

Abstract

A contrastive look into demonstratives in EU legal languages

An important, though highly under-researched field of applied contrastive linguistics is the multilingual legal drafting of the European Union.

EU legal acts are equally authentic and legally binding in all of their 24 language versions, which only together constitute one original (cf. Biel 2022; Sobotta 2015). This demands the highest possible degree of semantic convergence despite different lexical and grammatical structures of the languages concerned and despite the different national legal systems with their respective legal languages (cf. Burr/Gallas 2004).

One domain with significant differences in grammatical and semantic features across the official languages of the EU are demonstratives and their endophoric use for reference-tracking and disambiguation (cf. Mattissen 2022).

Under these premises, the question is how demonstratives are employed in the different legal languages, which other means, particularly coreference-expressing adjectives or participles like ‘the said’, complement them in the reference-tracking function, and to which degree semantic convergence is arrived at.

A typological-functional analysis of the parallel corpora of EU legal acts, which due to their drafting conditions allow an extremely high level of comparability, shows, for instance, that frequently across the language versions, and to a different extent in the various languages, qualitative demonstrative determiners (as in *such documents, tali documenti*) correspond to entity-demonstrative determiners (as in *diese Dokumente, ces documents*) and produce ambiguities as to anaphoric and generic readings, which have already been substantial in cases heard by the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The presentation identifies some relevant contexts, the cross-linguistically corresponding demonstratives and related expressions, and illustrates different idiomatic and systematic preferences as well as contact phenomena concerning their use in several Germanic, Romance and Slavic language versions of EU legal acts. It shows how, with a contrastive linguistic approach, the synoptic wordings can be analysed in order to avoid divergences and ensure equal legal effects. The findings do not only have a significant impact on translation studies, but also contribute to cross-linguistic generalizations.

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Burr, Isolde / Gallas, Tito 2004: “Zur Textproduktion im Gemeinschaftsrecht”. In: Müller, Friedrich / Burr, Isolde (eds.): *Rechtssprache Europas*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot. 195-242.

Mattissen, Johanna 2022: “Reference-tracking in multilingualen Europäischen Rechtstexten”. In: Wiene, Ursula / Reichmann, Tinka / Sergio, Laura (eds.): *Syntax in Fachkommunikation*. Berlin: Frank und Timme Verlag. 463-500.

Sobotta, Christoph 2015: “Die Mehrsprachigkeit als Herausforderung und Chance bei der Auslegung des Unionsrechts”. *Zeitschrift für Europäische Rechtslinguistik* (ZERL). Köln: Europäische Rechtslinguistik, DOI: [10.18716/ojs/zerl/2015.0.597](https://doi.org/10.18716/ojs/zerl/2015.0.597).