually in both corpora, frequencies were counted, and a Chi-square goodness-of-fit test was performed using the SPSS 29 version for each specialized structure to examine if the observed difference in frequency counts between translated and interpreted English was due to chance alone or reflected inherent differences between the two modes. The five types of syntactic constructions were also analyzed qualitatively to examine how information is packaged differently between the two modes in context.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results of Quantitative Analysis

As shown in Table 1, there are significantly more occurrences of passives in translation than in interpretation, $X^2$ (1, $N$ = 718) = 40.25, $p$ < .001, Cramér's V = .24. This trend is mirrored in the use of *it*-extraposition, which is also significantly more prevalent in translation, $X^2$ (1, $N$ = 119) = 18.56, $p$ < .001, Cramér's V = .39. This means that the two constructions are strongly associated with the written mode, in line with the findings of Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001).

The existential *there* construction occurs more frequently in interpretation than in translation, although the difference is not significant, $X^2$ (1, $N$ = 117) = 1.92, $p$ = .166, Cramér's V = .13. Similarly, clefts occur more frequently in interpretation

than in translation, but the difference is not significant, $X^2$ (1, $N$ = 55) = 1.47, $p$ = .225, Cramér's V = .16. The pattern of the two constructions is also in line with the findings of Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001), who found that existential *there* and *wh*-clefts (including reverse *wh*-clefts) are more associated with the spoken mode[3].

The only construction that shows the opposite trend from Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001) is inversion, which occurs slightly more often in translation than in interpretation, and the difference is not significant, $X^2$ (1, $N$ = 20) = 1.8, $p$ = .180, Cramér's V = .30. In Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001), inversion is strongly associated with the spoken mode. The divergent of the findings will be discussed in the next section.

**Table 1. Occurrences of Specialized Structures in Interpretation and Translation**

| | Interpretation | Translation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Passives | 274 | **444** | 718 |
| It-extraposition | 36 | **83** | 119 |
| Existential there | **66** | 51 | 117 |
| Clefts | **32** | 23 | 55 |
| Inversion | 7 | **13** | 20 |

## 4.2. Results of Qualitative Analysis

In the examples below, extracts from the translation corpus (T) are presented first, serving as the baseline against which their interpretation counterparts (I) are compared.

3) It should be noted that in Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001), it-clefts were not discussed as the construction was negligible in their data. Furthermore, they only reported raw frequencies and did not conduct inferential statistics.

### *4.2.1. The passive*

The use of the passive is particularly suitable for scientific writing because it helps to achieve impersonality in a text (Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005). Furthermore, the passive allows an inanimate element or a noun phrase in a previous clause to serve as the Theme/Given in the subsequent clause, thus maintaining thematic continuity, or cohesion, between clauses (Brinton 2000; Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001; Downing and Locke 2006; Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005). Native speaker scientists use the passive much less often in spoken presentations than they do in written articles; instead, they use a high proportion of personal pronoun syntactic subjects as themes followed by an active verb, making their presentations more frank, direct, and livelier and contributing to the establishment of their rhetorical personality (Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas, 2005).

In the current study, the passive occurs significantly more often in translation than in interpretation. More than 1/3 (39%) of the passives used in translation have the same or similar passive equivalents in interpretation. For example, “I would like to take up the issue raised by a previous speaker” in translation is rendered as “I would like to return to a subject which was mentioned before” in interpretation (25-02-04-p-019-int-it-en), or “must be eliminated” in translation is rendered as “should be got rid of” in interpretation (25-02-04-p-065-int-it-en).

Another 1/3 (30%) of the passives used in translation are omitted in interpretation. It is possible that the source texts of translation contain more details, but it is also possible that interpreters are under time pressure and have to forgo some minor details. For example, “the Commission made a proposal presented to the House by Commissioner Barnier” in translation is rendered as “The Commission has made a proposal” in interpretation (25-02-04-p-047-int-es-en). Sometimes, interpreters resort to more concise rendition: “The overview provided in the Spring report is very clear” in translation is rendered as “The spring report has some clear conclusions” in interpretation (25-02-04-p-043-int-es-en).

The other 1/3 (31%) of the passives used in translation are converted into active voice in interpreting. Similar to the native speaker presenters in Rowley-Jolivet and

Carter-Thomas (2005), the interpreters in this study often use personal pronoun syntactic subjects as themes followed by an active verb, as in Example 1.

Example 1 (25-02-04-p-043-int-es-en)

T: (1) The material *adopted* on 21 January already contained the main political messages and key conclusions. (2) A series of positive results *was mentioned*, notably concerning job creation. (3) Six million jobs *have been created* despite the climate of weak growth. (4) The considerable improvement in the situation regarding long-term unemployment and female employment *was also mentioned*.

I: (1) What we adopted on the twenty-first of January already includes the main political messages we want to send out and also the main conclusions. (2 & 3) We praise positive results, particularly the creation of six million jobs, despite the weak rate of growth. (4) We also praise the substantial improvement in long-term unemployment and women's employment.

In Example 1, all four sentences in translation start with highly explicit and precise nominal groups as the subjects/Themes, as the words underlined. This may be one of the features of written language. As pointed out by Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005: 48), “The scientific writer needs to convey as precisely and as unambiguously as possible a high density of information. The heavily pre-modified noun groups of many passive clauses enable the writer to condense this quantity of information into the clausal theme.” With the passives used in Sentences 2 and 3 in translation, thematic continuity, or cohesion, is achieved, as the Rheme/New in Sentence 2 (“concerning job creation”) serves as the Theme/Given in Sentence 3 (“Six million jobs”). With the use of passives, the verb phrases of Sentences 2, 3 and 4 in translation (“was mentioned,” “have been created,” “was also mentioned”), carrying less substantial meaning, occur at the end of the clauses. This progression from Theme/New to Rheme/Given is a marked order and seems to violate the principle of end-focus where the last position in the clause tends to be the Rheme/New. This may be because impersonality takes priority in the written genre like EP proceedings.

In interpreting, passive constructions preceded by long and heavy nominal groups

or clausal themes as subjects would make it difficult for interpreters to produce and for the audience to process in real time. Instead, in Sentence 1 in Example 1, the interpreter uses a *wh*-cleft with active voice ("What we adopted..."), which makes the information more easily digestible than the more condensed post-modified inanimate noun phrase in translation ("the materials adopted on..."). The interpreter continues to use "we praise" twice to frame the messages. Two reasons make it easier to produce for the interpreter and easier to understand for the audience. First, from the grammatical viewpoint, the personal pronoun subject "we" and the active verb "praise" are close together. Second, from the information structure perspective, the parts containing higher information value (i.e., "positive results..." and "the substantial improvement...") are pushed towards the end of the clauses, respecting the principle of end-weight.

If we use the frequency of passives in the interpretation corpus (274 occurrences) as the denominator, 63% of the passives are the same or similar with the passives used in translation, whereas the rest of the passives (37%) become active voice, noun phrases, adjectives, or are omitted in translation. In Example 2, interpretation contains three passive constructions (as the words in italics) whereas translation contains none. In the first translated sentence, the subject/Theme is a gerund phrase and the *be* verb is the seventh word of the sentence. The six-word complex Theme in sentence initial position would be hard for interpreters to produce and for the audience to process. Instead, the interpreter breaks down what could otherwise be conveyed in one sentence into four Subject-Verb units. The subject of each unit is short ("we," "the pipelines," "they," and "that"), and the verb comes right after the subject. The linear progression of the units ("they" refers to "the pipelines" and "that" refers back to the Rheme of the preceding clause—"not environmental-friendly") allows the information to be progressively conveyed to the audience, easing their processing effort. In Sentence 2, although the subjects/Themes of both translation and interpretation are the same "the oil," the Rheme in translation is more specific. In Sentence 3, the noun phrase "the planning of the pipelines" in translation is more precise than the generic "effort" in interpretation. In other words, although passives also occur in interpretation, they

are not preceded by complex nominal groups as subjects/themes.

Example 2 (26-02-04-m-035-int-it-en)

T: (1) Discrediting the pipelines for environmental reasons is merely a rhetorical exercise. (2) The oil must, in any event, go from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea. (3) During the cold war, the planning of the pipelines sought to avoid Soviet territory...

I: (1) Should we say that the pipelines *can't be used* because they're not environment-friendly? That would only be an academic exercise. (2) The oil *has to be channelled*. (3) In the past, efforts *were made* to avoid the Soviet territory...

### *4.2.2. Extraposition*

More associated with the written mode, *it*-extraposition is the case where an anticipatory "it" takes up the Theme position of the matrix clause, and the clausal item that "it" refers to is postponed towards the end of the sentence. Information is thus packaged in a way that adheres to the principle of end-weight, allowing new elements to occur in the Rheme position and thus facilitating processing (Downing and Locke 2006; Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005).

In this study, *it*-extraposition occurs significantly more often in translation than in interpretation. About 1/5 (22%) of *it*-extraposition cases in translation are the same or similar in interpretation, as in Example 3. In both translation and interpretation in Example 3, the semantically empty *it* in the matrix clause refers to the postponed extraposed clause containing heavy information load, as shown in the words underlined. If the extraposed clause were placed in the Theme position (e.g., "determining a common programme for...illegal immigration is important"), the complex theme would be difficult for interpreters to produce and the audience to process.

Example 3 (11-02-04-m-009-int-it-en)

T: With regard to the particular case of immigration, as repeatedly demanded by this Parliament, *it is essential to* lay down a common policy governing the entry, residence and integration of citizens from third countries which is not

restricted to stamping out clandestine immigration.

I: And on immigration, in particular, as called for by Parliament on numerous occasions, *it's important to* determine a common programme for citizens coming from third countries and their residence, and not only to concentrate on illegal immigration.

In addition to its information packaging function, *it*-extraposition also functions as hedging, as the matrix clause includes an evaluative element (Downing and Locke 2006; Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005). Native speaker scientists use extraposition six times more frequently in research articles than in oral presentations, as the construction allows them to make subtle commentary on the information placed in the extraposed clause, whereas in oral presentations, extraposition is rarely used, as speakers tend to express their opinions and evaluation more openly; for example, "it can be implied that" in research articles would be expressed as "we know" in presentations, and "it seems that" becomes "we think that" (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001: 25).

The same pattern can be seen in the current study. In Table 2, every extraposition case in translation contains an evaluative element. For example, "it is possible to" is an evaluation of likelihood, "it is essential to" and "it is important to" convey importance, and "it is incumbent on all of us to" and "it is necessary to" convey necessity. In interpretation, however, these subtle evaluative comments are often formulated as direct stance, such as "you can," "we must," and "we need to."

In fact, 42% of the extraposition cases in translation in this study take the form of personal pronouns in interpretation, as in Example 4. In Example 4, the translation contains two cases of *it*-extraposition, subtly conveying the speaker's attitude: "disappointing" and "impossible." The interpretation is more straightforward and sounds more like a fact.

Example 4 (11-02-04-m-022-int-es-en)

T: *It is disappointing too that* in the specific area of asylum and immigration *it has as yet proved impossible* for us to come up with satisfactory solutions.

I: And also in areas such as asylum, we haven't come up with a solutions.

**Table 2. Examples of Extraposition in Translation Versus Their Interpretation Counterparts**

| T | I |
|---|---|
| it is possible to | I'm sure we can/you can |
| it will be possible to | we will be able to |
| it is essential to/that | we must/we need to/we have to |
| it is important to | we must/we need to/we have to/you've got to |
| it is useful to | let's not forget that |
| it is incumbent on all of us to | we must/we need to |
| it is necessary to | we must/we need to |
| it is deemed necessary to | they realise that there is a need to |
| it should be recalled that | we should also bear in mind that |
| it needs to be borne in mind that | we need to remember that/don't forget |
| it is not possible to | you can't say |
| it is important not to | we should not |

In Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005: 53), nearly half of the extraposition cases in native speakers' articles take the form of a passive, such as "it is believed that," "it is hoped that," and "it can be implied that," the combination of the two structures creates an impression of objectivity. In the current research, however, none of the extraposition cases in interpretation uses a passive, while only 16% of the extraposition cases in translation use a passive (such as "it is deemed necessary to," "it should be recalled that," and "it needs to be borne in mind that" in Table 2). In this study, the combination of extraposition and passive voice not only conveys objectivity but has its pragmatic function of softening the tone of criticism. In Example 5, with the use of "it must be said that" in translation, it seems as if the MEP is giving criticism against their will. The interpretation sounds more straightforward with the active verb "has failed."

Example 5 (11-02-04-m-009-int-it-en)

T: *It must be said that* the Commission's conduct, marked by inaction and complicity, has been deplorable.

I: And moreover, the Commission has failed to take action on this.

### *4.2.3. Existential there*

The existential *there* structure is often used to introduce new elements into the discourse, especially to focus on the (non-)occurrence or (non-)existence of something (Biber et al. 1999; Downing and Locke 2006). The structure allows the semantically empty *there* to be placed in the clause initial position where Theme/Given is, and therefore the New can be placed in the rhematic position, following the Given-New division (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2001). Furthermore, the use of existential *there* makes it possible to present one unit of information at a time and therefore serves to delay discourse flow, allowing New information to appear later in the clause (Biber et al. 1999). In the study of Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001: 21 & 28), native speaker scientists use the structure three times more frequently in their oral presentations than in conference proceedings, which may be explained by the following three reasons: 1) the structure helps the audience process sequential information, such as "*there* are two other factors;" whereas in the written mode, enumeration can be expressed by punctuation and page layout; 2) the structure serves as discourse organizer with "now *there* is/are..." initiating a new topic and "so *there* is/are..." closing a topic, whereas in the written mode, topic opening and closing may be signaled by page layout such as paragraph segmentation and headings; 3) the structure is used to refer to what is shown on the visual aid, such as "as you can see, *there*'s... ."

In the current study, there are also more cases of existential *there* in interpretation (66) than in translation (51), although the difference is not statistically significant. Existential *there* in interpretation serves to delay information. In Examples 6 and 7, the translated sentences start with specific nouns as Themes ("the results" and "a day"), whereas in their respective interpreted counterparts, the semantically empty "there" serves as the Theme/Given, allowing words containing specific information ("very good results" and "an international day...") to occur later in the sentences where the Rheme is, easing the audience's processing effort.

Example 6 (10-02-04-m-074-int-es-en)
T: The results are encouraging.
I: *There* have been very good results.

Example 7 (11-02-04-m-022-int-es-en)
T: A day should be set aside to honour the victims of terrorism.
I: *There* should be an international day for the victims of terrorism.

Existential *there* in interpretation therefore may serve as a stalling device, helping interpreters process more information before producing the output. In Example 8, the translation contains a heavy clausal Theme, as the words underlined, and the readers' attention would be directed towards the Rheme ("is common to all our languages"). However, if this sentence were produced orally, the long and complex Theme would pose difficulties to the listeners. The interpreter breaks down what could otherwise be conveyed in one sentence into three stand-alone units, with "in all our languages" being rendered first, followed by two Subject-Verb units ("there's a saying that" and "the road to hell is...").

Example 8 (25-02-04-p-047-int-es-en)
T: The saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions is common to all our languages.
I: In all our languages, *there*'s a saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

In cases where translations contain existential *there*, their interpreting counterparts are often more straightforward with personal pronoun subjects serving as Themes in the sentence initial position, as in Examples 9 and 10.

Example 9 (25-02-04-p-037-int-es-en)
T: *There* is no need to keep on reinventing the wheel.
I: We shouldn't reinvent the wheel every other day.

Example 10 (11-02-04-m-025-int-it-en)
T: In Italy, today, *there* is a desire to return to the legal and political culture of

the Middle Ages.
I: In Italy today, they want to go back to legal and political cultures of the medieval times.

What is interesting is the hedging function of existential *there* in translation. In Example 11, "there seems to be" in translation softens the tone of criticism. The use of noun phrases (i.e., "widespread agreement," "the rate of growth," and "our present rate") also makes the criticism less personal. The interpretation counterpart starts with "I think" as a hedging tactic, but the rest is more direct, with the personal pronoun "we" being used thrice.

Example 11 (25-02-04-p-081-int-es-en)
T: *There* seems to be widespread agreement that the rate of growth needs to increase, and that our present rate is unsatisfactory.
I: I think we all agree that we are not satisfied with the way things have gone. We need more growth.

### *4.2.4. Clefts*

There are two types of clefts: *wh*-clefts and *it*-clefts. In both types of clefts, the content of a single clause is broken down into two parts where the presupposed information, or the Given, becomes the background and the New receives the focus (Biber et al. 1999; Downing and Locke 2006). For example, "We want oranges." can be rephrased as "What we want is **oranges.**" (*wh*-cleft), "**Oranges** are what we want." (reversed *wh*-clefts), or "It's **oranges** that we want." (*it*-cleft). Although *it*-clefts are common in conversation, fiction, news, and especially in academic prose (Biber et al. 1999), practically no *it*-cleft was found in either conference proceedings or oral presentations produced by native speaker scientists in Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001). In the same research, while no *wh*-cleft (or reversed *wh*-cleft) was found in conference proceedings, it occurs relatively frequently in presentations, suggesting it is mode-dependent. According to Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001: 32), the *wh*-cleft in speech has three discourse functions: 1) it helps slow down the discourse flow as it chunks

information into two parts, facilitating processing for the audience; 2) it increases the salience of the new forthcoming information; and 3) it enhances an interactive element in the discourse as it implies a questioning process ("What did you do then?" "What we did here was...") that prepares the listener for the upcoming information.

In this study, clefts occur more often in interpretation (32 occurrences) than in translation (23), although the difference is not statistically significant. The exact occurrences of *wh*-clefts are 12 in interpretation and seven in translation. In Example 12, the two *wh*-clefts in interpretation draw the audience's attention to the specially focused elements at the end of the sentences, as the words in bold. In fact, *wh*-clauses such as "what I think," "what I want to say," and "what we need" may act like springboard in starting an utterance, as *wh*-clefts often entail low information content and are common in conversation (Biber et al. 1999: 963). The second *wh*-cleft in interpretation ("what we can do") is a simpler and more listener-friendly alternative to the more complicated noun phrase in translation ("the margin for manoeuvre").

Example 12 (10-02-04-m-058-int-es-en)

T: I feel the starting point is sound. Increased growth would of course be welcome, and the margin for manoeuvre is indeed limited.

I: And I think basically what I'm saying is **we've got a good point of departure**. Obviously we haven't got to as much growth as we want, and what we can do is **limited**.

Reverse *wh*-clefts usually contain a demonstrative pronoun like "that," followed by a *be* verb and a dependent clause introduced by a *wh*-word (Biber et al. 1999). The exact occurrences of reverse *wh*-clefts in this study are 14 in interpretation and eight in translation. In Example 13, the reverse *wh*-cleft in interpretation "that is why" is used twice. The demonstrative pronoun "that" is a reference to the preceding idea ("this is one of its priorities") and receives special focus. The translation counterpart exhibits syntactic variety, with "hence" at the clause initial position and "for the same reason" at the end of the last sentence.

Example 13 (25-02-04-p-043-int-es-en)

T: The impetus must come from the European Council. The Irish Presidency has identified this as one of its priorities, hence the opportunity for strengthening coordination of economic policies. The Commission launched its consultation last month for the same reason.

I: Now of course this life must be breathed into it by the European Council. The Irish presidency has said this is one of its priorities and ***that*** is why we have to improve coordination of economic policies, and ***that*** is why the European Commission last month began consultation and discussion

*It*-clefts also break up what could be conveyed in a single clause into two, with the specially focused element appearing in the front. The exact occurrences of *it*-clefts in this study are six in interpretation and eight in translation. In Examples 14 and 15, the specially focused elements are boldfaced, and the dependent clauses placed in the bracket receive normal end focus.

Example 14 (12-02-04-m-033-int-it-en)

T: The scourge of terrorism can only be eliminated by working within the rule of law, in cooperation with the judicial authorities and the police.

I: *It is* **with the bodies of justice and police** [that we can fight against this scourge of terrorism].

Example 15 (11-02-04-m-032-int-es-en)

T: ...since *it should be* **the European institutions** [that have the power to implement this policy].

I: ...because the European institutions should have the strength to implement the policy.

### *4.2.5. Inversion*

Inversion reverses the normal SV(O) order and taps into the potential of the opening and the end of a clause, helping achieve the discourse functions of cohesion, end focus or double focus, or intensification (Biber et al. 1999). There are two types of inversion, subject-verb inversion and subject-operator inversion. In

both types of inversion, some element other than the subject is being placed in clause-initial position (Biber et al. 1999). In Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001), subject-operator inversion is rare in either oral presentations or proceeding articles, but subject-verb inversion is a frequently used structure in oral presentations, although not in the articles. According to Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005: 54-56), native speaker presenters often use locative adverbials like *here / there* + BE to introduce a new referent into the discourse ("*here's* a picture of..."), to break up complex visual information into digestible chunks ("*on the left are*..., and *on the right are*..."), or to place heavy noun group towards the end of the clause to ease processing effort for the audience ("*here is* two measurements of power density...").

In the current study, out of the 20 cases of inversion, only five cases are subject-verb inversion, in which four occurs in translation and only one in interpretation. This may be because in the context of EP plenary debates, visual aids such as PowerPoints are rarely used, reducing the need to combine oral and visual channels of communication. The subject-verb inversion found in this study mainly serves the purpose of double focus, i.e., fronting the evaluative element and placing heavy noun group towards the end of the clause, as in the translation of Example 16.

Example 16 (11-02-04-m-022-int-es-en)
T: *Most serious of all are* the unacceptable delays in transposing Community regulations into the legislation of Member States.
I: ...and especially, the tremendous delay in integration of matters.

There are 15 cases of subject-operator inversion in this study, with nine in translation and six in interpretation. They occur because of triggering elements such as opening negative or restrictive coordinators or adverbials. Examples from translation include "*So too* should all future commitments..." (25-02-04-p-081-int-es-en) and "*Such* is the case...with the arrest warrant..." (11-02-04-m-009-int-it-en), and examples from interpretation include "*Neither* should we overlook the fact that..." (25-02-04-p-043-int-es-en) and "...is not a

binding document legally...*nor* a list of sections...” (25-02-04-p-088-int-it-en).

Example 17 showcases the use of subject-operator inversion in discourse. Within the 56 words in translation, there are two incidents of subject-operator inversion (“only then...”), two cases of *it*-extraposition (“it is essential to” and “will it be possible to”), and one passive (“be dealt with”). The restrictive adverbial “only then” at the front of the sentence alerts readers to the coming information, serving the purpose of double focus. The interpretation is simpler in both word choice and sentence structure, with “we need to” being used twice to frame the messages.

Example 17 (11-02-04-m-035-int-es-en)

T: It is essential to develop a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation with immigrants’ countries of origin. *Only then* can the underlying reasons for the migratory flows be dealt with. *Only then* will it be possible to increase and improve ways of combating poverty, which is, of course, the real reason for immigration from developing countries.

I: We need to achieve reciprocal trust and confidence with the countries of origin so as to solve the causes of these flows of illegal immigration. And we need to combat poverty which is the true cause of this difficulty.

## 5. Conclusion

The specialized sentence structures examined in this study showed that, similar to non-mediated spoken and written discourse, mediated spoken and written discourse exhibits different information packaging arrangements: the passive and *it*-extraposition are significantly associated with translation, whereas existential *there* and clefts are more associated with interpretation. Inversion is relatively rare in the current study.

Qualitative analysis revealed mode differences in context. Although passives also occur frequently in interpretation, they are not proceeded by heavy, precise nominal groups as subjects/Themes. *It*-extraposition serves the function of hedging in translation as it makes MEPs’ opinions more subtle, but it also occurs in

interpretation as it helps push the loaded extraposed clause towards the end of the sentence, potentially easing interpreters' production effort and audience's processing effort. Existential *there* and clefts help break down information into digestible chunks and are therefore more associated with interpretation, but they also occur in translation, and when they do, their interpretation counterparts tend to be even more straightforward message-wise and more simplified lexically and syntactically.

The current study is based on two small corpora on parliamentary discourse, which is political in nature, and therefore the statistical results may not be generalized to interpretation and translation in general. Furthermore, the differences in syntactic structures observed in EP interpretation and translation may be partially attributed to the characteristics of their respective source texts, as the interpretation data were based on read-out, impromptu, or mixed speeches, whereas the translation data were based on refined written versions of these speeches. However, qualitative analysis may provide valuable materials for T&I training, as students need to recognize how different modes of linguistic mediation require distinct information packaging strategies for effective communication.

The current study is limited to five specialized structures. Future studies may continue to explore intermodal differences between interpretation and translation in lexical choices, syntactic structures, and pragmatics to understand more about the linguistic features and norms of mediated spoken discourse in contrast with mediated written discourse.

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***Authors' email address***

yinyinwu@ntu.edu.tw

***About the authors***

Yinyin Wu is an assistant professor at the Graduate Program in Translation and Interpretation at National Taiwan University. Her research interests include conference interpreting, retour interpreting, B language enhancement, interpreting pedagogy, and corpus linguistics. Her latest project focuses on the various linguistic features of European Parliament conference English with the use of corpora and corpus technology.