

# Question Time: Comparing and contrasting parliamentary questions in Britain, Italy and the EU

GIUSEPPE PALUMBO  
Università di Trieste

## ABSTRACT

Following the recent tradition of research on situations of language contact and, in particular, on the reciprocal influences between languages in terms of textual patterns and argumentative and rhetorical structures, the paper reports on the analysis of a small corpus of parliamentary questions, observed in two different settings, one national (Italy) and one supranational (the European Parliament). More specifically, the analyzed corpus includes: 1) written questions by MPs in the two Chambers of the Italian Parliament; 2) written questions in Italian by Italian MEPs; 3) written questions tabled by British MEPs and translated into Italian. The aim of the analysis was to identify the possible influence exerted by the supranational context on the lexical and syntactic make-up of the texts produced by Italian MEPs. The results show that, especially from the point of view of syntax and discourse structure, questions by Italian MEPs are closer to the translated questions than to the questions tabled in the Italian Parliament.

## KEYWORDS

language contact, hybrid texts, parliamentary discourse, EU texts, connectives.

Translations are often presented as the quintessentially hybrid texts, or as texts displaying “features that somehow seem ‘out of place’/‘strange’/‘unusual’ for the receiving culture, i.e., the target culture” (Schäffner and Adab 2001: 169). More specifically, translations are often described as texts showing a significant degree of markedness with respect to texts produced by native speakers of the target language. The linguistic make-up of translations, in other words, is often considered to differ from that of comparable “native” texts. Such difference may have to do with the overrepresentation of certain traits or features (e.g. a higher frequency of occurrence of certain items or patterns) or, conversely, with the underrepresentation, or even the absence, of other traits that are frequently found in native texts.

The tendency to prefer standardized forms of the target language, postulated by Toury (1995: 267-271) as the “law of growing standardisation” and documented by a series of studies (e.g., recently, Delaere et al. 2012), can be placed towards the pole of overrepresentation. Interference from the source language, which is the basis for Toury’s (1995: 271-279) other general “law” of translation, can manifest itself in many forms, such as the tendency to use collocations that are unusual in the target language or the tendency *not* to use, or to proportionally under-represent, target-language items that have no direct counterpart in the source language (according to what is known as the “unique items hypothesis”; Tirkkonen-Condit 2004).

Considering these as universal traits of translated texts, i.e. as features characterizing all translations irrespective of the pair of languages involved, is controversial (Mauranen 2007). While the markedness of translated texts can be described in qualitative and – thanks to corpus-based methods of analysis – quantitative terms, the origins of marked features in translation may be diverse. The process of translation may certainly play a role in shaping the particular make-up of a translated text with respect to comparable native texts, but an equally significant role may be played by specific phenomena of interference from the source language, deliberate stylistic choices on the part of translators and their adherence to specific translational “cultures” such as those emerging in multi-national or multi-cultural contexts, of which the EU institutions are a typical example (Tosi 2007; Koskinen 2008).

In short, while it is possible to observe specific textual patterns and link them to regularities of behaviour on the part of translators, the motivation behind such patterns and regularities may have as much to do with translational contexts and norms as with the process of translation *per se*. The difficulty of distinguishing between the two general sets of motivations was already acknowledged by those (such as Baker 1996 and Laviosa 2002) who elaborated the search for translation universals as a full-blown programme of research. Recent studies and discussions have, if anything, cast further doubts the possibility of identifying

true universals (Tymoczko 2005; Becher 2010; Chesterman 2010). On the other hand, the methodologies developed in the quest for universals have provided researchers with an array of tools and ideas that are proving particularly useful in the elucidation of the specific features of translated texts.

With particular reference to Italian, the last decade has seen the appearance of a number of studies aimed at identifying the particular nature of translated language with respect to contemporary native texts. Interest in the linguistic make-up of Italian translated texts has come both from translation scholars (Garzone and Cardinaletti 2004; Cardinaletti and Garzone 2005; Palumbo and Musacchio 2010) and Italian linguists (Salsnik 2007; Ondelli and Viale 2012), both groups often relating their analyses to the research on the features of contemporary standard Italian (Sabatini 1985; Berruto 1987). A few studies, such as Ondelli (2003), Cortelazzo (2008) and Tosi (2007), have expanded the horizon of their investigation so as to relate the evolution of modern Italian, in either translated or non-translated texts, to situations in which writers experience contact with other languages, especially English.

The consideration of international scenarios in the discussion of how texts are translated or even produced in the first place brings us back to the question of hybridity. As argued by Pym (2001), qualifying translations as quintessentially hybrid may lead us to ignore comparisons with other, possibly more hybrid, modes of text production. Translations in general can even be seen as “agents of dehybridization” in their attempt to project the illusion of the non-hybrid text: “translated texts mark lines between at least two languages and cultures; they posit the separation and the possible purity of both” (Pym 2001: 196). As Pym (2001: 203) goes on to note, there are various contexts in which “sources are becoming more hybrid than their translations” (Pym 2001: 203). In such contexts, texts are produced by people who are not translators but inhabit the same “intercultural space” as translators: people who use a foreign language for interacting with each other and producing drafts and official documents. In settings like the EU institutions, source-text production is largely carried out by non native speakers and the texts they produce may well be characterized as hybrids with respect to comparable texts produced in national contexts. Pym’s argument echoes the paradox of EU translation pointed out by Tosi (2007: 164): “[s]e si accetta che nessuna traduzione abbia mai le sembianze di un originale è perché lo stesso originale si legge come una traduzione” – a paradox which largely derives from the status of English as the unofficial but *de facto* lingua franca used within EU institutions.

The present paper focuses on the analysis of one specific text type, parliamentary questions, in both a national context (the Italian Parliament) and the supranational, supra-cultural setting of the European Parliament, where questions are tabled by MPs either in their own language or in English and are then translated into all EU official languages for publication in the *Official Journal of the European Parliament*. The idea is to compare a specific, highly-constrained text type as emerging in the two settings so as to observe differences and similarities,

and to relate these to the influence of source texts on the one hand and ‘national’ conventions on the other.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONING

Analyzing and comparing parliamentary discourse is considered problematic because of the difficulty in drawing general conclusions about its features and functions (Fenton-Smith 2008: 97). Parliamentary activity includes a huge variety of discursive processes and the notion of parliament itself varies from one country to another in terms of constitutional frameworks, balance of power between the legislative and the executive, a parliament’s role in the policy-making process, the systems of representation and a country’s specific political culture (Bayley 2004: 2-5).

As suggested by Fenton-Smith (2012: 98) himself, there are various possibilities for overcoming this problem, one of which is the selection of an activity which is common to different parliaments, such as parliamentary questioning. It has been noted (for instance, by Wiberg 1995) that the practice of questioning is far from uniform across parliaments, even within the European context: in each parliamentary system questioning may have different sets of motivations and respond to different incentives. The present analysis, however, will not focus on the pragmatic functions of parliamentary questions. Looking at some generic, textual and lexico-syntactic features, the analysis will take into consideration a particular text type (or subgenre) of parliamentary questioning: the questions tabled in written form by MPs in the Italian Parliament and in the European Parliament.

In very general terms, questions to the government by MPs are one way in which a parliament exercises control on the activity of the executive. The practice originated in the British Parliament in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was later taken up in the proceedings of many other national parliaments. In Italy, questions are of three types: written questions (*interrogazioni*), oral questions (*interrogazioni a risposta immediata*) and interpellations (*interpellanze*). They can be tabled, by individual MPs or groups of MPs, in both Chambers of the Parliament (*Camera dei Deputati* and *Senato*) and must meet the requirements set out in the rules of each Chamber as to their content and essential aim. The difference between *interrogazioni* and *interpellanze* is that the former ask for information of an essentially factual nature, whereas the latter are intended to enquire about the political motivations behind the government’s actions and decisions. Questions are always tabled, in advance, in written form, even when they are regarded as “oral” questions. They can require either a written or an oral answer. Questions can also be presented to individual Committees of either Chambers. For the purposes of the present studies only *interrogazioni* have been considered.

In the European Parliament there used to be four different procedures for tabling questions: questions for written answer, questions for oral answer without debate, questions for oral answer with debate and questions for question time. Oral questions without debate were abolished in 1993. Whether they are for oral or written answer, questions must be submitted in advance in written form.

## 2.2 THE CORPUS

The small corpus compiled for this study aims to explore differences and similarities in three sets of parliamentary questions, all written in Italian but produced in two different settings (one national, one supra-national) and in two different 'modes', i.e. as originals and translations. The three sets will be referred to as 'IT-PARL', 'EU-PARL' and 'EU-PARL-TRAD'. More specifically, the three corpus components are composed as follows:

- IT-PARL: 80 questions (*interrogazioni*) from the Italian Parliament: 40 from the *Camera dei Deputati* and 40 from the *Senato*; the total amount of tokens for this component of the corpus is 32,452;
- EU-PARL: 129 questions (for either oral or written answer) tabled by Italian MPs, in Italian, in the European Parliament; total number of tokens: 29,724;
- EU-PARL-TRAD: 147 questions tabled by British MPs in the European Parliament and translated into Italian; total number of tokens: 29,168.

For each corpus component questions were selected at random from those published in 2012 in each Parliament's website.<sup>1</sup> An attempt has been made to ensure a quantitative balance for each of the three corpus components, which explains the different numbers of questions included in each. The size of the corpus is too small to allow statistically significant conclusions from quantitative analyses. On the other hand, as the analysis of some features will show, the texts included in each corpus component appear to be highly standardized in terms of both structure and lexico-syntactic choices, which suggests that results obtained from a small-scale analysis may reflect patterns and trends likely to emerge from the analysis of a larger corpus.

The analysis will start from a consideration of the macrostructure of the texts in each component and will then move on to consider some morpho-syntactic features. Specific attention will be devoted to the ways in which cohesion is realized in each corpus component, and particularly to the use of cohesive devices signalling relations between sentences (coordinating conjunctions).

### 3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### 3.1. MACROSTRUCTURE OF QUESTIONS

Questions in the Italian Parliament have an obligatory structure: in the Senate, they have a heading indicating the name of the questioner(s) and the minister(s) the question is addressed to. A preface then follows, opened by the formula *premesso che*. The preface is by far the largest element in the text, usually including a succession of several sentences or even paragraphs. The formula *si chiede di sapere* (or sometimes *conoscere*) introduces the question or questions proper, which are always syntactically indirect, as in the following example:

- (1) [...] *si chiede di sapere che cosa intenda fare il Governo per accertare, ed eventualmente sanzionare, le azioni dei sanitari e dei magistrati coinvolti negli eventi di cui sopra.*

Questions in the *Camera dei Deputati* have a slightly different but still obligatory structure, in that the heading is followed by a double formula: *per sapere* and then, immediately after, *premesso che*. The first formula (*per sapere*) is strictly the introduction to the proper question or questions; these, however, come much later in the text (phrased as indirect questions) after the preface, which is again a succession of several sentences or paragraphs. The following is an excerpt from one question where the fixed formulas are highlighted:

- (2) *Al Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri. - Per sapere - premesso che: il futuro della Calabria, racchiuso nel suo sviluppo economico e nella crescita sociale e civile, è legato ad un incisivo contrasto al grave fenomeno dell'associazione mafiosa, denominata 'ndrangheta;*  
[...]  
*se il Governo non ritenga di porre particolare cura alle vicende della Calabria, con specifica attenzione, nel rigoroso rispetto delle proprie competenze e del principio della divisione dei poteri, ai gravi fatti segnalati in premessa, per evitare che la polvere dell'oblio possa coprire una pagina che agli interroganti appare inquietante.*

In short, for the Italian Parliament, the structure of questions can be schematically represented as follows:

Heading ^ Preface ^ Question proper (indirect)

Within such a structure the phrase *premesso che* serves as a textual signal introducing the preface. In questions tabled at the *Camera dei Deputati*, the textual signal for the questions proper (*per sapere*) is explicitly mentioned but it is mostly a graphic signal, placed as it is before the preface and at considerable distance from

the questions proper. Though graphically distant, however, the phrase *per sapere* forces the question proper to be phrased as an indirect question, which means that syntactically it takes the form of a subordinate clause.

In the European Parliament, questions are usually fronted by the indication of the subject. A preface then follows, which is sometimes structured as a bulleted or numbered list. The question or questions proper come at the end. These are usually phrased as direct questions and explicitly mention the addressee. When there is more than one question, the questions are usually presented as a bulleted or numbered list. The strictly obligatory elements in the questions are the subject and the question proper. In some cases (all appearing in EU-PARL-TRAD) the preface is missing, as in this example:

- (3) *Oggetto: Riepilogo delle misure concernenti il pluralismo dei mezzi di comunicazione*  
*Potrebbe la Commissione riepilogare le iniziative e azioni attuali dell'UE concernenti il pluralismo dei mezzi di comunicazione?*

The structure of questions at the European Parliament can be schematically presented as follows:

Heading ^ (Preface) ^ Question proper (usually direct)

In several questions tabled by Italian MEPs, this structure is made to accommodate elements that are typical of Italian parliamentary questions, as in the following example, where the preface is explicitly signalled by the use of *considerato che*:

- (4) *Oggetto: Utilizzo di truciolo di legno per pratiche di invecchiamento del vino*  
*Considerato che:*  
– *l'UE ritiene prioritarie le politiche di tutela dei consumatori, di trasparenza delle etichette dei prodotti alimentari e di valorizzazione della qualità dei prodotti agricoli;*  
– *in sede di Comitato di Gestione vino sarebbe stata raggiunta un'intesa di massima fra la maggioranza dei delegati nazionali che include tra le pratiche enologiche di invecchiamento anche il ricorso all'utilizzo di trucioli;*  
[...]  
*potrebbe la Commissione far sapere: alla luce degli orientamenti comunitari in materia di qualità e trasparenza delle etichette, quale sia il suo orientamento in relazione a tale proposta del Comitato Vini?*  
[...]

Quite a few of the 129 questions in EU-PARL follow this pattern by using the same or similar phrases. More specifically, 14 questions use *considerando che*, 8 use *premesso che* and 7 use *considerato che*, which means that a total of 22% of the questions in this corpus component adopt the same textual organization as that

observed in questions submitted in the Italian Parliament. The majority of questions in EU-PARL, however, follow the syntactically more linear pattern observed in EU-PARL-TRAD, favouring parataxis over hypotaxis.

### 3.2 MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ASPECTS

As regards morpho-syntax, the three sets of parliamentary questions under analysis have been compared for the following aspects: distribution of part-of-speech categories and distribution of verb moods and tenses. These aspects are among those typically considered in studies of variation across registers or text types in Italian. Their relevance for the study of translated Italian has already been pointed out in some contributions in Garzone and Cardinaletti (2004) and Cardinaletti and Garzone (2005); in Ondelli e Viale (2010) they are subject to extensive analyses using corpus-based methods.

The distribution of part of speech categories in each corpus component is shown in Table 1. The counts were made using the POS tagger included in TalTac<sup>2</sup>, an Italian software package especially developed for corpus analysis.<sup>2</sup> Please note that the counts here refer to a subset of tokens in each corpus component (i.e. the subset for which the results of the POS tagging could be quickly verified for correctness) and that the total percentage for each column may slightly exceed 100% because of the way each cell was rounded off.

	IT-PARL (N=22600)		EU-PARL (N=21400)		EU-PARL-TRAD (N=21500)	
<b>Nouns</b>	5802	25.67%	5488	25.64%	6008	27.94%
<b>Proper nouns</b>	672	2.97%	944	4.41%	687	3.20%
<b>Verbs</b>	2685	11.88%	2686	12.55%	2799	13.02%
<b>Adjectives</b>	1294	5.73%	1243	5.81%	1198	5.57%
<b>Adverbs</b>	998	4.42%	962	4.50%	888	4.13%
<b>Articles</b>	2334	10.33%	2679	12.52%	2577	11.99%
<b>Prepositions</b>	6506	28.79%	5500	25.70%	5430	25.26%
<b>Pronouns</b>	756	3.35%	826	3.86%	743	3.46%
<b>Conjunctions</b>	1580	6.99%	1125	5.26%	1182	5.50%

Table 1. Distribution of part-of-speech categories in the three corpus components (based on subsets of tokens).

One interesting element in Table 1 is the higher percentage of both verbs and nouns in EU-PARL-TRAD, the translated texts. Texts originally written in Italian are usually said to rely more heavily on nominalised structures than comparable texts in English. This, however, may not be the case for the Italian parliamentary questions, whose elaborate generic structure (as discussed in the previous section) leads to an increased use of items contributing to the syntactic ‘scaffolding’ of the text, especially conjunctions and prepositions – both of them more frequent in IT-PARL than in the other two corpus components. Texts in EU-PARL seem to follow a middle-of-the-way approach: the percentage of nouns is the same as in IT-PARL (but not that of proper nouns), while the number of verbs is closer to that in EU-PARL-TRAD. The percentage of both prepositions and conjunctions in EU-PARL is closer to that in EU-PARL-TRAD. Overall, a comparison of the way parts of speech are distributed in the three sets of texts seems to reflect the patterns observed in the previous section: more syntactically intricate for IT-PARL, more linear for EU-PARL and EU-PARL-TRAD.

A closer look at verb moods and tenses (Table 2) gives further confirmation of the structural preferences observed in the three sets of texts.

	IT-PARL (N=32452)		EU-PARL (N=29724)		EU-PARL-TRAD (N=29168)	
<b><i>Indicativo</i></b>	1109	3.42%	1180	3.97%	1424	4.88%
<i>Presente</i>	950	2.93%	1079	3.63%	1271	4.36%
<i>Imperfetto</i>	77	0.24%	42	0.14%	40	0.14%
<i>Passato remoto</i>	27	0.08%	9	0.03%	6	0.02%
<i>Futuro</i>	55	0.17%	50	0.17%	107	0.37%
<b><i>Congiuntivo</i></b>	307	0.95%	171	0.58%	188	0.64%
<b><i>Condizionale</i></b>	101	0.31%	84	0.28%	79	0.27%
<b><i>Infinito</i></b>	801	2.47%	802	2.70%	864	2.96%
<b><i>Gerundio</i></b>	135	0.42%	157	0.53%	93	0.32%
<b><i>Participio</i></b>	215	0.66%	131	0.44%	165	0.57%
<i>Passato</i>	191	0.59%	117	0.39%	128	0.44%
<i>Presente</i>	24	0.07%	14	0.05%	37	0.13%

Table 2. Distribution of verb moods and some verb tenses in the three corpus components.

In particular, the preference for hypotaxis in IT-PARL is reflected in a much higher relative frequency of verbs in the subjunctive (*congiuntivo*), which is the tense appearing in most of the indirect questions in IT-PARL, as in the following examples (where the subjunctive is highlighted in bold):

(5) *si chiede di sapere quali iniziative **possano** essere assunte [...]*

(6) *[per sapere] – se non **ritenga** di avviare studi e ricerche su questa poco conosciuta patologia [...]*

Overall, texts in both EU-PARL and EU-PARL-TRAD use more verbs in the indicative (on account of their preference for sentence coordination) and EU-PARL is once again in middle position between the two other sets, as shown by its higher frequency of gerundives (*gerundio*), which are often used either to construct syntactically complex sentences (as in 7 below) or to emphasize the background to the question proper (as in 8):

(7) *Nel corso della procedura di adozione del decreto vi è il rischio che sia soppresso il periodo transitorio originariamente previsto, **rendendo** il meccanismo dell'opt-out immediatamente applicabile senza adeguata informazione preventiva.*

(8) ***Considerando** quanto esposto, si chiede pertanto alla Commissione [...]*

With regard to individual verb tenses, Table 2 shows two more interesting differences between the three corpus components. The first is the higher frequency of verbs in the *passato remoto* (a past tense) in IT-PARL: 27 occurrences versus 9 in EU-PARL and 6 in EU-PARL-TRAD respectively. This may be an indication that Italian MPs follow more closely the conventions of the language of bureaucracy and administration (where this particular tense is more frequent than in modern standard Italian, in which the compound past, or *passato prossimo*, is more frequently used) or, alternatively, it may reflect the usage of MPs coming from those regions (especially in Southern Italy) where the *passato remoto* is still very much alive in almost all registers. The second element to be noted is the higher frequency of verbs in the future tense in EU-PARL-TRAD, most probably a case of interference from the English source texts.

### 3.3 FOCUS ON COHESION: COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

The connective items used in text to create cohesion between and within sentences have already proven to be a useful test-bed for the investigation of the possible differences between translated and non-translated language. In particular, connectives have been studied to test hypotheses on translation universals: research on the addition or omission of connectives, for example, has been used in support of the hypotheses of explicitation and implicitation. A series of re-

cent studies (Palumbo and Musacchio 2010; Becher 2011; Bucciol 2012), however, have looked at the cohesive shifts involving connectives not only with respect to source texts but also in relation to norms of text organization that are typical of the target language, showing that the use of connectives by translators may be strongly influenced by the latter and not necessarily be a translation-related case of explicitation.

In particular, as regards the language pair English-Italian, Musacchio and Palumbo (2010) have found that newspaper articles written in Italian make more extensive use of certain categories of intersentential (i.e. coordinating) connectives, and that these same connectives are among those that translators typically *add* to the target text to make intersentential relations more explicit. Bucciol (2012) has looked at translation in the other direction (Italian to English) and found that those same connectives tended to be *omitted* by translators. A similar analysis was conducted on the corpus under consideration to see if similar or different results would be obtained on a corpus of translated and non-translated language representative of a very different text type.

The graph in Figure 1 shows, in percentage terms, the frequency of six categories of intersentential connectives, five of which are based on the categorization provided in a standard grammar of Italian (Dardano and Trifone 1997). A sixth category, i.e. “additional” connectives, has been added which was not included in Dardano and Trifone’s grammar.<sup>3</sup> Please also note that the copulative conjunction *e* (“and”) was excluded from the count so as to avoid time-consuming distinctions between its use as a coordinating item and as a conjunction within or between phrases.

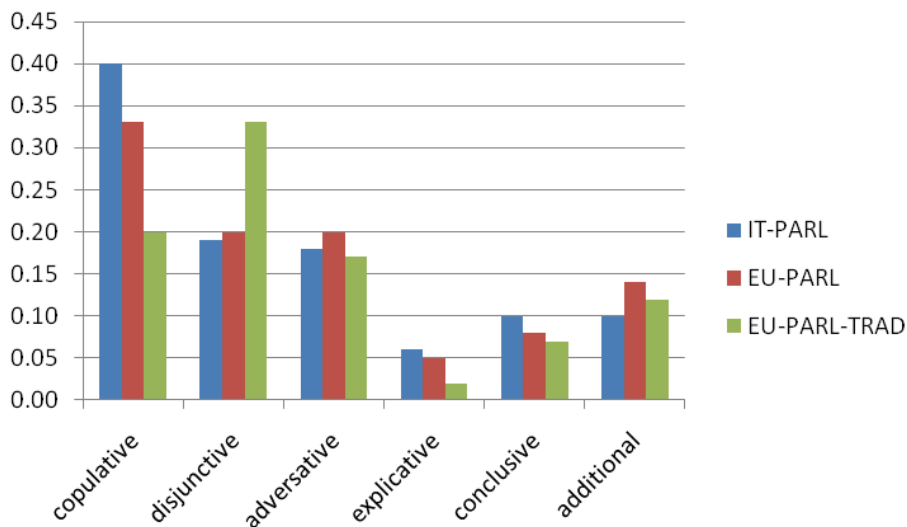


Figure 1. Frequency of categories, in %, of coordinating conjunctions in the three corpus components.

In the native texts, i.e. IT-PARL and EU-PARL, there is a higher frequency of copulative, explicative and conclusive conjunctions, a result that is in line with that obtained by Palumbo and Musacchio (2010) on a different text type. This is a rough indication that, from a syntagmatic point of view, the translated texts still exhibit a somewhat different profile from the native texts, at least as far as sentence construction is concerned (as observed above, EU-PARL and EU-PARL tend to share the *macro-structure*). Other interesting findings emerge when, within each category, choices on the paradigmatic axis are considered, i.e. when the presence and frequency of individual items is taken into account. Table 3 lists some selected connectives taken to be representative of the paradigmatic choices made by the writers in each corpus.

	IT-PARL	EU-PARL	EU-PARL-TRAD
<i>tuttavia</i>	4	14	16
<i>infatti</i>	14	9	2
<i>peraltro</i>	0	3	4
<i>nonché</i>	14	18	16
<i>altresi</i>	1	7	2

Table 3. Occurrences of selected connectives in the three corpus components.

The higher number of occurrences of *tuttavia* in the translations is most probably due to it being used as a stock equivalent for the English “however”. The item *infatti*, on the other hand, is regularly found to be among the explicative connectives that are more frequent in native texts (and are sometimes added wholesale by translators; Palumbo and Musacchio 2010: 71-72). The absence of an item such as *peraltro* in the translations would seem to point to a preference for more formal elements in the native texts, which is, however, contradicted by the use of formal *altresi* and especially *nonché* in the translations. To sum up, this brief analysis of intersentential cohesion may be seen as a complement to the higher-level analyses conducted in the previous section, showing that – at the syntagmatic level – the two sets of native texts tend to share more features than the translated texts.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The picture emerging from the analysis of the three sets of texts under investigation is one in which each individual set shares only part of its features with the others, with EU-PARL, i.e. the ‘native’ texts produced in the supranational context of the European Parliament, acting as a sort of ‘pivot’ element: it appears to be related to the other set of native texts on account of some features and to the translations on account of other, different features. More specifically, IT-PARL

and EU-PARL share a greater reliance on particular subsets of coordinating conjunctions and, as far as verbs forms are concerned, a higher frequency of gerundives, possibly related to their use in constructing subordinate clauses. IT-PARL is the set in which, by far, verbs in the subjunctive are used the most. On the other hand, EU-PARL and EU-PARL, the two 'European' sets, share a set of features possibly related to their more linear macro-structure: a higher number of verbs and, among these, a greater reliance on indicative tenses, in turn linked to the preference for parataxis over hypotaxis. Although the 'European' texts generally use the same macrostructure, the analysis has also highlighted a significant minority of questions by Italian MEPs which tend to reproduce the typical structure found in questions submitted in the Italian Parliament. The analysis has only very briefly touched upon lexical aspects: at a glance, the wordlists of the three corpus components do not show lexically marked preferences in any individual component, but a larger corpus may well yield different results.

In terms of the discussion of hybridity mentioned at the beginning of the article, the present analysis, conducted on an admittedly small corpus, seems to give some support to the hypothesis that the texts produced in multi- or supra-national settings may end up presenting specific features emerging from situations of linguistic and cultural contact, which may lead to a blurring of the distinction between originals and translations.

## NOTES

1 For the Italian Parliament, the addresses are as follows: <http://leg16.camera.it/205> for the *Camera dei Deputati*; <http://www.senato.it/13leggi/documenti/47831/47832/genpagina.htm> for the *Senato*. European Parliament questions have been downloaded from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/it/parliamentary-questions.html>

2 See the website at [www.taltac.it](http://www.taltac.it) for more information on the application and the related bibliography.

3 The items considered are as follows: “copulative” – *anche, né, nemmeno, neppure, nonché, pure, neanche*; “disjunctive” – *o, oppure, ovvero*; “adversative” – *anzi, ciò nonostante, effettivamente, eppure, in effetti, in realtà, invece, ma, nondimeno, peraltro, però, piuttosto, tuttavia*; “explicative” – *cioè, infatti, ossia, vale a dire, invero*; “conclusive” – *allora, dunque, ebbene, pertanto, quindi*; “additional” – *altresi, inoltre*.

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