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A frame-based approach to the pragmatics of “*bekanntlich*” and English translation equivalents

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Within functional approaches to translation theory, the text is considered the primary unit of translation. Several models developed for describing the pragmatic features of a text (e.g. House 1997; Nord 2009) propose to derive individual translation choices from the functional characterisation of the text as a whole. However, not all pragmatic phenomena can be fully accounted for by textual factors. Instead, they may be rather independent of the overall text and be tied to specific lexical items or grammatical constructions.

A case in point is the phenomenon of a speaker referring to shared prior knowledge of the participants of the communicative interaction. This pragmatic function can be realised by formulaic expressions such as *wie Sie wissen* ('as you know'; cf. Staffeldt 2011) as well as the German adverb *bekanntlich*. The pragmatics of *bekanntlich* and its English translation equivalents will be sketched out using corpora and frame semantic annotation, proposing pragmatic frames as a tertium comparationis in translation analysis. The parallel corpora used to explore *bekanntlich* together with the English source language expressions it translates are DGT-TM (Steinberger et al. 2012) and Europarl UdS (Karakanta/Vela/Teich 2018), both consisting of German translations of primarily or exclusively English original EU texts.

We follow (Czulo/Ziem/Torrent 2020) in modelling the pragmatic content of the expression by means of frames as developed in the tradition of Fillmorean frame semantics (1982), and refer to these as 'pragmatic frames'. We assume *bekanntlich* to regularly evoke the pragmatic frame `Common_ground`¹ that models a SPEAKER claiming some CONTENT to be prior knowledge (with degrees of FAMILIARITY) shared by the COGNIZERS. Those are participants of the communicative interaction and necessarily include the utterance's addressee(s). The expressions evoking this frame differ with respect to which of these frame elements are realised in the text: most importantly, the COGNIZERS may be lexically specified, commonly by deictic person reference especially with *wie wir/Sie/alle wissen* (as we/you/everybody know(s)), or left to be inferred from the communicative context as is the case with *bekanntlich*.

Comparing the English source language equivalents of *bekanntlich* across the two corpora reflecting different registers, it appears that in Europarl UdS, the participants of the communicative interaction are more often than not lexically realised (1). In DGT-TM and

¹ The frame is described in German as `Gemeinsames_Vorwissen`, see German FrameNet entry: <https://gsw.phil.hhu.de/framenet/frame?id=1569> [2023-04-20].

Following conventions in frame semantics, frames are set in Courier, frame elements in small caps.

the minority of cases in Europarl UdS, however, the COGNIZERS remain implicit and what is most interesting, do not seem to include the addressee ((2)-(3)). Instead, the COGNIZERS can (contextually) be inferred to coincide with the SPEAKER, with the translation pair (*is/are*) *known – bekanntlich* (4) expressing that the Speaker is aware of some fact. This usage of *bekanntlich* is motivated semantically rather than pragmatically and can be found to evoke the lexical-semantic frame *Awareness_status*. It could be assumed that this divergence in pragmatic versus semantic use is an influence of the source text. This assumption will be tested by contrasting the findings to the uses of *bekanntlich* in German original legal language.

Examples

Europarl UdS

- (1) a. Eventually they will be competing directly with the US for ever-diminishing supplies, which is a forbidding thought and, as we know, fossil fuels are running out very quickly.
- b. Irgendwann wird sich China mit Amerika um die immer knapper werdenden Vorräte streiten, was nicht gerade ein beruhigender Gedanke ist, zumal die fossilen Brennstoffe bekanntlich rasch zur Neige gehen.

DGT-TM

- (2) a. It is recalled that the authorities in Laos as well as potential producers/exporters in this country were informed of the ongoing investigation.
- b. Bekanntlich wurden die laotischen Behörden sowie potenzielle Hersteller/Ausführer in Laos von der laufenden Untersuchung in Kenntnis gesetzt.
- (3) a. It is known that that nomenclature does not cover all special export refund cases but the Commission does not require that kind of detail.
- b. In diesem Verzeichnis sind bekanntlich nicht alle Sonderfälle bei den Ausfuhrerstattungen abgedeckt, die Kommission benötigt diese Details jedoch nicht.

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