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## **LOST AND FOUND IN TRANSLATION: SYNTACTIC MARKEDNESS, POLITICAL LEXICON, AND PROSODY IN INTERPRETED EU-PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES (GERMAN-ITALIAN)**

This qualitative exploratory study investigates the strategies employed by European Parliament interpreters when translating particularly challenging plenary speech segments from German into Italian. The focus is on syntactically marked constructions and ideologically loaded vocabulary. Adopting a multilevel approach (syntax, lexis, prosody-pragmatics), the analysis reveals a complex reality in which certain rhetorical and pragmatic features of the source texts are either neutralized or preserved. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance to delve into the prosodic-pragmatic interface of simultaneous interpretation.

**Keywords:** simultaneous interpretation, European Parliament, syntactic markedness, Nachfeld, political discourse, German-Italian

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The European Union (EU) constitutes a unique domain for linguistic research, as it is the only institution with no fewer than 24 official languages, all holding equal status: it is thus characterised as a multilingual environment (Colaci, 2018, p. 58). Because all EU citizens have the right to access the work of EU institutions (laws, information, speeches, etc.) in their own language, translation processes play a crucial role in ensuring institutional transparency and inclusivity (Cosmai, 2007). In the context of plenary speeches at the European Parliament (EP), translation is provided through simultaneous interpreting, whereby interpreters orally and in real time

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render what the EU deputies (also known as Members of the European Parliament, MEPs) are saying into the target languages. The modality of translation being both oral and immediate proves for the interpreters demanding. The present paper aims to qualitatively investigate possible translation strategies employed by EP interpreters when confronted with particularly challenging segments of MEPs' speeches—specifically those containing marked syntactic constructions and ideologically loaded words (see also Caprioli, 2025). The present study, centred on the German to Italian language pair, represents a preliminary, not yet generalisable exploration that advocates for a multi-level linguistic approach to the analysis of simultaneous interpretation.

### 1.1 Simultaneous interpretation at the European Parliament

The primary goal of interpreting at the EP is to facilitate the communication among speakers of different languages, which is achieved by simultaneously interpreting all oral speeches into the EU's other official languages (Riccardi, 2007). Interpreters are primarily tasked with conveying the meaning and content of a speech into the target language (Cinato 2016, 2019). However, replicating the speaker's exact phrasing is often difficult: simultaneous interpreting is cognitively demanding due to the necessity of processing and producing speech concurrently (Riccardi, 1998). At the EP, these demands are compounded by the high speech rate of the MEPs, which makes a faithful interpretation more difficult (Anghelli & Mori, 2022, p. 96). Consequently, on the one side not all elements of the original speech can always be reproduced (Cinato, 2019), on the other side anticipation plays a pivotal role: using co- and contextual cues as well as common ground knowledge, interpreters often predict upcoming elements before they are uttered (Wills, 1978).

Interpreting at the EP is thus inherently challenging, but linguistic asymmetries between source and target languages pose an additional test, as interpreters face fewer difficulties when working between syntactically similar languages (Politi, 1997; Riccardi & Snelling, 1997). For this reason, German—being an SOV language<sup>1</sup>—is frequently studied in interpreting research (Riccardi, 2007, p. 666), especially due to its characteristic *Verbklammerstruktur* 'verb bracketing structure', which sets it apart from most of the other European and world languages (Weinrich, 1986). This means that in German the predicate must often be realised in a discontinuous form, in which the part carrying the main semantic content only appears at the end of the clause, requiring interpreters to wait before they can begin translating (Wills, 1978, p. 347). Given time constraints, they often resort to syntactic anticipation—predicting

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<sup>1</sup> The categorisation of German as an SOV or SVO language remains a matter of debate. In this study, we follow the position outlined by Gaeta (2017) and Freywald (2023), advocating for an SOV order by highlighting the possibility to displace at the end of the clause the semantically central part of the predicate through the addition of a modal verb, and by considering the clause-final position of the verb in subordinate clauses as the basic word order (see also Thurmair, 1991).

the final verb—which may lead to divergences, use semantically weaker verbs that fit the sentence but may deviate from the original or reorder constituents and modify intonation contours when translating (Bevilacqua, 2009; Cinato, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

### 1.2 Verb-free *Nachfeld* occupations with ideologically loaded words and their interpretation

Syntactically marked<sup>3</sup> constructions often extend beyond purely syntactic concerns, as they typically involve pragmatic questions. Each language possesses its own inventory of such constructions (Pekarek Doehler et al., 2015); in German, verb-free (or verb-less) *Nachfeld*<sup>4</sup> occupations (*verbfreie Nachfeldbesetzungen*) constitute one such marked construction. Due to the bracketing structure characteristic of German syntax, the predicate—either in its entirety or in part—must appear at the end of the clause. However, there are cases where the *Nachfeld* is occupied, thereby creating an utterance where one or more constituents are placed after the part of the predicate that should be at the very end. This is illustrated in example (1)<sup>5</sup>: in (1a) the *Nachfeld* is empty, with the infinite verb *sein* ‘(to) be’ closing the sentence, whilst the semantically equivalent utterance in (1b) is syntactically marked by the placement of *mit der Todesstrafe* ‘with the death penalty’ after the verbal bracket—i.e. in the *Nachfeld*.

(1)

- a. Es muss mit der Todesstrafe Schluss sein. (canonical word order)  
it must with the death penalty end be  
‘The death penalty must be abolished’
- b. Es muss Schluss sein **mit der Todesstrafe**. (with verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation)  
it must end be with the death penalty  
‘The death penalty must be abolished’

Vinckel (2006, pp. 62–64) describes such verb-free *Nachfeld* occupations as non-sentential structures occurring after the clause-final verbal element. These can be syntactically and prosodically more or less dependent from the reference structure.

<sup>2</sup> Setton & Dawrant (2016) define these aspects as *syntacrobatics*.

<sup>3</sup> Linguistic markedness is here referred to as outlined in Lombardi Vallauri (2009), Ferrari (2012) and Gaeta (2017), according to whom a non-marked construction represents the most frequent and common way of encoding a given meaning.

<sup>4</sup> *Nachfeld* is a widely used concept in German linguistics since Drach (1937) and, in particular, Engel (1970); it can be approximately translated into English as ‘postfield’ (see its use in English in Lambert, 1976; Vinckel-Roisin, 2021 among others). It can be roughly defined as the part of the sentence after the infinite verb, the past participle, the separable prefix or the predicative adjective in declarative and interrogative clauses, and after the verbal complex in subordinate clauses (Gaeta, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> The example is taken from the corpus in Caprioli (in preparation) and has been orthographically normalised.

Whereas not ungrammatical—though syntactic constraints apply to what can be placed in this position—these constructions are syntactically marked and reflect pragmatic needs of the speaker, particularly in political discourse (Vinckel, 2006; Antonioli 2014). For instance, their utility lies in enhancing listener comprehension, improving textual clarity, giving space to afterthoughts and repairs, and, most notably, in focusing attention on specific information (Filpus, 1994; Vinckel-Roisin, 2011; Caprioli, 2022, 2025). They thus function as a discursive strategy employed by politicians to achieve persuasive goals (Vinckel, 2006). Since Italian lacks a bracketing structure like the German one, there is no direct formal equivalent to a *Nachfeld* construction. When such structures appear in MEPs’ speeches, the EP interpreters may benefit from reduced syntactic distance, which can aid in preserving constituent order (Bevilacqua, 2009). However, they face the more complex challenge of conveying the rhetorical functions embedded in verb-less *Nachfeld* constructions, that are often difficult to reproduce faithfully in translation (Caprioli, 2025).

Another key element in the rhetorical structuring of political speeches is the use of ideologically<sup>6</sup> loaded vocabulary, often referred to as catchwords (germ. *Schlagwörter*). These lexical items are used to shape public opinion, evoke emotions, and influence behaviour by expressing a stance toward a political issue through carefully chosen words (Niehr, 2007, 2021; Dang-Anh, 2023). Although often drawn from common lexicon, such words acquire ideological weight through additional connotations or evaluative meanings; however, they do not exist in a vacuum but must be decoded within specific political and social contexts in order to be recognized (Girnth & Hofmann, 2016, p. 9). Owing to their brevity and resonance, catchwords possess a strategic persuasive potential: they can encapsulate entire political agendas, obviating the need for elaborate argumentation, and contribute both to political polarization and the propagation of ideological positions (Niehr, 2019).<sup>7</sup> Like verb-free *Nachfeld* occupations, the handling of ideologically charged vocabulary in interpretation poses significant challenges for simultaneous interpreters: they are ordinary words that carry context-dependent ideological significance, making them particularly difficult to render accurately in translation. Due to its function—among the many it can have—to highlight salient information<sup>8</sup>, the verb-less *Nachfeld* in political discourse frequently accommodates such words, which thereby gain particular emphasis through this syntactic positioning (Antonioli, 2014; Caprioli, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> In the sense of Van Dijk (2006), according to whom “ideologies consist of social representations that define the social identity of a group, that is, its shared beliefs about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence and reproduction” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 116).

<sup>7</sup> Terms such as *Arier* ‘Aryan’, *Lebensraum* and *Rasse* ‘race’ are examples of typical political catchwords during the Nazi period (Niehr, 2007, p. 498).

<sup>8</sup> A *Nachfeld* occupation typically serves a highlighting function when its content carries sentence accent, thereby assuming the status of focus (see below). However, it can also accommodate background information when such elements are unaccented or are realised with an Appendix intonation contour (cf. the description of L-AcT below).

## 2. DATA

The data for the present analysis are drawn from the corpus compiled in Caprioli (in preparation), which comprises 500 occurrences of verb-free *Nachfeld* occupations in plenary speeches at the EP delivered orally<sup>9</sup> in German between January 2023 and January 2024 by MEPs elected in Germany, to ensure a mother tongue level of the speakers.<sup>10</sup> Of these 500 occurrences, a subset of 200 has been randomly selected to be accompanied by the corresponding translation in Italian produced orally by the EP simultaneous interpreters. For this analysis, only occurrences annotated as containing ideological lexicon are taken into consideration. Due to the qualitative and narrow scope of the present research<sup>11</sup>, only a few examples are presented—specifically those that can be considered most representative of the typologies under scrutiny. Both the original speeches and their simultaneous interpretation are available to be heard (and seen) on the EP official website (see Appendix). All occurrences have been transcribed following the main conventions of the *Basistranskript* of GAT2 (Selting et al., 2009)<sup>12</sup>—e.g., the indication of the stressed syllable in every intonation phrase (IP)<sup>13</sup> with capital letters, of pauses in brackets, of latching phenomena between IPs, etc.—, while boundary tones of IPs are annotated in accordance with the conventions and the tag-set of the Language Into Act Theory (abbreviated as L-AcT; Cresti, 2000; Moneglia & Raso, 2014)<sup>14</sup>. The verb-free *Nachfeld* occupations are indicated in bold to better show their distribution.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This means that blue card questions and answers to blue card questions (cf. Corbett et al., 2011) are included in the corpus and treated as single speeches, whilst written interventions sent by the MEPs to be added in the verbatim report of proceedings are excluded.

<sup>10</sup> Corbett et al. (2011) show that, in general, nearly all MEPs elected in a given country are citizens of that country.

<sup>11</sup> Quantitative results are instead discussed in greater detail in Caprioli (in preparation).

<sup>12</sup> An overview of these conventions is available at <https://gat-to.uni-jena.de/> (28/07/2025).

<sup>13</sup> In this study, the notion of *intonation phrase* is adopted as defined by Selting et al. (2009), who describe it as a prosodic unit identifiable by a complete and cohesive intonation contour.

<sup>14</sup> In brief, L-AcT is a theoretical framework grounded in Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory, designed to investigate the pragmatic organization of oral interaction, stressing on the role of prosody in the analysis of the way oral interaction is built. According to L-AcT, every utterance can be segmented into IPs, each of which is associated with a specific function: the Comment is the mandatory IP which carries the illocutionary force of the utterance; IPs can then fulfil either textual functions (Topic, Appendix, Parenthesis), dialogic functions (Allocutive, Phatic, Conative, etc.), or other functions lacking informational value (Scanning, Time-Taking, etc.). Beyond this level, L-AcT also identifies prosodic units bigger than the single utterance that are typical of monologic speeches, such as Stanzas, in which at least two Comments are bound together in a continuous flow and have a rather diffuse illocutionary force, and Illocutionary Patterns, in which a sequence of two or more Comments (Multiple Comments) are held by a single prosodic pattern to express specific relations (List, Comparison, Reinforcement, etc.). The identification of both IP functions and speech acts is exclusively based on prosodic criteria and is (largely) independent of syntactic and semantic clues.

<sup>15</sup> Even though the examples are not glossed, the analysis seeks to provide the most detailed possible account of the syntactic structure of the utterances in order to capture the distribution of verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation as accurately as possible.

### 3. METHOD

All occurrences in Italian are compared to their German correspondences and analysed across different linguistic levels: (i) syntax, (ii) lexis and (iii) prosody-pragmatics. (i) From a syntactic perspective, the analysis investigates whether the Italian renderings feature marked constructions—such as *topicalizzazione* ‘topicalization’, *dislocazione a sinistra* ‘left dislocation’ or *dislocazione a destra* ‘right dislocation’ (cf. e.g., Benincà, 2001). In cases where no marked construction is observed, attention is given to the resulting linear distribution within the Italian sentence—i.e. whether it follows an unmarked word order, involves shifts of position in the utterance, or exhibits other reordering strategies. (ii) The lexical analysis follows the criteria proposed by Caprioli (2025; based on Anghelli & Mori, 2022). This approach categorises semantic affinity or divergences in interpretation according to following types: literal translation; synonymy or reformulation with a comparable connotation or perlocutionary effect; reformulation with a differing connotation or perlocutionary effect; use of more generic or vague expressions. Furthermore, the analysis considers whether the entire verb-less *Nachfeld* occupation or specific lexical item within it are omitted in translation. (iii) The prosodic-pragmatic examination explores whether the IPs in the Italian translation—corresponding to the German verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation—show a differing distribution in sentence accentuation, thereby effecting the *focus-background structure*<sup>16</sup>. In addition, the analysis examines whether the type of prosodic unit according to L-AcT remains consistent between the German original and in the Italian translation, and whether the prosodic breaks—either terminal or non-terminal—preceding and following the phenomenon in question align across the two languages. Prosody represents an additional challenge for interpreters: not knowing how the speaker will deliver their speech, they are unable to predict its precise intonation contours (Kučiš & Majhenič, 2018).

### 4. RESULTS

In this section some representative results from the (i) syntactical, (ii) lexical and (iii) prosodical analysis are presented under the broader categories *lost*—when the interpreters’ renderings somehow diverge from the original versions—and *found*—when the interpreters’ renderings adhere to the original versions—in translation.<sup>17</sup> Each example consists of an *a*-occurrence—the transcription of the original speech—and a

<sup>16</sup> Following, among others, Uhmann (1991) for German and Lombardi Vallauri (2009) for Italian, sentence accentuation in an IP marks those constituents perceived as informationally prominent—i.e. in focus—, whereas non-accented elements constitute the utterance background (cf. also Moroni, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> For each level of analysis, a more fine-grained categorisation is required (see Caprioli, in preparation). As a preliminary and exploratory contribution, this study aims to provide an initial overview of various translation strategies, which can be broadly classified as instances of either *lost* or *found*.

*b*-occurrence—the transcription of its respective translation of the EP interpreter. Each example is furthermore assigned to a specific level of analysis; however, observations from other levels are also taken into account where relevant.

(i) From a syntactical point of view, example (2) is a case of *lost* in translation.

(2)

a.

01 und dass sie die unabhängigkeit der justIZ beachtet/<sup>COB</sup>  
 02 (-)  
 03 **und der palästinensischen zIVILgesellschaft**/<sup>COB</sup>

b.

01 e deve garantire l'indipendenza della giustIZia/<sup>COB</sup>  
 02 (.)  
 03 **e DEL**=/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 04 =**la società civile**::/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 05 **palestINEse**//<sup>COM</sup>

(Speech A)

While (2a) features a verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation—i.e. a marked syntactic construction—occurring after the finite verb *beachtet* ‘observes’, which in a subordinate clause should be clause-final, (2b) does not: the Italian version simply adheres to the unmarked linear word order required by Italian syntax (cf. Lombardi Vallauri 2009; Cosentino, 2023), according to which the object *e della società civile palestinese* ‘and of the Palestinian civil society’ is placed after the predicate. In the context of a statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the peculiar syntactic configuration of (2a) enables the speaker to place particular emphasis on *und der palästinensischen Zivilgesellschaft* ‘and of the Palestinian civil society’, which is moreover prosodically realised as a Comment Bound, thereby contributing to the construction of the illocutionary force of the Stanza. The peculiar effect of a verbless *Nachfeld* occupation is lost in the interpreted version in (2b), although the same content is realised as a Comment Bound, mirroring the prosodic structure of the source text.

Example (3) is a case of (partially) *found* in translation.

(3)

a.

01 AUFkommender ressourcenhunger/<sup>COB</sup>  
 02 (.)  
 03 präsentiert **in der neuen SEIdenstraße**/<sup>COB</sup>  
 04 **und in der ROLle als aktiver geopolitischer akteur**/<sup>COB</sup>

b.

01 **nella NUOva::**/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 02 **via della SEta**/<sup>TOP</sup>  
 03 la CIna vuole::/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 04 (-)  
 05 divenTAre/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 06 (.)  
 07 **un atTOre cen!TRA!le a livello globale**/<sup>COB</sup>

(Speech B)

Example (3a) syntactically displays a verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation: the constituents *in der neuen Seidenstraße und in der Rolle als aktiver geopolitischer Akteur* ‘in the new Silk Road and in its role as an active geopolitical player’ are placed after the past participle *präsentiert* ‘presented’. In contrast, (3b) does not feature such syntactic markedness; however, unlike in (2b), the interpreter strategically exploits the relatively free word order of Italian by placing part of the original *Nachfeld* occupation—more precisely *nella nuova Via della seta* ‘in the new Silk Road’—in the clause-initial position, thereby assigning it relevant topical status (cf. Lombardi Vallauri, 2009). Not coincidentally, the pragmatic-prosodic structure also differs: in (3a) the information is articulated through Comment Bound that together form a Stanza with a diffuse illocutionary force; in (3b) the interpreter likewise constructs a Stanza, but the constituents fronted to the beginning are realised with a Topic intonation contour, and therefore do not carry illocutionary force, serving instead a textual management function.

(ii) From a lexical point of view, example (4) is a case of *lost* in translation.

(4)

a.

01 dass REgelmäßig/<sup>TOP</sup>  
 02 wenn ich EINsprüche formuliere/<sup>TOP</sup>  
 03 (-)  
 04 **gegen die HERaufsetzung von grenzwerten**=/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 05 =um IMporte nicht zu gefährden=<sup>TOP</sup>  
 06 die E vao pe fraktion dagegen stimmt//<sup>COM</sup>

b.

01 che ogni volta che faccio obieZIOne/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 02 (.)  
 03 **contro la riduzione della SOglia**/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 04 per non compromETtere/<sup>SCA</sup>

05 (.)  
 06 la situaZIOne/<sup>TOP</sup>  
 07 il vostro parTito/<sup>i-COM</sup>  
 08 l'e fao PE/<sup>PAR</sup>  
 09 vota CONtro//<sup>COM</sup>

(Speech C)

Example (4) constitutes a case of lexical reformulation involving a semantic reversal, i.e. a complete shift in meaning: while discussing the sustainable use of plant protection products, the speaker in (4a) from the Greens/ALE political group states in the verb-less *Nachfeld* occupation—realised after the conjugated verb *formuliere* ‘(I) formulate’ in the subordinate clause—that they are ‘against the *raising* of threshold values [of pesticides, F. C.]’ (*gegen die Heraufsetzung von Grenzwerten*); in contrast, the interpreter in (4b) renders the utterance with the opposite meaning by stating they are ‘against the *reduction* of the threshold’ (*contro la riduzione della soglia*). It is not possible to determine precisely why the interpreter produces such a shift in meaning; however, institutional pressures to maintain a very high delivery rate and to constantly navigate different political sensitivities may have played an important role (cf. also Anghelli & Mori, 2022). The interpreter nevertheless realizes the content of the verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation with the same intonation contour as in the original—i.e. the Topic one.

Example (5) is a case of *found* in translation.

(5)  
 a.  
 01 es muss schlUss sein **mit der Todesstrafe**//<sup>COM</sup>  
 b.  
 01 BASta/<sup>CMM</sup>  
 02 **con la pena di MORte**//<sup>CMM</sup>

(Speech D)

Example (5) illustrates a case of literal translation: the term *Todesstrafe* ‘death penalty’ in (5a) is accurately translated by the interpreter in (5b) as *pena di morte* ‘death penalty’. The prosodic realisation is also similar: (5a) is produced as a single independent utterance, whereas (5b) is realised as an Illocutionary Pattern which, though structurally more complex, still functions as an independent utterance. In both cases, a terminal prosodic break occurs at the end.

(iii) From a prosodic point of view, example (6) is a case of *lost* in translation.

(6)

a.

01 dass menschen sich gar nicht mehr auf den WEG machen  
müssen//<sup>COM</sup>

02 (-)

03 ÄH/<sup>TMT</sup>

04 **auf diese gefährliche ROute**//<sup>COM</sup>

b.

01 affinché le persone non intraPRENdano/<sup>COM</sup>

02 (-)

03 **questo viaggio pericoLOso**//<sup>APC</sup>

(Speech E)

The verb-free *Nachfeld* occupation in (6a) is realised after the verbal complex *machen müssen* ‘(they) have to set out (on the journey)’ that should be at the end of the subordinate clause. An analysis based on L-AcT reveals that this verb-less *Nachfeld* occupation is realised as prosodically and pragmatically autonomous: it functions as a separate utterance with its own illocutionary force, thereby conferring it particular emphasis and a salient informative status. By contrast, the interpreter in (6b) renders the elements in the original *Nachfeld*—while semantically accurate—using an Appendix intonation contour (cf. Cresti, 2021), which not only fails to foreground the information, but relegates it to the background of the utterance.<sup>18</sup> In both cases, however, the prosodic break at the end of the *Nachfeld* occupation is terminal.

Example (7) is a case of *found* in translation.

(7)

a.

01 eine gruppe die MORdend durch euro/<sup>SCA</sup>

02 durch DEUTSCHland gezogen ist/<sup>COB</sup>

03 (-)

04 und bürgerinnen erMORdet hat//<sup>COM</sup>

05 **aus rasSISTischen**/<sup>SCA</sup>

06 **GRÜNden**//<sup>COM</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In this case, the presence of a sentence accent within the IP is merely due to the transcription conventions of GAT2. Nevertheless, the realisation of the IP with an Appendix intonation contour still indicates its background informative status (for a more extensive discussion of this issue see Caprioli, in preparation).

b.

01 =un GRUPpo che/<sup>SCA</sup>  
 02 (-)  
 03 eeh ucCIdeva/<sup>COM</sup>  
 04 (.)  
 05 gente in gerMAnia//<sup>APC</sup>  
 06 ha ucciso cittaDIni//<sup>COM</sup>  
 07 **per motivi razzISTi**//<sup>COM</sup>

(Speech F)

In (7a) the speaker realizes the *Nachfeld* occupation—after the verbal complex *ermordet hat* ‘(it) has murdered’ that should be at the end of the relative clause—as an autonomous utterance, endowing it with prominence through its own illocutionary force. In the interpretation (7b), this prosodic-pragmatic effect is successfully preserved: the elements in the original *Nachfeld*—also rendered with semantic accuracy—are assigned pragmatic independency by functioning as a separate utterance. Moreover, the prosodic break at the end of both cases is terminal and the sentence accentuation is also maintained.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Starting from a research question concerning the translation strategies employed by interpreters when faced with challenging segments of EP speeches—namely those involving syntactic markedness and ideologically loaded words—several translation strategies emerged.

At the syntactic level, the bracketing structure of German—which has no formal counterpart in Italian—poses significant challenges for rendering the pragmatic nuances of verb-less *Nachfeld* occupations. These can be lost in translation, resulting in utterances with an unmarked linear word order for the Italian syntax. Alternatively, reordering strategies can be involved—although they do not necessarily produce a syntactically marked construction; interpreters can therefore shift the position of (some elements in) the *Nachfeld* occupation, for instance by putting it in the clause-initial topic position. Cinato (2019) and Caprioli (2025) have underlined the difficulty to render such syntactic configurations in interpretation.

From a lexical perspective, catchwords may be rendered through a range of strategies along a *continuum*, from literal translation to more generic or vague expressions. Interpreters might adopt these strategies, for instance when adhering to the literal rendering of the words, or, possibly due to time pressure and the cognitive load they must deal with, produce translations that diverge in meaning. While Beaton-Thome (2013) suggests that interpreters tend to resort to more generic expressions, Anghelli & Mori (2022) observe that interpreters remain faithful to the original meaning and only rarely deviate from it.

From a prosodic-pragmatic viewpoint, interpreters may either replicate the speaker's prosodic organization—by maintaining the same prosodic phrasing, the same prosodic breaks around the *Nachfeld* occupation and the same pragmatic (in)dependence—or they may deviate from it, thereby producing prosodic units that differ from the original speech and altering the pragmatic and informative management of the speech. Previous research indicates a general tendency of interpreters to rather use continuing intonation patterns<sup>19</sup>, likely due to the unpredictability of the speaker's delivery (cf. Shlesinger, 1994).

Although each of these levels of analysis can be examined individually to grasp their specific contribution in translation, it is important to acknowledge their mutual interdependence. A more comprehensive categorisation—beyond the aims of this preliminary investigation—should integrate all these levels into a unified framework (see Caprioli, in preparation). The results suggest, for instance, that prosodic devices can compensate for syntactic divergences (example 2), and that syntactic restructuring may also trigger prosodic adjustment (example 3). Likewise, a faithful prosodic delivery does not automatically guarantee a semantically faithful translation of political catchwords (example 4) and vice-versa (examples 5–6).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has examined a highly specific multilingual context—i.e. the EP, where oral plenary speeches must be translated in real time by the interpreters. For this research, the language pair from German to Italian was taken into consideration. More precisely, the investigation focused on cases of syntactically marked constructions containing political catchwords, which are deemed to pose significant challenges for the translation. Through an analysis across various linguistic levels (syntax, lexis, prosody-pragmatics), the findings revealed a multifaceted reality in which certain linguistic features of the source speeches are either lost or (partially) preserved in interpretation. Instances of *lost in translation* were generally attributable to the extremely demanding nature of the interpreting context, which is characterised by high speech rates—which make it uncomfortable to deliver a faithful translation—and the frequent use of ideologically loaded vocabulary which is difficult to semantically disentangle.

The multi-level approach adopted here proved effective in capturing the range of the strategies the interpreters employ, as it integrates complementary perspectives of linguistic analysis that altogether concur to shape the rendering in interpretation. The limitations of this study, however, is its qualitative approach and *in fieri* nature: future research building on this framework should aim at conducting a quantitative study capable of identifying recurring translation patterns. Particular attention should be

<sup>19</sup> Within the L-AcT framework, continuing intonation patterns are typically associated with Scanning units and, in particular, with Comment Bound forming part of Stanzas.

given to the prosodic-pragmatic interface between original and interpreted speeches, an area that remains underexplored in the literature. In this respect, the systematic application of the L-AcT framework would be especially valuable for shedding light on how interpreters prosodically and pragmatically structure their translations.

## 7. APPENDIX

From <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html> (28/07/2025):

- Speech A: 11/07/2023, *Relations with the Palestinian Authority (debate)*, 17:51:25–17:53:29, M. G. (EPP);
- Speech B: 19/01/2023, *The Global Gateway Initiative (debate)*, 11:06:18–11:07:41, V. C. (Greens/EFA);
- Speech C: 21/11/2023, *Sustainable use of plant protection products (debate)*, 10:03:17–10:03:53, J. P. (Greens/EFA);
- Speech D: 17/01/2023, *EU response to the protests and executions in Iran (debate)*, 22:09:25–22:11:21, C. E. (The Left);
- Speech E: 18/01/2023, *Criminalisation of humanitarian assistance, including search and rescue (debate)*, 19:11:56–19:13:41, J. O. (Renew);
- Speech F: 18/01/2023, *Terrorist threats posed by far-right extremist networks defying the democratic constitutional order (debate)*, 16:35:23–16:38:39, G. B. (S&D).

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**IZGUBLJENI I PRONAĐENI U PREVODU: SINTAKSIČKA MARKIRANOST,  
POLITIČKI LEKSIKON I PROZODIJA U GOVORIMA U EVROPSKOM  
PARLAMENTU (NEMAČKO-ITALIJANSKI)**

Rezime

Ova kvalitativna eksplorativna studija istražuje strategije koje koriste prevodioci Evropskog parlamenta prilikom prevođenja posebno zahtevnih segmenata plenarnih govora sa nemačkog na italijanski jezik. Fokus je na sintaksički markiranim konstrukcijama i ideološki obojenom vokabularu. Usvajanjem višeslojnog pristupa (sintaksa, leksika, prozodija-pragmatika), analiza otkriva složenu stvarnost u kojoj se određene retoričke i pragmatičke karakteristike izvornog teksta ili neutralizuju ili čuvaju. Nalazi dodatno naglašavaju važnost dubljeg proučavanja prozodijsko-pragmatskog interfejsa simultanog prevođenja.

**Ključne reči:** simultano prevođenje, Evropski parlament, sintaksička markiranost, Nachfeld, politički diskurs, nemački-italijanski