

VERTIMAS / TRANSLATION

Use and Translation of Conditional Sentences in Institutional Register and Popular Scientific Prose

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Abstract. In a world characterised by cross-cultural communication, scientific and institutional languages have become increasingly important for linguists and translators. The characteristics of scientific and institutional languages clearly distinguish them from other types of registers. In terms of translation, texts in both registers under analysis should render exact meaning and context of the original text through clear, unequivocal lexis and concise, unambiguous grammar. This particular study focuses on conditional sentences in EU documents and popular science texts and attempts to uncover dominant patterns of the order of clauses in such sentences and whether the particular order is retained during the process of translation. The level of language formality in the two registers seems to be different, being higher in the institutional texts and, thus, imposing a more straightforward rendering of particular grammatical structures. More complex sentence structures with the conditional clause taking the middle position in a sentence are, therefore, expected to be more frequently observed in institutional texts. Likewise, an assumption is made that exactly the same ordering of clauses in a conditional sentence is rendered in another language more frequently in institutional than in science popular texts.

Key words: *conditional sentence, if-clause, sentence-initial, sentence-final position, scientific prose, institutional register.*

Introduction

The language of institutional documents and scientific texts, like any professional language, should be based on the standard variety. Institutional and scientific texts are the common form of language expression that is highly specialised and requires a specific level of expertise. Although it is equally important to convey accurate, clear and concise information and to follow certain requirements in both institutional and scientific texts, at first sight, institutional register and scientific, or more exactly popular scientific, prose seem to be different, at least in the level of formality. Scientific prose, as its name implies, is informative in style, which involves technical, scientific and engineering-based topics and encompasses various texts of technical and scientific language (Wells et al., 2008). Its function is simply to inform the audience about the complex nature of specific phenomena. Meanwhile, the institutional register conveys data of legislative procedures. Hence, the institutional register is reflected in official documents such as treaties, directives, regulations, judgments, etc. When translated, texts in both registers under analysis should render exact meaning and context of the original text through clear, unequivocal lexis and concise, unambiguous grammar. Institutional and scientific texts display a full set of various linguistic devices. Conditional sentences are typical of both the scientific prose and the institutional register. The frequency of 71 % of conditional clauses among all dependent clauses has been observed in various legal documents; the percentage determined for scientific texts is lower, i.e. 53 % (Bloor, 1998, p.47). Different researchers have observed an abundance of conditional sentences in many areas of science, e.g. physics (Louwerse et

al., 2008), chemistry, applied linguistics (Hesabi et al., 2013), more and less formal discourses of medicine (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet, 2008), etc. Although conditional sentences seem to pose no problems for writers or translators, more complex sentence structures with the conditional clause taking the middle position in a sentence and, this way, distancing the subject and the verb might be difficult to comprehend or translate. They are expected to be more frequently observed in institutional than popular science texts. An assumption is also made that exactly the same ordering of clauses in a conditional sentence is more probable in institutional than in popular science texts translated to Lithuanian. Since the language of popular scientific prose is more flexible and encompasses features of journalistic register, it allows for more diversity and less tight structuring because of a more open nature of the register. Therefore, possible problems related to complicated understanding in case of presence of the conditional clause in the mid-sentence position might be more flexibly solved in the translation process of popular science texts.

The **object** of this particular study is conditional sentences in EU documents representing the institutional register and in the popular science magazine *National Geographic* representing the popular scientific prose.

The **aim** is to analyse the peculiarities as to the ordering of conditional sentences in the institutional register and the popular scientific prose and their translation from English to Lithuanian.

The work seeks to achieve the following **objectives**:

- To discuss peculiarities of conditional sentences, the institutional register, the popular scientific prose, and translation thereof;
- To select and overview the instances of conditional sentences in EU documents and a popular scientific magazine with the purpose to identify the dominant order of clauses in English versions of sentences;
- To identify whether any changes are made in the order of clauses in the Lithuanian versions of selected conditional sentences in the process of translation;
- To compare the prevailing peculiarities as to the order of clauses of conditional sentences in the institutional register and the popular scientific prose.

In total, 800 sentences were analysed (400 English sentences and 400 translated Lithuanian sentences). The database Eur-lex, which is the database of EU law and other documents, and *National Geographic* journals served as the data sources.

The sentences in English and the translated Lithuanian sentences were reviewed and compared in order to identify the dominant ordering of clauses in a sentence and to reveal translation peculiarities that emphasise potential translation differences.

The methods employed are descriptive analysis for review, interpretation, and generalisation of the obtained data, quantitative analysis for obtaining a picture of the frequency of the phenomena under analysis (McEnery, 2001, p.77), and contrastive analysis for identification of differences and similarities between the two registers in the two languages in concern.

Translation in Institutional and Scientific Register

Institutional register refers to the language of documents used by institutions. Official documents are written in a formal, matter-of-fact style. A high level of formality, accuracy, consistency, and clarity are salient criteria for institutional register (Župerka, 1997, p.85; Vladarskienė, 2004, p.16). It is undeniable that the institutional language has to be precise, accurate, and free of ambiguity and emotions.

Institutional translation is a distinctive type of translation carried out inside an institution (Gouadec, 2007, p.36). Thus, institutional translation encompasses texts translated for legal and administrative purposes that are of great importance. Legal and administrative texts have to be straightforward and unambiguous as they are or may be used for legal purposes, and any misunderstanding may cause legal problems.

In institutional translation, it is very important to maintain that the different versions of certain documents are equally authentic. This can be done through clear, unequivocal lexis and concise, unambiguous grammar. On the other hand, all institutional translations are affected by various kinds of institutional requirements and limitations. There is also a tendency for clarity, transparency and simplicity in legal and business English as well as in government documents (Wagner and Cutts, 2002; Siegel, 2010). Translators are recommended to render the message rather than “the words or the structures of the source-text”, which might be un-

necessarily complex and incomprehensible (Translation Bureau, 1984, p.3, in Mason, 2003, p.177). Thus, generally, unnecessary wordiness, structural or semantic ambiguity are to be avoided.

The scientific prose is described as being objective, logically coherent, impersonal, unemotional and exact (Pikčilingis, 2010, p.367). The main objective of scientific prose is “to impart useful information without being irrelevant in the least” (Sharma, 2007, p.23).

The scientific prose may take a few different courses: the style of popular scientific prose, scientific-technical style and language of textbooks (Pikčilingis, 2010, p.368). Although, at first sight, these subregisters seem to be different, they are all characterised by specific terminology, direct vocabulary, certain phraseology and complex syntactic structures (ibid). Popular science texts, as analysed here, encompass features of several registers and its diverse nature has been acknowledged (Bowler, 2009). In popular science texts, specialised knowledge is transformed into everyday knowledge, but that does not mean the text should be simplified; it should rather be recontextualised, in which case accessibility to the reader, or readability, might be even more important than accuracy (Calsamiglia and van Dijk, 2004, p.370). Therefore, scientific translation, be it more formal and strict as in case of research articles or less formal and more flexible and open to interpretation as in case of popular science, is not an easy task. Byrne argues that scientific translation can be quite formal and illustrates this statement giving an example of popular science books and magazines (2006, p.9). In addition, translation of popularised scientific texts might be even more complicated than scientific translation since translators do not only deal with usual issues, like translation of terminology and rendering information accurately; they also have to take into consideration how to render content in a way that is readable for non-experts or semi-experts (Liao, 2013, p.131). Thus, problems related to translation of popular scientific texts cover semantic, varietal, cultural as well as formal, i.e. grammar, areas (Sharkas, 2009, p.53). Given all that, although objective and accurate in nature, popular scientific texts and their translations allow for more diversity in grammatical structures and, consequently, order of elements in a sentence.

Ordering of Conditional Sentences in English and Lithuanian

A conditional sentence is a structure composed of the subordinate clause which gives the condition and the main clause which gives the result of that condition.

Any ordering of clauses in a conditional sentence may be exhibited in English. In fact, conditional sentences may exhibit three different orders of clauses: (a) the if-clause followed by the main clause; (b) the main clause followed by the if-clause; and (c) the main clause interrupted by the if-clause. Researchers have argued that the condition tends to precede the main clause (Jucker et al., 2013, p.11; Diessel, 2001, p.433; Dancygier and Sweester, 2000, p.132). Joseph Greenberg examined the grammar structures of thirty languages from different language families and different parts of the world and found out that there were some rules that

govern the way languages work. Greenberg's research revealed that the sentence-initial position of the if-clause in a conditional sentence was a universal feature across languages of the world. The universal itself was structured as follows: "In conditional statements, the conditional clause precedes the conclusion as the normal order in all languages" (Greenberg, 1990, p.13). This universal discloses the point that should be common for all the languages. Thus, it is clear that the structure where the if-clause is in the sentence-initial position and the main clause in the sentence-final position is the extremely frequent, but the possibility of the reverse structure is also exhibited. The third possibility of the if-clause interfering in the main clause is rare but possible in the written mode; on the other hand, such a structure is not favoured by writers as it may cause comprehension problems (Rissanen et al., 1997, p.56).

Lithuanian grammars state that there is a tendency for the if-clause to precede the main clause in conditional sentences in Lithuanian; however, the order of clauses in a conditional sentence may be variable (Ambrazas, 2006a, p.743). The Grammar of Contemporary Lithuanian provides one example from Lithuanian literature with the conditional clauses in the mid-sentence position: *Šeima, jei tik gerai sugyvenama, užpildo visas širdies tuštumas* (Ambrazas, 2006b, p.686), which means that the mid-sentence position of a conditional clause, although infrequent and unusual, and therefore susceptible to incomprehension, is possible in less formal registers and genres, too. The possibility of the mid-sentence position of conditional clauses in Lithuanian was analysed already by Drotvinas, who observed the weakened relation between the main clause and the conditional clause in such cases (1960, p.53).

However, it has been also observed by Pažūsis that the order of clauses in conditional sentences is often changed in the process of translation (2014, p.466). On the other hand, the linguist does not provide any illustrations with the if-clause in the mid-sentence position; nor are there any specific examples from the institutional or popular scientific register (2014, p.466). Thus, this study is an attempt to extend the investigation into the ordering of conditional clauses in two different registers and translation patterns thereof.

Conditional Sentences in Institutional Register

One of the objectives of this research study was to identify the dominant position of the if-clause in the selected sentences in English. The findings obtained from the analysis of conditional sentences in EU documents are demonstrated Figure 1.

As can be concluded from Figure 1, the sentence structure in EU documents is variable. In the majority of the cases, the subordinate clause, i.e. the if-clause, tended to take the sentence-final position as illustrated in the following example:

- (1) *That allowance for the purchase of housing was granted if the investment related to residential property in Hungary.*¹

¹ Examples 1-8 were taken from the database Eur-lex.

- (2) *... the unsuccessful party is to be ordered to pay the costs if they have been applied for in the successful party's pleadings.*

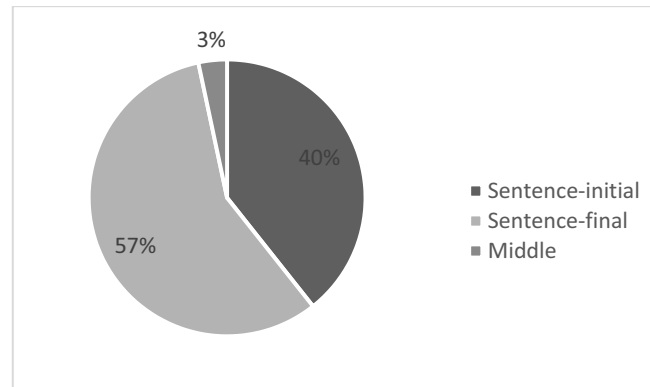


Figure 1. The Position of the If-clause in Sentences in Institutional Texts.

The provided examples and the overall results generalised in Figure 1 demonstrate that this order of clauses is frequently used. However, this pattern might not be considered as a prototypical feature of the institutional register due to the fact that the percentage is not absolute and the results might be biased because of the number of sentences analysed.

More than one-third of the selected English conditional sentences were formed with the if-clause in the sentence-initial position, e.g.

- (3) *If the difference is more than 30% of the area determined, no aid shall be granted for the year in question.*
 (4) *If an essential condition for issue, extension or determination of the period of validity ceases to apply, the period may also be subsequently shortened.*

Interruption of the main clause with the if-clause in the middle was observed only in 3% of the selected English sentences and may be considered an extremely infrequent phenomenon, e.g.

- (5) *Using unique identifiers and structured metadata in referencing national legislation in Official Journals and Legal Gazettes, if Member States so decided, would allow effective, user-friendly and faster search and exchange of information.*

Infrequency of this order of clauses might be explained by the speculation that it is only effective as long as the reader does not lose track of the idea in the main clause. Probably, although complex sentences are typical of institutional documents, readability of the text is more important.

Another objective of the study was to examine the change of sentence components (the if-clause and the main clause) in the sentences selected from English and Lithuanian versions of institutional documents. The analysis of the analysed English and Lithuanian conditional sentences revealed that the order of sentence elements tended to remain identical, i.e. the position of the if-clause and the main clause did not change in the process of translation, as shown in the following example:

- (6) *If the criminal proceedings are not continued, the suspended administrative proceedings shall be resumed.*

Jeigu baudžiamoji byla nutraukiama, laikinai nutraukta administracinė byla atnaujinama.

The calculations demonstrated that the vast majority (97 %) of the clauses retained the same position in the Lithuanian sentence as it was in the English sentence.

There were only a few cases where the ordering of the clauses in a conditional sentence was different in its English and Lithuanian version. The following example illustrates that the if-clause was used in the sentence-initial position in the English version, but in the sentence-final position in the Lithuanian version:

- (7) *If the two samples of a type of cornering lamp meet the requirements of this Regulation, approval shall be granted.*

Patvirtinimas suteikiamas, jeigu abu posūkio apšvietimo žibintų bandiniai atitinka šios taisyklės reikalavimus.

In those few cases, where the if-clause was observed in the mid-sentence position in English, the ordering of the clauses in the sentence remained identical in the Lithuanian version, i.e., the if-clause was also used in the middle of the sentence, or the if-clause appeared in the sentence-initial position, e.g.

- (8) *This Directive may also cover, if Member States so decide, dispute resolution entities which impose solutions which are binding on the parties.*

Jei valstybės narės taip nuspręstų, ši direktyva taip pat gali būti taikoma ginčų sprendimo subjektams, kurie nustato šalims privalomus sprendimus.

In summary, the ordering where the if-clause is in the sentence-final position is more frequent than in the sentence-initial position in EU documents. The same ordering of the clauses is usually maintained in Lithuanian versions of documents, too. The phenomenon of the same ordering of clauses retained in conditional sentences could be considered a peculiarity of institutional translation.

Conditional Sentences in Scientific Prose

This section attempts to uncover dominant peculiarities of conditional sentences in scientific texts. Thus, the position of clauses in the sentence was identified in scientific texts, too.

The obtained data were calculated and are demonstrated in Figure 2.

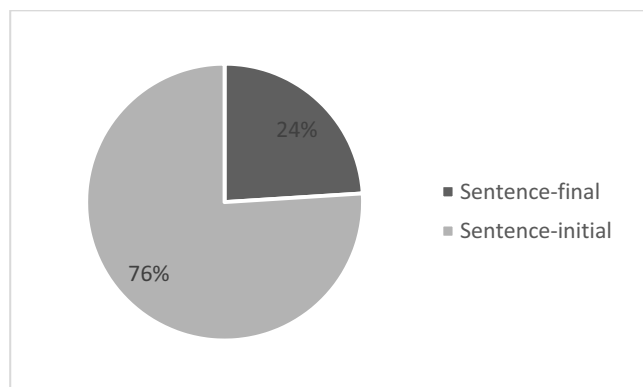


Figure 2. The Position of the If-clause in Sentences in Scientific Prose.

The majority of conditional clauses (76%) tend to occupy the sentence-initial position. Consider:

- (9) *If all goes well, the inadvertent matchmaker will eventually deliver to the female parts of another balsa tree's flowers.*²
- (10) *If the water were to evaporate, the whole thing would collapse.*

As with conditional sentences in institutional texts, the alternative order in which the if-clause follows the conclusion is entirely possible and, in fact, approximately one-fourth of the main clauses preceded the condition in the English conditional sentences analysed. Consider:

- (11) *Prey and tigers can only disperse if there are recognized corridors of land between protected areas to allow unmolested passage.*
- (12) *People are more forgiving if the robot warns them first that it might make errors or apologizes when it screws up.*

It was observed that the condition in which the if-clause was likely to be found in the sentence-final position was when the sentence was lengthy and elaborated:

- (13) *It would be helpful if someone uncovered a Diprotodon skeleton with a spear point embedded in a rib – or perhaps a pile of Thylacoleo bones next to the charcoal of a human campfire.*

In the example above, the main clause is relatively short and simple. By contrast, the subordinate if-clause, which provides additional information concerning the main clause, is long and complex.

No sentences were found to display the if-clause in the middle of a sentence.

Another objective of the study was to find out how the structure of the sentences was transformed when they were rendered in Lithuanian by way of translation. The analysis of the conditional sentences in the institutional register revealed that the majority of the structures of statements remained identical; the same pattern was observed in the scientific texts. The calculation indicated that only 2 % of the translated clauses changed their position in a sentence. Therefore, in many cases, the Lithuanian sentences demonstrated the same order in a sentence as in the English variant. Consider:

- (14) *... if current trends continue, most will use power produced by coal.*

Jei dabartinės tendencijos tęsis, daugelis naudos iš anglies išgaunamą energiją.

- (15) *... population growth will outstrip the planet's ability to sustain it unless kept in check by starvation, disease, or war...*

... planeta sugebės išlaikyti gausėjantį žmonių skaičių, jei jis bus kontroliuojamas ligomis, badu arba karais.

Thus, the obtained results lead to an implication that both the main and the subordinate clauses tend to retain the same order of the sentence in scientific texts.

² Examples 9-16 were taken from National Geographic (2011-2014) and its Lithuanian versions.

Besides, the analysis of the selected sentences from popular scientific texts showed that the sentence structure could be rendered in different ways, i.e., it may remain identical or the if-clause might move from the sentence-initial position to sentence-final or vice versa. Consider:

(16) ... *the seeds will remain high and dry even if the polar ice caps melt.*

... *net jei ištirps poliarinės ledo kepurės, sėklų neapšems vanduo.*

In the example above, the position of the if-clause changed from sentence-final to sentence-initial. These few cases imply that the change of the ordering of clauses in conditional sentences is a rare phenomenon in the translation process.

In summary, certain peculiarities of conditional sentences in the scientific prose were revealed. Generally, the conditional clause tends to take the sentence-initial position. During the process of translation, the order of sentence components tends to remain identical.

Comparison of Conditional Sentences in Institutional Register and Scientific Prose

In order to get a precise picture of the similarities and distinctions of the use and translation of conditional sentences in two different registers, the data obtained during the analysis were compared and generalisations were made.

Although the institutional register and the popular scientific prose seem to be different in the level of language formality, the research carried out indicates that the two registers in concern were notably comparable. The only difference between the two registers was observed in the ordering of clauses. The investigation revealed that the if-clause tended to take the sentence-final position in official documents (57 %); meanwhile, in popular scientific texts, the clause which expressed the condition tended to occupy the sentence-initial position (76 %).

In all other respects, the results obtained were quite similar.

First, the conditional clause appears in the middle of statements very sparsely in both the institutional and scientific texts. This phenomenon was revealed by the calculations indicating that no conditional clauses in popular science texts and only 3 % of the if-clauses in official documents appeared in the middle of the sentence, this way interrupting the normal word order of the main clause and, thus, making comprehension of a sentence more complicated.

Another resemblance between the institutional register and the popular scientific prose observed was related to the outcome of the translation process. Taken that the Lithuanian versions of the sentences were the translated versions (whatever the original language), it was found out that the order of clauses remained identical in both the English and the Lithuanian version, i.e. the position of the if-clause and the principal clause did not change. The analysis revealed that 97 % of the conditional clauses observed in institutional texts retained the same position in both English and Lithuanian sentences. An identical phenomenon was observed in popular science texts: 98 % of the cases demonstrated the same sequence of clauses in original and translated sentences.

Conclusions

- The if-clause tends to take the sentence-final position in sentences in institutional texts; by contrast, in popular science texts, the clauses, which express the condition, i.e. the if-clauses, tend to occupy the sentence-initial position. This observed phenomenon implies that in conditional sentences the condition can be used as the initial or the final clause of the sentence as the normal position in English and Lithuanian. This particular study did not show a well-established position of the conditional clause in the sentence.
- The order of sentence elements (the if-clause and the main clause) tends to remain unchanged during the process of translation from English to Lithuanian in both the scientific prose and the institutional texts. This might be explained by the fact that the same three clause-ordering patterns are possible in both languages under analysis, even though the languages are typologically different. On the other hand, in the case of institutional texts, this also might be conditioned by the necessity to render the message in the most accurate way.
- Conditional clauses are infrequently observed in the middle of sentences in both the institutional and popular science texts, which shows that readability of the text is more important. However, more data need to be analysed in order to determine whether translators are inclined to retain the original ordering of clauses in cases where the if-clause takes the mid-sentence position in both analysed registers.

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Sąlygos sakinių vartojimas ir vertimas administraciniame ir mokslo populiarinamajame stiliuose

Santrauka

Mokslinė ir administracinė kalba šiandieniniame tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos pasaulyje tampa vis svarbesnėmis kalbininkams ir vertėjams. Mokslinės ir administracinės kalbos stiliai aiškiai skiriasi nuo kitų kalbos stilių. Kalbant apie vertimą, abiejų analizuojamų funkcinių stilių tekstai turi ypatingai tiksliai išreikšti mintį ir perteikti tą patį kontekstą kaip ir originalo tekste, t. y. leksika turi būti aiški ir nedviprasmiška, o gramatinės struktūros – glaustos ir tikslios. Šis tyrimas nagrinėja sąlygos sakinius Europos Sąjungos dokumentuose ir mokslo populiarinamojo postilio tekstuose. Ieškoma dominuojančių struktūrų šių sakinių dėmenų išsidėstymo tvarkoje ir stebima, ar ta pati dėmenų tvarka išlieka vertime. Akivaizdu, kad kalbos formalumo lygmuo skiriasi šių dviejų stilių tekstuose: administracinių tekstų kalba formalesnė, o vėrciant dažniau išlaikoma originalo teksto sakinio dėmenų tvarka. Daroma prielaida, kad identiška originalo ir versto teksto sąlygos sakinio dėmenų tvarka dažniau bus aptinkama administraciniuose stiliaus tekstuose nei mokslo populiarinamojo postilio tekstuose, o pastarojo tipo tekstuose tokių sakinių bus apskritai mažiau. Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad abiejų nagrinėtų tipų tekstuose sakinio struktūra, kai šalutinis sąlygos sakinio dėmuo yra sakinio pradžioje arba, atvirkščiai, pabaigoje, vertimo proceso metu išlaikoma. Administracinių tekstų vertėjai yra linkę išlaikyti tą pačią sudėtingą sakinio struktūrą, kai šalutinis sąlygos sakinio dėmuo yra sakinio viduryje, tačiau norint patvirtinti ir patikslinti šį pastebėjimą būtina atlikti platesnį tyrimą tiek administracinio stiliaus, tiek mokslo populiarinamojo postilio atveju.

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