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Improving Layman Understanding of Forensic Evidence: Can the Language of Autopsy Reports and Personal Examination Reports be Made more Lay-friendly?

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Abstract In murder and attempted murder cases, the information provided by the autopsy report or personal examination report and the evidence given in court by forensic pathologists are often essential for the legal outcome. These reports written by forensic pathologists contain very specialized language; however, when used in connection with legal cases, the target audience also comprises non-experts in medicine such as the police, lawyers, judges, jury members and lay judges. Therefore, the reports must be comprehensible to this lay audience. This study investigates the language of 15 written autopsy reports and personal examination reports used in court with the aim of identifying potentially incomprehensible linguistic features or features which make the reports unnecessarily complex to laymen. Results show that many linguistic elements both at word, sentence and text level can be changed to more lay-friendly options without loss of precision. We discuss best practice recommendations as well as potential barriers to implementing these recommendations in practice.

Keywords autopsy reports, best practice, comprehensibility, forensic medicine, lay-friendliness

1 Introduction

In connection with murder and attempted murder, forensic pathologists play an extremely important role. When a case is brought before the courts, much relies on the autopsy report (for murder) or personal examination report (for attempted murder), and the evidence given in court by the forensic pathologist. Forensic medicine is a very specialized field, and it goes without saying that the expert register of the field may be a challenge for laymen to comprehend. Laymen are part of the judicial process because in a murder or attempted murder case, people from many different walks of life are involved. The judges and lawyers are highly educated, but not within the medical field. The police and the prosecution service have their specialized fields, but again not within medicine, and the jury or the lay judges may consist of people with very different educational backgrounds. To this should be added that the defendants and the plaintiffs are unlikely to be medical specialists in the majority of cases. In the interest of justice, i. e. a fair trial and judgment, it is therefore important to ensure that communication from the forensic pathologists, albeit often very detailed and complex in nature, is made as comprehensible as possible to everyone involved. In the Danish judicial system, jurors are used in cases where the prosecutor pleads for punishment by imprisonment for four years or more

or for a custodial sentence. District court cases are heard by three legal judges and six jurors, and the high courts are heard by three legal judges and nine jurors. Each judge and each juror has one vote. Lay judges are used in criminal cases in which the accused pleads not guilty, and the prosecutor demands punishment by imprisonment or withdrawal of rights. District court cases are heard by one legal judge and two lay judges. High court cases are heard by three legal judges and three lay judges. Both legal judges and lay judges have one vote each (The Danish Court Administration 2021).

Forensic linguistics is a well-known research field, typically analyzing legal language, and focussing on how legislation is to be interpreted, on the interaction between the parties in the court room, and especially on how linguistic evidence can be used in court (Coulthard/Johnson/Wright 2017, Gibbons 2003, Tiersma/Solan 2012). However, there is a lack of research on the lay-friendliness of the expert genres which must in fact be comprehensible to the lay audience (in the sense that they are laymen in relation to medicine) involved in a court case. This study, which is part of a larger project between the School of Communication and Culture and the Department of Forensic Medicine both at Aarhus University[1], Denmark, aiming to improve the comprehensibility of the communication of forensic pathologists with a layman audience, investigates the language of a corpus of written autopsy reports and personal examination reports used in court. The overall aim of the project aligns with the growing demand in society, in Denmark, as in many other countries, for comprehensible communication from experts. The identification of the specific research questions and data of this particular project is the result of conversations among the authors who have backgrounds within communication and forensic pathology, respectively. The aim of this part of the project is thus to identify potentially incomprehensible linguistic features or features which make the reports unnecessarily complex to laymen. On the basis of the analyses, we will establish an initial list of best-practice guidelines for this complex field in order to ensure optimal comprehension of the medical forensic reports involved in a court case. We will furthermore discuss what may be potential barriers to fulfilling the goal of optimal comprehension.

2 Legislative background

In the legislative foundation for carrying out autopsies etc. (expressed in the comprehensive 29-page *Government circular on inquests and autopsies etc.* (Justitsministeriet 1995), very little information on the language is provided. In fact, only three brief sections comment on the language. The first comment on page 9 concerns the entire report and indicates an awareness of a layman audience:

> The autopsy report must be dictated directly in connection with the autopsy and the report must be typed up as fast as possible and sent to the requesting party [...] **The report must be written in Danish without the use of medical terms, which can, however, be added when this is necessary for comprehension** [...] [our emphasis]

The last sentence seems to contain a contradiction or mixing of audiences in so far as medical terms should be avoided (indicating a layman audience), but can be added if necessary for comprehension (indicating an expert audience). On page 24, there are two slightly more

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[1]   In particular with the State-Appointed Forensic Pathologist and the Deputy State-Appointed Forensic Pathologist.

detailed comments under the headline "The writing of the autopsy report". As far as the systematic description of the internal examination [why this is not mentioned in connection with the external examination is unclear] is concerned, it says:

> It must be purely descriptive without a diagnosis, **and everywhere Danish terms must be used (can, if necessary, be made clearer by adding Latin terms in brackets**) [our emphasis]

This reflects the general comment from page 9. Finally, in connection with the summary and conclusion, after having set out what this part of the report must contain, it says:

> Furthermore, diagnoses must be provided in the autopsy report. **Mainly Latin terms should be used**. [our emphasis]

This final comment on the language of the autopsy report somewhat contradicts the first general statement, namely that Danish should be used and Latin only if necessary. On the basis of these legislative comments related to the language of the autopsy report etc., we can conclude that they are not entirely consistent as far as the target audience is concerned. There seems to be a certain awareness that this expert genre also has a relevant lay audience, but at the same time, an assumption that for the sake of medical precision, it may be necessary to add Latin-based medical terms. This inconsistency does in fact point to the crux of the matter, the challenge of expert-lay communication.

The above legislative requirements are reflected in two internal guideline documents from the Department of Forensic Medicine at Aarhus University (Department of Forensic Medicine 2021a, 2021b) on the writing of autopsy reports and personal examination reports, respectively. There are two small deviations: in the general comment relevant for the entire autopsy report, it is specified that the recommendations apply both to the internal examination as well as the external examination. And in connection with the diagnosis guidelines, it says that Latin terms *must* be used.

3 Literature review

Literature on the subject of the lay-friendliness or lay comprehension of the communication originating from forensic pathologists is sparse to say the least. Searching databases and relevant journals using keywords such as "autopsy report/postmortem", "pathologist", "medical examiner" and "language", "comprehensibility" and "style" produced very limited relevant literature. Perhaps autopsy reports and personal examination reports are considered so expert in nature that they have up till now not been the obvious choice for health communication scholars to analyse. As pointed out above, in many instances, it is crucial that the many laymen involved in a murder or attempted murder case understand the communication from the forensic pathologists, but on the face of it, the forensic report is not your obvious lay audience genre. One relevant source is the *Guidelines for Reports by Autopsy Pathologists* (Adams 2008), which has a chapter on Style. In this textbook-style reference, the author emphasizes that the audience of autopsy report also consists of laymen: "the autopsy pathologist should serve the goal of communicating to the parties who will read the report, namely, the case pathologist him- or herself (at a later date), attorneys, the family of the decedent, and other physicians" (Adams 2008: v). While a few examples of tailoring the language to the laymen audience are provided such as "use the English term [as opposed to the Latin] to make the report more

readable to nonmedical persons" (Adams 2008: 70), these do not seem to be based on empirical research.

When we consider expert genres as a whole, there is consensus in the literature (cf. e. g. Cabré 1999, Engberg 1998) that experts writing to experts make use of expert language for the following three main reasons: 1) **economy:** saving space and reading time for instance by making use of specialized terms, ellipses, heavy premodification and other complex syntax, 2) **objectivity**: making use of the passive voice and nominalizations; naming the agent is thus avoided and so are personal pronouns as the results, and not the authors, are central, and perhaps most important of all, 3) **precision:** making use of specialized terms and expressions with unambiguous meaning. Another, less positive, application of expert language is when the "speaker might intentionally use technical jargon that they know is incomprehensible to the audience" (Moldovan 2022: 2), and in that way end up disempowering the non-expert audience (Krieger/Gallois 2017). As described, expert language has many advantages when communicating with other experts, including demonstrating membership of a discourse community (Swales 1990: 26). When experts communicate with laymen, they may of course consciously or subconsciously want to establish their authority by using expert language (Moldovan 2022), but presuming that experts want to make themselves comprehensible to a layman audience, they may encounter what has been termed "the curse of expertise" (Hinds 1999: 205), namely the fact that experts gradually lose the ability to gauge what laypeople may or may not understand (cf. also Bromme/Jucks/Wagner 2005, Nickerson 1999). This is a natural consequence of expert training, but also means that experts may have to be made specifically aware of their writing style as well as alternatives, in order to be able to adjust to a more lay-friendly way of communicating.

Several research fields have engaged with text complexity and language comprehension, including Applied Linguistics, Psychology, Document/Information Design, Education and Plain Language. Plain Language has been defined as "the writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a co-operative, motivated person a good chance of understanding it at first reading" (Cutts 2009: n.p.).While Plain Language started out as a movement advocating for social benefits of clear communication to enable citizens to make informed decisions, the research base for Plain Language guidelines has been increasingly developed (Balmford 2002, Stewart 2010). Below, we present the linguistic features that are likely to make a text more or less complex and thus more or less difficult to understand. These are based on Plain Language literature, but backed up by research in the other fields mentioned above. As linguistic features are text-inherent, reader comprehension is not guaranteed as such comprehension would rely on each individual reader and the situational context. However, we argue that a text, which is linguistically complex, is much more likely to create difficulties in relation to reader comprehension.

There are three overall ways to assess the lay-friendliness of a text: 1) numerical or formula-based, 2) outcomes-focused, and 3) elements-focused methods (International Plain Language Working Group 2009). The first category covers numerical readability formulas that count sentence and word length (and sometimes word frequency) as a measure of text complexity. This approach to text complexity has been criticized for interformula reliability issues (Zakaluk/Samuels 1988) with different formulas yielding different grade level scores on the same piece of writing; up to three grade levels have been found (Schriver 2000). Readability formulas are criticized for lacking criterion validity (Crossley/Skalicky/Dascalu 2019, Zakaluk/Samuels 1988), and for focusing only on sentence length, word length and word frequency,

which are not the only, and maybe not even the best, predictors of text comprehension (Crossley et al. 2017, Crossley/Skalicky/Dascalu 2019). Despite this criticism, readability formulas are still widely used as a method for measuring text complexity in the Health Sciences. The second category, outcomes-focused methods, includes user-testing of the text, which can be performed using a myriad of different qualitative and quantitative methods, such as think-aloud protocols, focus groups and questionnaires (Schriver/Cheek/Mercer 2010). Such methods are valuable for investigating whether the target group understands and is able to use the text; however, to understand which specific micro-level features are likely to be problematic in relation to lay-friendliness, the third category, i. e. the elements-focused methods, is required (an important second step would be to test the text with the intended audience; see also section 6 Discussion). This category includes the use of checklists or elements assumed to influence textual Plain Language such as the use or avoidance of nominalisations, passive voice etc. They are aimed at giving writers advice on linguistic, stylistic or graphic features of text. As mentioned, there is a general consensus on the numerous lexical and syntactic features which should be used with caution when communicating with a lay audience. These include: avoiding or limiting lexical elements such as expert terminology, bureaucratic language and vague expressions and syntactical elements such as passive voice and heavy premodification (Askehave/Zethsen 2011, Becker Jensen 2007, Helder 2011, Nisbeth Jensen 2013, Plain Language Action and Information Network 2011, Schriver/Cheek/Mercer 2010).

We saw in the legislative background that autopsy reports and personal examination reports must cater for the layman audience; however, no research has examined the textual complexity of these reports. Therefore, based on the above literature review on text complexity, we aim to identify potentially incomprehensible linguistic features or features which may make the reports unnecessarily complex to laymen. In the following, we present our data and our analytical method.

4 Data and method

The data analyzed consist of a corpus of the summary and conclusions of ten autopsy statements and five personal examination statements as well as supplementary statements (addendums to the statement when lab results, such as chemical analyses, become available), if any.[2] Each summary and conclusion typically consists of 1 A4 page and the supplementary statements of half a page. The reason for analyzing these particular parts of the documents is that they are the ones which are typically relied on in court as the basis for questioning the forensic expert, sometimes even read aloud in their entirety and taken down by the court reporter as such. Ten different medical examiners / forensic pathologists have authored the 15 documents. All statements were written between 2018 and 2021, apart from one statement which is from 2016. As the Department of Forensic Medicine, Aarhus, covers most of the western part of Denmark, i. e. one third of Denmark, the data analyzed represent the same area. In qualitative studies one can often argue for a larger sample, however, in the present case, data saturation was obtained quite early in the analysis process. That is, in spite of the fact that 10 different pathologists had authored the reports, they were quite alike in their linguistic style and characteristics.

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[2]　In the following, we will often just use the word "statement" even though we have only analyzed the indicated passages.

At the first stage, the data were collected and analyzed inductively while keeping the research aim and the insights from our literature review in mind. Although aware of the linguistic features which are known to be potentially difficult for laymen to understand (see above), we approached the data without looking exclusively for these features, i. e. they were not used as a deductive framework. This approach was chosen to ensure that we did not limit ourselves to predefined categories but were open to any features which were likely to hamper lay-friendliness. The data were accessed and analyzed *in situ* at the Department of Forensic Medicine, Aarhus University, Denmark, by the first and last author, who are communication scholars with expertise in expert-lay communication and intralingual translation. One of the authors would read aloud from the autopsy statement and every time a word, phrase or sentence was not immediately understandable, sounded complicated or simply different from everyday language we would stop, discuss the issue and the other author would take notes. For practical purposes, these notes were sometimes structured in accordance with phenomena known potentially to hamper layman understanding and sometimes a difficult sentence was simply written down to be analyzed in detail later. The actual autopsy and personal examination statements cannot be removed from the Department of Forensic Medicine which is why the more detailed analyses have been carried out on the basis of our notes containing the preliminary raw analyses. Each day of analysis was immediately followed by a meeting with the second author, State-Appointed Forensic Pathologist, Professor Lene Warner Boel to discuss expert formulations and possible alternatives. The final textual analysis includes phenomena at the lexical and syntactical levels as well as textual layout, and at this stage, we attempted to categorize the problems identified in accordance with known categories.

5 Analyses and results

In our analyses, we found that in many cases, the authors have taken great care to use Danish medical terms as required by the law (apart from the diagnosis section in which mainly Latin-based terms should be used), and we also found that some passages were straightforward and easy to understand. Having said that, we did indeed find a large number of linguistic features which could be reworded into more easily comprehensible Danish, without loss of the required precision. To assess that precision, alternatives were discussed with the second author, professor Lene Warner Boel as mentioned above. In addition, we found many examples of sentences which were very complex and difficult to understand. This is often the case when one sentence contains several expert features making it even more complex. The following analyses provide examples of the most frequent potential barriers to lay-friendliness in relation to expert terms, synonymy, officialese, polysemic words / false friends, vague expressions, premodification, compound nouns and adjectives, passive voice (and nominalisations) and layout. All examples provided are authentic. For each example, a translation into English is provided in square brackets. All translations have been performed by the authors. In the translations, we aimed to provide insights into the Danish linguistic constructions which is why they may not always be idiomatic.

5.1 Expert terms

In accordance with current legislation, the Danish variants of medical terms are used fairly consistently in the reports. However, from a layman point of view, also the Danish terms may

be very difficult to understand. In some contexts, a paraphrase would simply be too lengthy, and one can only hope that questions will be asked if detailed comprehension is crucial in court, but in other cases, it is in fact possible to simplify the Danish term.

"**Udrift**" [tear] as in "a tear in the liver": An alternative is "rift" which is the common word.

"**Bug**" [abdomen]. An alternative is the common word "mave". In everyday Danish, "bug" is mainly used in relation to animals (see first meaning of "bug", Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.).

"**Indsiden**" [the innermost side] is archaic Danish. The common alternative would be "indersiden". The difference only consists of two letters, but the layman reader may think that it means something different.

"**Læderer** knoglen" [lesion the bone]: The commonly used alternative is "beskadiger".

In some cases, a Latin synonym is provided in brackets, presumably for the benefit of other experts, but this may create confusion for the layman who may not know whether the term in brackets is a synonym or perhaps additional information:

"En **blæredannelse** (**cyste**)" [A blister formation (cyst)]

"**indtrykningsbrud** (**impressionsfraktur**)" [inpressure breakage (impression fracture)]

"… **en del af tyktarmen** (**colon ascendens**)" [… a part of the thick intestine (colon ascendens)]: In this example, the bracketed Latin-based term is not synonymous with the preceding information, but is a clarification as to the part of the colon.

There are not many instances of Latin-based medical terms standing alone, but some terms of Latin origin and their derivatives are used as seen in the following examples:

"Der er således tale om tre **penetrerende** skud." [Thus, there are three penetrating shots.]: Latin-based words are much less frequent in Danish than in English and Romance languages, so many Danes struggle with their meaning (cf. Zethsen 2004 for a detailed discussion). In Danish "penetrate" is almost exclusively used in an expert medical context or in a sexual context (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.). An alternative would be to paraphrase and say that three shots have gone through the skin or the like.

"**Traume**" [trauma], "**traumatisk**" [traumatic]: In everyday Danish, a "trauma" is purely a psychological phenomenon and does not refer to physical damage (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.).

"**Læsion**" [lesion]: Instead "beskadigelse" [damage] or "sår" [wound] would in many cases be suitable alternatives.

The two latter examples are used in almost all statements, and when they appear together in one sentence (in combination with the passive voice, premodification and nominalization), the result is quite complex as seen in the following example:

> "Dødsårsagen antages at være **traumatisk** hjernekvæstelse som følge af den påviste **skudlæsion**" [The cause of death must be presumed to be traumatic brain damage as a result of the demonstrated bullet lesion]

No precision would be lost if the sentence was reworded using active voice, a personal pronoun, Danish words etc.:

> "Vi mener, at dødsårsagen sandsynligvis er skader på hjernen på grund af skud" [We think that the cause of death is likely to be brain damage due to the bullet wound]

Sometimes the expert term contains superfluous parts as in the following examples:

> "**Isseregionen**" [the pate region] could just as well be "issen" [the pate].

> "**en traumatisk kvælningstilstand**" [a traumatic strangulation condition] could just as well be "en traumatisk kvælning" [a traumatic strangulation].

There are also examples of Danish medical jargon (not terminology), which is not common in everyday language:

> "Det er oplyst at afdøde **var kendt med** tidligere blodpropper i hjernen, epilepsi, **svært** dement og sengeliggende [sic]" [It has been stated that the diseased was known with former blood clots in the brain, epilepsy, strongly demented and bedridden [sic]]

5.2 Synonymy

In essay writing, stylistic variation may be encouraged, but in connection with expert-to-layman communication, it may create confusion.

> "Der var længdegående og delvist **tungeformet brudstykke** gående bagud fra læsion 7 i højre isseregion, med let indpresning af **brudfragment**" [There was a longitudinal and partly **tongue-formed breakage piece** going backwards from lesion 7 in the right pate region, with a light impression of a **breakage fragment**]

"Tongue-formed" is later in the same context mentioned as "bueformet" [bow-formed] and the "breakage piece" is, as can be seen from the example, also called "breakage fragment". The layman reader may not know that it is the same thing which is referred to. We also see "**kvæstningssår**" [injury wound], and "**kvæstning**" [injury] used interchangeably with "**kvæstelse**" [injury], which may create confusion as the lay reader may think there is a difference. It is the latter word "kvæstelse" [injury], which is common in everyday Danish.

5.3 Officialese

Many expressions which are common within bureaucratic language are used in the reports. The use of such language may have its reasons (see below for a discussion), but formal, often somewhat archaic, bureaucratic language does not contribute anything from a medical point of view and may complicate the main message for the layman. Examples include:

"Afdøde var i øvrigt sund og rask rask **fraset** let astma" [The diseased was otherwise healthy apart from light asthma]: The Danish word used for "apart from" is a very rare, obsolete expression.

The reports contain a large number of bureaucratic alternatives to connecting words such as "and", "but", "also" and "as".

"**endvidere**" [furthermore] instead of "også" [also].

"**idet**" [in that] instead of "da" [as].

"**omend**" [though] instead of "men" [but].

Officialese is often marked by a more convoluted way of expression, and this is for instance seen in the very frequently used construction "has the character of":

"**har karakter af**" [has the character of] instead of "looks like" or "seems to be"

or in the construction with "hvorfor" [therefore] in relatives clauses:

"**hvorfor** de må antages at være påført med stor kraft" [why they must be presumed to have been administered with great force] instead of the more common Danish expression "og derfor" [and therefore]. In other words, "hvorfor" used as the start of a relative clause instead of an interrogative clause is marked as formal in Danish (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.)

Other examples of officialese include:

"kvinde, der blev **indbragt ukontaktbar** til Traumecenteret" [woman who was inbrought uncontactable to the Trauma Centre]

"**uden at dette nødvendigvis er relateret til dødens indtræden**" [without this being necessarily related to the onset of death]

In both examples, more than one very formal term or expression are used in the same sentence thus creating convoluted sentences which are very remote from everyday language.

5.4 Polysemic words / false friends

Sometimes words are used which are well-known in Danish layman language, but which have a different expert meaning thus potentially confusing the layman reader:

"**ukarakteristiske**, stumpe traumer" [uncharacteristic blunt trauma]

The word "ukarakteristisk" [uncharacteristic] normally means something which is not typical. In expert medical language, it more specifically means that it is not possible to determine what has caused a particular trauma, for instance an object.

"en **diffust** forstørret skjoldbruskkirtel" [a diffusely enlarged thyroid gland]

The word "diffus" [diffuse] normally means something which is not clear or precise, e. g. blurred and often with connotations of being confusing. In expert medical language, it means that e. g. a swelling (in this case of the thyroid gland) is evenly spread over a defined area.

"**lokaliserede** blødninger i hjernen" [localized bleedings in the brain]

The word "localized" normally means something which has been found (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.), but is not used much in everyday Danish. In expert medical language, it means something that has a delimitation.

5.5 Vague expressions

By using vague (i. e. non-specific) expressions, the author presupposes that the layman reader is able to interpret the expressions in the context. Vague expressions found in the data include:

"**kort efter**" [shortly after]

It may be difficult for the layman to establish how much time may in fact be involved.

"**talrige**" [numerous]

Again, it is difficult to know where on the spectrum of numbers "talrige" lies. In addition, according to *Den Danske Ordbog* [The Danish Dictionary], there is for instance no difference between "mange" [many] and "talrige" [numerous], which means that the more common expression "mange" could have been used.

"hvorfor de må antages at være påført med **stor kraft**" [which is why they must be presumed to have been administered with great force]

The layman reader may find it very difficult to assess how much force is needed to constitute "great force" and may ask themselves whether anybody could do it.

There can be valid reasons for choosing vague expressions, for example when the writer lacks specific information or for self-protection purposes (Channell 1994: 184, 188), both of which could be relevant in this context. However, this category of vague expressions may potentially be of great importance in court so, when possible, more specific expressions, analogies or explanations should be chosen or added.

5.6 Premodification

Premodification is much more common in English than in Danish where a post-modifier such as a relative clause is normally used. In addition, the Danish orthographic tendency of connecting words makes heavy premodification very difficult for laymen to decipher (Becker Jensen 1998, 2007) as seen below:

"**åreforkalkningsbetingede** forandringer i nyrerne" [atherosclerosiscaused changes in the kidneys]

"**den ved personundersøgelsen påviste** blodtilsmudsning" [The at the personalexamination demonstrated bloodsoiling]

"**ledsagende punktformede** blødninger" [accompanying pointformed bleedings]

5.7 Compound nouns and adjectives

As just mentioned, Danish orthography requires words to be written as one word in connection with premodification. This may create extremely long words and even if the words that are combined are not too difficult in themselves, the compound word may be a barrier to lay-friendliness. An example involving a compound noun is:

"**Sygehusjournalmateriale**" [hospitalrecordmaterial]

A typical feature of the reports is the use of the gerund in the form of compound adjectives such as:

"Ingen **forudeksisterende** sygdomsforandringer" [no previouslyexisting illness changes]

"**afværgelignende** læsioner" [avertinglike lesions]

"**forudbestående** tilstand" [previouslyexisting state]

Instead of a relative clause, the compound adjective premodifies the noun. This is non-standard Danish syntax and together with the sheer length of the premodifier, it makes the entire expression very complex.

5.8 Passive voice (and nominalizations)

The autopsy reports are mainly written in the passive voice (and even a past tense passive which is quite unusual in Danish), thus hiding the agent. There is a complete absence of personal pronouns, and unusual (for laymen) or formal nominalizations are used extensively. All summary and conclusions are initiated by a passive standard sentence structure:

"Ved obduktion af den xx-årige mand/kvinde, der blev fundet død på sin bopæl, **fandtes**:" [at the autopsy of the xx-year-old man/woman, who was found dead at his/her home was found:]

Generally, all results are stated in the passive voice:

"De påviste læsioner er friske og **antages** at være opstået i live" [the demonstrated lesions are new and presumed to have been sustained alive]

"Der **påvistes** ingen oplagte afværgelignende læsioner" [no obvious aversion lesions were detected]

"Dødsårsagen **antages** at være …" [the cause of death is presumed to be …]

Furthermore, the sections not directly linked to examination results are kept in the passive voice:

"Når resultaterne heraf foreligger, **fremsendes** en supplerende erklæring" [When the results hereof are available, a supplementary report will be forwarded]

Nominalization is a common feature in the Danish language, but when verbs are nominalized in a non-standard way, it is likely that the text is more complex for the layman to understand:

"Med **fjernelse** af begge nyrer og milten" [with the removal of both kidneys and the spleen]

"Ved ambulancepersonalets **ankomst**" [at the arrival of the ambulance personnel]

5.9 Layout

The reports follow a template, and therefore the move structure[3] is very recognizable. Typically sentences are very long and lists of observations are given without any kind of graphic indication that an enumeration is taking place. As previously mentioned, all summary and conclusions are initiated by a standard sentence structure:

"Ved obduktion af den xx-årige mand/kvinde, der blev fundet død på sin bopæl, **fandtes**:" [at the autopsy of the xx-year-old man/woman, who was found dead at his/her home was found:]

In the majority of cases, this "was found" construction governs a long list, for instance of lesions. The following is an example where "was found" still governs the list (no translation will be provided as the purpose is simply to illustrate how unmanageable the list is without any help from layout in the form of bullets or the like):

"Desuden kvæstningssår i panden" (21), "fordybning i hårbunden" (2), "hudafskrabninger" (1), "venstre tinding" (20), "ved venstre øje" (23) "og på næseryggen" (25), "smalle hudafskrabninger på begge hænder" (29, 31, 33), "og højre knæ" (35), "punktformet hudafskrabning på højre håndryg" (30), "blodunderløbent mærke med slimhindebristning af læberne" (26), "og blodunderløbne mærker i ansigtet" (17, 19, 22, 24), "nakken" (18), "på halsen" (27, 28), "med underliggende blødning i muskulaturen, på venstre 4. finger" (32), "og begge lår" (36, 37), "begge knæ " (34, 38), "og venstre skinneben" (39)

There are furthermore many examples of sentences which contain a large amount of information, and which would be easier to comprehend if some full stops were introduced:

"Vedrørende ovennævnte xx, der med talrige knivstik blev fundet død på bekendts bopæl, kan det nu på basis af det i sagen oplyste, obduktionsfundene og resultatet af de supplerende undersøgelser konkluderes, at **dødsårsagen** fortsat må antages …" [Concerning the above-mentioned xx, who with numerous knife wounds was found dead at the abode of an acquaintance, it can now on the basis of what has been stated in the case, the autopsy findings and the results of the supplementary tests be concluded that **the cause of death** must still be presumed …]

The sentence is further complicated by left-branching, i. e. the fact that the main noun phrase (the cause of death) does not appear until line three. Another example of lack of full stops or

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[3]   We use the term "move structure" in the sense of Swales (2012: 228): A "move" in genre analysis is a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse. It is flexible in terms of its linguistic realization and can consist of, for instance, a sentence, utterance, or paragraph.

other typography is a description of the trajectory of a bullet (in addition, these descriptions are complicated):

> "På ryggen (fra læsion 6) gående gennem højre tværtap på 10. brysthvirvel, højre 10. ribben bagtil, højre lunges underlap, gennem højre 5. ribben med projektilet liggende i højre armhule." [On the back (from lesion 6) going through the right transverse process on the 10th thoracic vertebra, right 10th rib at the back, right lung's lower lobe, through the right 5th rib with the projectile lying in the right armpit]

Finally, the move structure of the summary and conclusion of the reports typically consists of three parts: the "fandtes" [was found] section, the main body of the text and the cause of death. It would help the layman reader if three subheadings were introduced.

6 Discussion

The summary and conclusions of the autopsy and personal examination reports are of course the crucial parts of these documents and the ones which are often read aloud in court and taken down in the court records. The complete reports are evidently more detailed, but it seems that especially in the summary and conclusions, the forensic pathologists must strive to reach their layman audience. As mentioned above, the traditional expert writing style is marked by economy, objectivity and precision often resulting in the use of expert terminology and complex syntax. In particular when it comes to precision, there may be cases where it is next to impossible to paraphrase a medical term or condition without either losing precision or explaining at length, and in these cases, the ability for the court to ask questions must be relied on. In this connection, one concern is that the jury or lay judges will not risk losing face or adding to the workload by asking questions not raised by others. Or, perhaps even worse, that they are not aware that there is something they have misunderstood. However, in the majority of cases, it seems that a more lay-friendly alternative will not compromise expert communication dogmas. As mentioned above, there are very many linguistic features which can be adjusted to make a text more lay-friendly (or the opposite), but in this article, our focus has been on the most common groups of features and features which are feasible to change in practice. If changes are made within these main groups, it is likely to improve layman comprehension significantly. Based on the above analyses and in accordance with the literature cited above, these are our best practice recommendations:

Lexis:
- Avoid Latin-based expert terms, also in brackets.
- Avoid even Danish expert terminology if an everyday alternative exists.
- Avoid synonymy as it may confuse the lay reader.
- Avoid archaic and bureaucratic expressions ("officialese") when a newer and more common one exists.
- Avoid false friends.
- Use everyday language whenever possible.
- Be specific, when possible, thus avoiding vague expressions.

Syntax:
- Use active voice, unless the agent is irrelevant.
- Use personal pronouns if possible.
- Avoid uncommon nominalizations.
- Avoid excessive use of the gerund.
- Avoid heavy premodification.
- Avoid long compound words.

Layout:
- Use more full stops. Write short sentences, avoiding too much information in one sentence.
- Use bullets when listing (for instance lesions).
- Start with the most important information in a sentence (avoid heavy left-branching).
- Introduce meaningful subheadings.

In the interest of ensuring that such best practice recommendations can in fact be implemented, one may ask why the forensic reports are not routinely intralingually translated by the pathologists or even outsourced to language specialists to be formulated in a language comprehensible to laymen? Zethsen (2018: 85) suggests that the lack of such translation, or rewording, may be due to one of the following barriers:

- lack of resources (financial, human or otherwise),
- ignorance (those who could instigate a translation are not sufficiently aware of the need),
- negligence (those who could instigate a translation do not care sufficiently to take action or invest resources),
- control (deliberately not translating for reasons of ideology, religion, etc.; a translation is not commissioned or is prevented).

In the case of the forensic reports, *lack of resources* would be an issue if the rewording into more lay-friendly alternatives were to be outsourced to a language specialist. First of all, it would be very time-consuming for the pathologists as the reports are so highly specialized, detailed and precise that there is bound to be much interaction with the language specialist. Furthermore, such outsourcing would introduce another layer and would very likely delay the process. Also, it would be very costly and potentially pose problems in relation to ethics and GDPR.

As far as *ignorance* is concerned it is very likely that most forensic pathologists are so specialized that they suffer from the above-mentioned "curse of expertise" (Hinds 1999: 205). That is, the more specialized you become, the more you lose your ability to gauge what laypeople understand. Based on an experimental study, Lentz/De Jong (2006) confirm that experts tend to overestimate the knowledge of others. In other words, the pathologists may not be sufficiently aware of the need, how to identify challenging words and expressions or how to reword. The force of habit is very likely also at play, and since the reports are built on templates, the format is well-known, and it no doubt eases the workload to make use of tried and trusted formulations. To this should be added that the training of forensic pathologists relies very much on personal mentors, and consequently, there may be a tendency to retain archaic formulations. Examples provided in the internal guidelines of the Department of Forensic Medicine at Aarhus University confirm this tendency.

Negligence is very unlikely to play a part in connection with these diligent, detail-oriented specialists, and the same could be said about *control*. However, an aspect of control could be the power relations involved in the communication. Expert language shows that you are a legitimate member of a discourse community, and it may be the case that the authority entailed by such membership plays a part, though perhaps often unconsciously, for the forensic pathologists. Their work involves dealing with impatient members of the police force, lawyers, etc. as well as giving evidence and being cross-examined in court. It would be only natural to lean on the safety of a discourse community and its inherent authority as language, apart from being a means of communication, is also a (cultural) capital and a mechanism of power through which individuals pursue their own interests (cf. e. g. Bourdieu 1992). Bourdieu's claim that language is power is hardly disputed today: "The basic idea that language expresses 'power' is itself rarely doubted, because language is one of or perhaps *the* major symbolic means of encoding and mediating social relationships" (Leung/Durant 2018: 8).

These barriers, in particular those related to *ignorance* and *control*, will be further explored in focus groups to be held with forensic pathologists. In fact, all of the potential barriers will be used directly by the end of the focus groups as a vantage point for a discussion of the possible motives for the writing style of the pathologists. We expect to gain more insights into the level of awareness among the pathologists, of the level of knowledge of laymen in general and of the specific target groups they cater for. However, it may pose more challenges to explore *control* in depth since it must be expected to be an often unconscious barrier or a barrier to which it may be difficult to admit openly. It can for instance be hypothesized that forensic pathologists have worked hard to obtain their membership of their highly specialized discourse community, and that it may be hard to leave behind the language (and thus the cultural capital) which, among other things, legitimizes membership. Likewise, it may be that the precision which is so crucial for the profession may be difficult to forego, even when not required in the context, simply because it feels like a loss of control. Or it may be a question of personal status where the writer enjoys their authority and status which is expressed through expert language. Based on our results, we see three important avenues in order to fulfil the objective of lay-friendly reports and thus a fair trial and judgment. First of all, while our best practice recommendations rely both on research-based guidelines and our analysis of the 15 reports, they must be user-tested with members of the target audience. Secondly, to ensure that the best practice recommendations can indeed be implemented in practice, also in light of the barriers presented above, further research needs to include the perspectives of a larger group of forensic pathologists. Finally, as we saw that the problem of pinpointing the target audience as either lay or expert starts in the legislation, we need to investigate who forensic pathologists frame as their target audience when writing reports. In the long term, the legislation might also need revision to clarify the target audience and the language use.

Conclusion

At first sight, autopsy reports and personal examination reports are expert-to-expert communication. However, to ensure a fair trial and judgment, the knowledge contained in these reports, albeit often very detailed and complex in nature, must be made as comprehensible as possible to the audience who are not subject-matter experts in medicine. In our analysis of the 15 reports, we found many examples of complex language that could be rephrased without sacrificing medical precision. While it might not be possible to implement all changes

right away, e. g. due to the barriers presented above, more linguistic awareness among forensic pathologists as well as concrete guidelines could lead to great changes in relation to the lay-friendliness of these genres.

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Terminologiearbeit für das Gerichtsdolmetschen: Eine Umfrage unter österreichischen Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen

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Abstract Knowing and collecting specialised terminology is part of legal interpreters' and translators' (LITs) daily work and professional competences. It is also an important quality aspect. In 2021, about 100 Austrian LITs participated in a survey aimed at collecting data on their knowledge of basic terminology principles and standards as well as their attitudes towards terminology work. Results show that terminology work is generally done under time pressure, rarely employing state-of-the-art tools, often disregarding terminological principles and without considering advantages related to data maintenance and exchange. The answers collected suggest that many LITs would benefit from hands-on training on tools and methods for sound and adequate terminology work targeted specifically at their professional group and activities.

Keywords court interpreting, legal interpreters and translators, legal terminology, terminology principles, terminology work

1 Einleitung

Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen spielen eine ausschlaggebende Rolle im Justizsystem, indem sie Personen, die die Sprache des Gerichts nicht sprechen, gleichen Zugang zum Recht und zu einem fairen Verfahren ermöglichen. Sie tragen somit zur Umsetzung grundlegender Menschen- und Sprachenrechte bei. Die Arbeit mit (Rechts-)Terminologie ist für diese Berufsgruppe ein fester Bestandteil des Berufsalltags, wobei Terminologie auch einen wichtigen Qualitätsfaktor darstellt. Terminologiekenntnisse und -arbeit zählen daher zu den grundlegenden Kompetenzen professioneller Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen.

Dieser Beitrag präsentiert quantitative und qualitative Daten zur Terminologiearbeit vonseiten vieler Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen in Österreich, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Kenntnis der Normen und Grundprinzipien der Terminologie, auf Einstellungen zur Terminologiearbeit sowie auf Schwierigkeiten bei der Erfassung von Terminologie. In der Folge werden der (wissenschaftliche) Hintergrund zum Beitrag (Abschnitt 2) sowie die Datenerhebungsmethode (Abschnitt 3) beschrieben. Abschnitt 4 fasst die Ergebnisse einer Umfrage unter Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen in Österreich zusammen, die anschließend in Abschnitt 5 interpretiert werden. Der Beitrag zeigt den spezifischen Aus- und Fortbildungsbedarf österreichischer Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen auf, der zurzeit nur teilweise von existierenden Angeboten gedeckt wird.

2 Hintergrund

2.1 Der Beruf in Österreich

Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen sind ein wichtiger Bestandteil eines funktionierenden Justizsystems und kommen bei unterschiedlichen Gerichtsverfahren zum Einsatz. Zu ihren Aufgaben gehören neben dem Dolmetschen in unterschiedlichen Ausformungen (z. B. konsekutives Dialogdolmetschen, Flüsterdolmetschen) auch das Übersetzen von unterschiedlichen Textsorten (z. B. medizinische Gutachten, Anklageschriften, Geburtsurkunden) sowohl im Auftrag des Gerichts als auch im außergerichtlichen Bereich (vgl. Kadrić 2019: 148). Die rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen und Anforderungen an Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen sind in den unterschiedlichen Ländern unterschiedlich geregelt (vgl. Pym et al. 2013). Da es sich bei der vorliegenden Untersuchung um eine Befragung unter in Österreich tätigen Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen handelt, wird nun auf die österreichische Situation eingegangen.

Um als Gerichtsdolmetscher*in in Österreich tätig sein zu können, gibt es zwei Möglichkeiten: durch Eintragung in die Liste der gerichtlich beeideten und zertifizierten Dolmetscherinnen und Dolmetscher oder durch eine Ad-hoc-Vereidigung seitens des Richters oder der Richterin bei der Verhandlung. Im Nachfolgenden werden wir näher auf das Eintragungssystem eingehen, das durch das Sachverständigen- und Dolmetschergesetz (SDG) geregelt ist. Nur wer in der Liste der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen eingetragen ist, darf die Bezeichnung „allgemein beeideter und gerichtlich zertifizierter Dolmetscher" bzw. „allgemein beeidete und gerichtlich zertifizierte Dolmetscherin" tragen. „Allgemein beeidet" bedeutet in diesem Fall, dass die Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen im Rahmen des Eintragungsverfahrens einmalig einen Eid leisten und nicht für jedes einzelne Verfahren vereidigt werden müssen[1], wie es bei den nicht eingetragenen Dolmetscher*innen mit der Ad-hoc-Vereidigung der Fall ist. „Gerichtlich zertifiziert" bedeutet, dass der Nachweis der beruflichen Qualifikation im Rahmen des Eintragungsverfahrens überprüft und amtlich beglaubigt wurde. Die folgenden Nachweise[2] für die berufliche Qualifikation müssen erbracht werden: eine dreijährige Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschtätigkeit in den letzten fünf Jahren vor der Eintragung oder eine einjährige Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschtätigkeit in den letzten drei Jahren vor der Eintragung, wenn ein Studium der Translationswissenschaft[3] (240 ECTS-Anrechnungspunkte) oder ein Universitätslehrgang (mindestens 60 ECTS-Anrechnungspunkte) für die Sprachen, für die die Eintragung erfolgen soll, abgeschlossen wurde (ÖVGD 2023a). Zudem muss eine Prüfung vor einer Kommission bestanden werden.

Die Prüfung besteht aus einem juristischen Fragebogen, bei der die Kenntnis der Rechtsterminologie (inklusive Definitionen und Abkürzungen) auf Deutsch überprüft wird, einer schriftlichen Übersetzung in beide Sprachrichtungen[4], Vom-Blatt-Dolmetschen in beide Sprachrichtungen sowie Dolmetschen in beide Sprachrichtungen im Rahmen einer simulier-

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[1]   § 5 in Verbindung mit § 14 Z 3 SDG.

[2]   Darüber hinaus müssen noch weitere Nachweise anderer Art erbracht werden.

[3]   Translation gilt als Oberbegriff für Übersetzen und Dolmetschen.

[4]   Für nicht europäische Sprachen kann gemäß § 14 Z 5a SDG eine Eintragung nur fürs Dolmetschen und nicht fürs Übersetzen beantragt werden; in diesem Fall gibt es keinen schriftlichen Übersetzungsprüfungsteil. Diese Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen bekommen aber auch kein Rundsiegel, um schriftliche Übersetzungen zu beglaubigen.

ten Gerichtsverhandlung (ÖVGD 2023b). Bei allen Prüfungsteilen spielt die korrekte Verwendung der (Rechts-)Terminologie eine wesentliche Rolle.

Auf der Liste der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher*innen, die von den Präsident*innen der Landesgerichte geführt wird, befinden sich aktuell 760 Dolmetscher*innen.[5]

Als Interessenvertretung der Berufsgruppe gibt es den Österreichischen Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher (ÖVGD). Die Mitgliedschaft ist für die auf der Liste eingetragenen Dolmetscher*innen nicht verpflichtend, aber nur in der Liste eingetragene Dolmetscher*innen können ordentliche Mitglieder werden. Der Verband, der seit 1920 besteht, zählte mit Stand 2020 535 Mitglieder. Er vertritt und fördert die Interessen der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen, organisiert Weiterbildungsmaßnahmen und fördert den Informationsaustausch (z. B. durch Newsletter und Mitteilungsblatt). Der Verband ist auch in die Zertifizierung der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen eingebunden (ÖVGD 2023c).

Die Kenntnis von Rechtsterminologie (z. B. Kadrić 2019: 147) sowie von Terminologie aus anderen Fachbereichen wie beispielsweise Medizin spielt nicht nur in der zuvor erwähnten Prüfung zur Eintragung eine wichtige Rolle, sondern gehört zum Anforderungsprofil von Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen. Die Verwendung korrekter Terminologie stellt einen wesentlichen Qualitätsaspekt (u. a. Driesen/Drummond 2011: 150, Prieto Ramos 2014: 121) und zugleich eine Herausforderung dar (Prieto Ramos/Cerutti 2021).

An dieser Stelle ist es sinnvoll, kurz auf einige Besonderheiten der Rechtsterminologie einzugehen. Ein besonderes Merkmal der Rechtsterminologie ist ihre Systemgebundenheit (de Groot 1999: 12–17), das heißt, die Rechtsterminologie ist an das jeweilige Rechtssystem gebunden. Daher ist eine vollständige Äquivalenz zwischen zwei Begriffen aus unterschiedlichen Rechtssystemen eher selten (Chiocchetti/Lušicky/Wissik 2023a, Šarčević 1997: 235–237). Je unterschiedlicher die zugrunde liegenden Rechtssysteme sind, desto schwieriger wird es, Äquivalente zu finden (Cao 2007: 30–31). Auch wenn mehrere Rechtssysteme die gleiche Sprache verwenden, z. B. Deutsch im Fall von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz, können terminologische Ressourcen, die sich z. B. auf das deutsche Rechtssystem beziehen, von den Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen nicht 1:1 für das österreichische Rechtssystem übernommen werden, da sich die Begriffe und Termini sehr wohl unterscheiden können (Cao 2007: 33, Chiocchetti/Lušicky/Wissik 2023a, de Groot 1999: 12). In Österreich wird z. B. die Auskunftserteilung aus dem Strafregister *Strafregisterbescheinigung*[6] genannt, in Deutschland heißt sie *Führungszeugnis*[7]. Ein weiteres Merkmal ist die Kontextgebundenheit der juristischen Terminologie (Chiocchetti/Ralli 2009: 102), das heißt, dass ihre Bedeutung vom Kontext abhängt. Oft gibt es in Gesetzestexten Definitionen, die Begriffe und Termini speziell für dieses eine Gesetz definieren. In diesem Zusammenhang ist es besonders wichtig, in Terminologiesammlungen Definition und Quellen anzugeben.

Da nicht für alle Sprachkombinationen oder Fachbereiche ausreichende bzw. aktuelle terminologische Ressourcen zur Verfügung stehen, betreiben Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen auch in der einen oder anderen Form Terminologiearbeit (Durán Muñoz 2012: 79–81). Dafür können unterschiedliche Tools zur Unterstützung eingesetzt werden. Die Palette reicht von einfachen Tabellenkalkulationssystemen und Datenbanken über spezifische Terminologieverwaltungs-

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[5]   https://justizonline.gv.at/jop/web/exl-suche/do (23.01.2024).

[6]   Strafregistergesetz, § 10.

[7]   Bundeszentralregistergesetz (BZR), § 30.

werkzeuge (z. B. Trados MultiTerm[8]), die dezidiert auf Terminologiearbeit ausgerichtet sind (Steurs / de Wachter / de Malsche 2015), bis hin zu Terminologieverwaltungskomponenten in computergestützten Übersetzungswerkzeugen (z. B. Trados Studio[9] und MemoQ[10]) oder in computergestützten Dolmetschwerkzeugen (z. B. InterpretBank[11] oder Interpreters' HELP[12]).

Da sich Dolmetschen generell vom Übersetzen unterscheidet, haben Dolmetscher*innen auch spezielle Bedürfnisse bei der Terminologiearbeit (vgl. Rodriguez/Schnell 2009). Durch die Einmaligkeit des Textes und die zeitliche Gebundenheit des Dolmetscheinsatzes unter erschwerten Bedingungen müssen Dolmetscher*innen hauptsächlich auf ihr internalisiertes Wissen zurückgreifen: auf passives Wissen, um den Ausgangstext zu verstehen, und auf aktives Wissen, um den Zieltext zu produzieren (vgl. Rütten 2007). Dies erfordert einen notwendigen Wissenserwerb und damit Terminologieerwerb vor einem Dolmetscheinsatz (vgl. Gile 2009, Kalina 2005). Oft ist es nicht möglich, das gesamte benötigte Wissen vorab zu internalisieren, und fehlende Informationen können während des Dolmetscheinsatzes nur punktuell von außen hinzugefügt werden (vgl. Lušicky 2019). Im Gegensatz zu Anwendungen für Übersetzer*innen unterstützen angepasste Software-Anwendungen für Dolmetscher*innen oft nur eine einfache Eintragsstruktur, ermöglichen jedoch eine relativ schnelle Suche in den Terminologiebeständen während eines Dolmetscheinsatzes (vgl. Fantinuoli 2014).

Terminologie, Terminologielehre und Terminologieverwaltungswerkzeuge sind Schwerpunkte mehrerer Translationskompetenzmodelle (vgl. Europäische Kommission 2022, Hurtado Albir 2017, Scarpa/Orlando 2017) sowie Bestandteil mehrerer Prozess- und Kompetenzmodelle für das Dolmetschen (Albl-Mikasa 2012, Kalina 2006, Rütten 2007). Dem wird auch durch die Rolle der „terminology worker" in den ISO-Normen Rechnung getragen, deren Aufgabe es ist, „to perform terminology work as an ancillary function of other professional activities" (ISO 12616-1:2021, Abschnitt 3.29). Sie steht im Gegensatz zur Rolle der Terminolog*innen, deren Hauptaufgabe die Terminologiearbeit darstellt. Die Auseinandersetzung mit Terminologie ist auch ein integraler Teil in Lehrveranstaltungen rund um Rechtsübersetzen auf tertiärer Ebene (Biel 2011) wie auch in der beruflichen Weiterbildung. Valero-Garcés (2005) beobachtet kritisch, dass in Ausbildungsprogrammen zwar der systematische Ansatz der Terminologiearbeit Vorrang hat, was jedoch nicht die zeitlichen Beschränkungen herkömmlicher Translationssettings widerspiegelt, wo wenig Zeit für Terminologierecherche oft zu Ad-hoc-Terminologiearbeit führt.

In Österreich gibt es neben den drei traditionellen Standorten (Wien, Graz, Innsbruck), an denen auf universitärer Ebene ein Translationsstudium angeboten wird, seit einigen Jahren auch postgraduale Weiterbildungsprogramme. Am Postgraduate Center der Universität Wien wird z. B. seit November 2016 ein zweisemestriger Universitätslehrgang „Dolmetschen für Gerichte und Behörden" für die Sprachen Albanisch, Arabisch, Chinesisch, Dari/Farsi oder Türkisch (jeweils in Kombination mit Deutsch) angeboten, in dem Wert auf Recherche und Terminologiearbeit gelegt wird.

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[8]   https://www.trados.com/products/multiterm-desktop/ (23.01.2024).

[9]   https://www.trados.com/products/trados-studio/ (23.01.2024).

[10]   https://www.memoq.com/ (23.01.2024).

[11]   https://interpretbank.com/ (23.01.2024).

[12]   https://interpretershelp.com/ (23.01.2024).

2.2 Normen und Richtlinien für die Terminologiearbeit

Terminologienormen bieten einen bewährten und allgemein gültigen Rahmen für die Erfassung, Verwaltung und Dokumentation von Terminologie. Die Einhaltung von Terminologienormen trägt zur Qualität von Terminologiesammlungen bei. Sie unterstützt effiziente Terminologiearbeit und Nutzung von Terminologiesammlungen in Werkzeugen für computergestützte Übersetzung (CAT) und computergestütztes Dolmetschen (CAI). Dadurch wird die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Translator*innen (und anderen Nutzer*innen von Terminologiesammlungen) ermöglicht, um Terminologiedaten nahtlos austauschen zu können.

Normen sind Dokumente, welche Anforderungen spezifizieren und einen Konsens über Qualitätsanforderungen und bewährte Verfahren darstellen. Sie werden von Fachleuten und Interessengruppen auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene entwickelt und unterstützen die Effizienz und Qualitätssicherung in Industrie, Technik, Wissenschaft und dem öffentlichen Sektor (DIN 2023a). Normen werden von Normungsorganisationen auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene entwickelt und verwaltet. Die Terminologienormung erfolgt in zwei Ausrichtungen: Die Einzelnormung befasst sich mit der Normung von Begriffen und Bezeichnungen in den jeweiligen Fachgebieten, die terminologische Grundsatznormung hingegen mit der Standardisierung von terminologischen Methoden und Prinzipien. Die beiden Bereiche der Terminologienormung sind voneinander abhängig und verzahnt: Qualitativ hochwertige Terminologien können ohne terminologische Methoden und Prinzipien nicht zustande kommen; jedoch sollen terminologische Methoden aktuellen Bedürfnissen in Anwendungsbereichen der Terminologienormung folgen (DIN 2023b).

Im deutschsprachigen Raum sind die Normen des deutschen DIN-Institutes verbreitet und werden gerne in den Lehrbüchern und anderen Referenzmaterialien für Translator*innen wiedergegeben (vgl. Schmitz 2012, 2017). In Österreich arbeitet auf der nationalen Ebene das Komitee 033 „Terminologie, Information und Dokumentation" der Austrian Standards International an der Normung von Grundsätzen, Methoden und Anwendungen für Terminologie und Sprach- und Content-Ressourcen.

Im Folgenden werden einige ausgewählte Grundsatznormen erörtert, die für die Terminologiearbeit von Translator*innen, die ihre terminologischen Aktivitäten im Rahmen einer nicht-terminologischen Tätigkeit ausüben, von besonderer Bedeutung sind. In der Norm *ÖNORM EN ISO 17100:2018 Übersetzungsdienstleistungen – Anforderungen an Übersetzungsdienstleistungen* ist die Terminologiekompetenz nämlich implizit ein Bestandteil des translatorischen Kompetenzprofils (Abschnitt 3.1.4). Weiters ist die Anforderung an Terminologie in den Projektspezifikationen beschrieben (Anhang B) und das Terminologiemanagement wird als eine mögliche Mehrwertdienstleistung zur Übersetzungsdienstleistung aufgeführt (Anhang F).

Die zentrale terminologische Grundsatznormung aus der ISO-Normenreihe ist die Norm ISO 704:2022, *Terminology Work — Principles and Methods*, in der die grundlegenden Prinzipien und Methoden für die Vorbereitung und Erstellung von Terminologien erfasst sind. Da zum Verständnis dieser Norm ein gewisses Grundverständnis der Terminologiearbeit erforderlich ist, definiert die *ISO 1087:2019 Terminology Work and Terminology Science — Vocabulary* die Grundbegriffe der Terminologiearbeit und der Terminologiewissenschaft. Diese Norm kann von allen Akteur*innen und Zielgruppen genutzt werden, die an der Terminologiearbeit beteiligt sind (z. B. Terminolog*innen, Terminologienutzer*innen und Fachleute, die mit Terminologie arbeiten).

Die Norm *ISO 12616-1:2021 Terminology Work in Support of Multilingual Communication — Part 1: Fundamentals of Translation-oriented Terminography* richtet sich unter anderem auch an Translator*innen, die zweisprachige oder mehrsprachige Terminologiesammlungen erstellen, und bietet Empfehlungen, bewährte Verfahren und Datenmodellierung.

Die Norm *ISO 12620:2019 Management of Terminology Resources – Data Category Specifications* beschreibt die Anforderungen an Datenkategorien für Terminologiesammlungen – ein einheitlicher Ansatz für die Bezeichnung und die Definitionen von Datenkategorien innerhalb von Terminologiesammlungen verbessert nämlich die Kohärenz der terminologischen Daten und fördert Wiederverwendung und Austausch von Terminologiesammlungen. Ausführlichere Anforderungen und Empfehlungen zu Terminologiedatenbanken finden sich in *ISO 26162-1:2019 Management of Terminology Resources – Terminology Databases – Part 1: Design*. Diese Norm bietet eine Anleitung für die Erstellung, Bearbeitung und Nutzung von mehrsprachigen Terminologiedatenbanken und ist daher von besonderem Interesse für Dolmetscher*innen und Übersetzer*innen.

Die Normen, die auf Deutsch verfügbar sind, sind die Normen des Deutschen Instituts für Normung und von Austrian Standards International. In der Norm *DIN 2342:2011-08 Begriffe der Terminologielehre* sind Grundbegriffe der Terminologie und Terminologiearbeit festgelegt. *DIN 2330:2013-07 Begriffe und Benennungen – Allgemeine Grundsätze* liefert ähnlich wie die ISO 704:2022 allgemeine Grundsätze für die Bildung von sprachlichen Bezeichnungen und die Formulierung von Definitionen, jedoch unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Sprache. Im österreichischen Kontext soll die Norm *ÖNORM A 2704 Terminologiearbeit – Grundsätze und Methoden* erwähnt werden, die nicht nur die Grundsätze und Methoden der Terminologiearbeit, sondern auch ihre praktischen Anwendungen regelt.

Auch außerhalb der Normungsorganisationen gibt es mehr oder weniger praxis- und handlungsbezogene Handbücher (vgl. Kockaert/Steurs 2015, Wright/Budin 1997, 2001), Empfehlungen (vgl. Chiocchetti et al. 2013, KÜDES 2018, Lušicky/Wissik 2015) und Trainingshandbücher (vgl. UNHCR Österreich 2023), die die terminologische Grundsatznormung für spezifische Anwendungsbereiche (z. B. Recht) oder Szenarien (z. B. Asyldolmetschen) wiedergeben und vertiefen. Einen wichtigen Beitrag zur österreichischen Rechtsterminologie für Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen leistet das zweibändige Skriptum der österreichischen Rechtsterminologie des ÖVGD (2021a, 2021b). Es handelt sich um eine Sammlung der Bezeichnungen wichtiger österreichischer Rechtsbegriffe mit Erläuterungen, die als Lernhilfe für angehende Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen entwickelt wurde. Vorerst nur auf Deutsch verfügbar, wird die Sammlung um weitere Sprachen sukzessive erweitert.

Terminologiearbeit der österreichischen Verwaltung und Behörden mündet bis auf wenige Ausnahmen in öffentlich nicht zugängliche Ressourcen. Eine Ausnahme ist das Fachglossar *Österreichische Verwaltung. Deutsch – Englisch*, eine Sammlung von Bezeichnungen aus den Bereichen österreichische Hoheitsverwaltung, Gesetzgebung und Exekutive, das von der informellen Arbeitsgruppe „Gouvernementaler Übersetzungs- und Terminologiedienste" erstellt wurde (Autorenkollegium des Sprachinstitutes des Bundesheeres 2018). Ein weiteres Beispiel ist das vom Bundeskriminalamt herausgegebene *Polizeiglossar* mit 1.900 Einträgen. Es handelt sich um einen Auszug aus der internen Terminologiedatenbank *BMITermbank*, die nur im Intranet des Bundesministeriums für Inneres abrufbar ist (Chreytah/Gelbmann/Taucher 2022). Weitere Werke, in denen die österreichische Rechts- oder Verwaltungsterminologie öffentlich verfügbar ist, werden an österreichischen Universitäten im Rahmen von Forschungsprojekten oder Abschlussarbeiten ausgearbeitet. Diese Werke haben einen de-

skriptiven Charakter und stellen eine Momentaufnahme dar, da die Glossare und Datenbanken nicht laufend aktualisiert werden.

3 Datenerhebungsmethode

Bisher fehlten quantitative Daten zum Umgang mit Terminologie vonseiten österreichischer Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen (vgl. Chiocchetti/Lušicky/Wissik 2023b). Die in der Folge vorgestellten Daten wurden von Mitte Juni bis Anfang Juli 2021 über eine explorative Online-Umfrage mit insgesamt 28 vorwiegend geschlossenen Fragen unter den Mitgliedern des ÖVGD erhoben.[13] Es handelt sich durchwegs um aktive Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen, da die Eintragung in die Liste der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen zeitlich befristet ist und alle fünf Jahre neu beantragt werden muss. Voraussetzung für die Rezertifizierung ist u. a. der Nachweis einer regelmäßigen Tätigkeit für Gerichte (ÖVGD 2023b).

Der Link zur Umfrage in Survey Monkey[14] wurde direkt vom Verband an die über 500 assoziierten Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen in Österreich verschickt. Somit blieben die Teilnehmenden für die Auswertenden völlig anonym. Auch konnte die Datenerhebung problemlos unter Wahrung der Distanzierungsvorgaben während der COVID-19-Pandemie erfolgen. Die Informationen zum Ziel der Umfrage und zur Datenverarbeitung laut Europäischer Datenschutzgrundverordnung wurden als druckbare PDF-Datei geliefert. Alle Teilnehmenden haben der Datenverarbeitung für Forschungs- und Publikationszwecke zugestimmt (Frage 1).

Die Umfrage wurde ausgehend von zwei einfachen Forschungsfragen aufgebaut: „Kennen Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen einschlägige Terminologienormen? Setzen sie diese bei ihrer Arbeit ein bzw. um?" Diese wurden sorgfältig operationalisiert, indem Indikatoren für die relevanten Variablen festgelegt wurden. Die Umfrage bestand aus drei Teilen (vgl. Umfragetext auf Zenodo[15]). Im ersten Teil (Fragen 2–10) wurden soziodemografische Daten zu den teilnehmenden Personen sowie wichtige Informationen zu ihrem beruflichen Hintergrund im Bereich Rechtsübersetzen bzw. Gerichtsdolmetschen erhoben: Geschlecht, Altersgruppe, Dauer der einschlägigen Arbeitserfahrung, Tätigkeitsschwerpunkt (vorwiegend Übersetzen oder Dolmetschen), Beschäftigungsform, Arbeit in Voll- oder Teilzeit, Tätigkeitsland, Ausbildung und Arbeitssprachen.

Teil 2 war der Kenntnis der Normen und der Grundprinzipien der Terminologiearbeit gewidmet. Frage 11 erhob, wie häufig die Teilnehmenden Terminologie sammeln und speichern. Die Fragen 12 und 13 wurden nur jenen gestellt, die Frage 11 positiv beantwortet hatten. Diese bedingten Fragen betrafen das für die Sammlung der Terminologie genutzte Medium und etwaige Felder bzw. Angaben, die Befragte in den eigenen Terminologiesammlungen immer erfassen. Die ebenfalls bedingte Frage 14 wurde nur Teilnehmenden gestellt, die laut Antwort auf Frage 11 nie Terminologie sammeln und betraf den Hauptgrund für fehlende Terminologiearbeit. Die Fragen 15 bis 17 bildeten anschließend den Kern der Umfrage. Die ersten zwei bezogen sich auf die Kenntnis nationaler und internationaler Normen zur Terminologiearbeit

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[13]   Die Umfrage wurde auch in Italien unter den Mitgliedern von AssITIG (Associazione Italiana Traduttori e Interpreti Giudiziari), einem kleinen Verband von Rechtsübersetzer*innen und Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen, durchgeführt. Diese Ergebnisse sind aber nicht Gegenstand des vorliegenden Artikels.

[14]   https://www.surveymonkey.com (23.01.2024).

[15]   Der Umfragetext ist auf Zenodo unter dem folgenden Link https://zenodo.org/records/10656785 abrufbar.

und -wissenschaft und auf die empfundene Wichtigkeit solcher Normen für die praktische Tätigkeit im Bereich Rechtsübersetzen bzw. Gerichtsdolmetschen. Frage 17 enthielt eine Liste von acht relevanten internationalen und nationalen Normen in englischer bzw. deutscher Sprache, die zum Zeitpunkt der Umfrage veröffentlicht waren. Außerdem konnten weitere Normen frei angegeben werden. Die darauffolgenden Fragen 18 bis 21 sahen nur Teilnehmende, die wenigstens eine Norm aus Frage 17 kannten. Frage 18 erfragte, wo die Teilnehmenden von der Norm bzw. den Normen erfahren hatten. Frage 19 erhob, ob sie direkten Zugriff zu einer oder mehreren Normen hatten. Zum Abschluss dieses zweiten Teils der Umfrage gab es noch zwei Fragebatterien mit vierstufigen Skalen (plus Antwortmöglichkeit „weiß nicht") zur Meinungserhebung. Die Teilnehmenden durften angeben, inwiefern sie einer Reihe von jeweils vier Aussagen (eher) zustimmten oder (eher) nicht zustimmten. In Frage 20 lag der Fokus auf der Kenntnis und den Einstellungen zu den Terminologienormen, während Frage 21 auf spezifische Datenkategorien und Arbeitsmethoden einging (vgl. Umfragetext).

Im dritten Teil der Umfrage wurden den Teilnehmenden unterschiedliche Eintragsbeispiele präsentiert. Die Aufgabe war, zwischen zwei unterschiedlich strukturierten Einträgen jenen zu wählen, den sie für eine Terminologiesammlung vorziehen würden. In Frage 22 ging es um verschiedene Optionen für die Organisation der Daten, in Frage 24 um die unterschiedliche Erfassung von Benennungen, in Frage 26 um den Umgang mit Homonymen. In den freien Antwortfeldern der Fragen 23, 25 und 27 konnte jeweils eine Begründung für die vorangehende Wahl gegeben werden. Ein freies Antwortfeld gab es abschließend auch in der letzten Frage (Nr. 28). Darin konnten persönliche Überlegungen und Kommentare in Verbindung mit den Normen im Bereich Terminologie angeführt werden.

Erste Entwürfe der Umfrage wurden von mehreren Personen mit Erfahrung in den Bereichen Rechtsübersetzen und Gerichtsdolmetschen begutachtet und kommentiert. Eine Juristin hat die rechtlichen Inhalte kontrolliert. Eine Soziologin und eine Statistikerin haben die Umfrage ebenfalls überprüft. Anschließend wurden Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen, Rechtsübersetzer*innen und Dolmetscher*innen mit Erfahrung im Bereich Recht zu einem Pretest (Weichbold 2014) der Online-Umfrage eingeladen. Alle relevanten Anmerkungen auf sprachlicher und fragebogentechnischer Ebene wurden in der endgültigen Version der Umfrage berücksichtigt.

Die 97 gültigen Antworten aus Österreich (all jener, die alle Fragen bis mindestens Nr. 15 beantwortet hatten) wurden in der Software SPSS mit quantitativen Methoden analysiert. Die freien Antworten zu den Fragen 23, 25 und 27 wurden neu kodiert und Kategorien wie „kurz", „übersichtlich", „genauer", „gewohnt" bzw. „Anderes" zugeteilt. Die 18 freien Antworten zur letzten Frage wurden inhaltlich mit der Methode der *content analysis* (Bernard/Wutich/Ryan 2017: 243–283) untersucht. Es handelte sich vor allem um Kommentare und Wünsche zu Tools, zu den Normen und ihrer Umsetzung in der Praxis, zur Terminologiearbeit im Allgemeinen sowie zu Fortbildungen und Information.

Im folgenden Abschnitt 4 des Beitrags wird besonders auf die Ergebnisse aus Teil 1 und 3 der Umfrage eingegangen. Teil 2 wurde in Chiocchetti/Lušicky/Wissik (2023b) eingehender behandelt.

4 Umfrageergebnisse

Knapp drei Viertel der 97 Teilnehmenden aus Österreich waren weiblich (73,2 %). Der größte Anteil (44,3 %) war über 60 Jahre alt, ein Fünftel (19,3 %) war 51–60 Jahre alt, ein weiteres

Fünftel (21,6 %) war 41–50 Jahre alt, 13,4 % waren 31–40 Jahre alt und eine Person war jünger als 30 (siehe Abbildung 1). Insgesamt waren also knapp zwei Drittel (63,9 %) der Befragten im Alter von über 50 Jahren. Entsprechend besaß die Hälfte (50,5 %) bereits über 25 Jahre Erfahrung im Rechtsübersetzen bzw. Gerichtsdolmetschen.
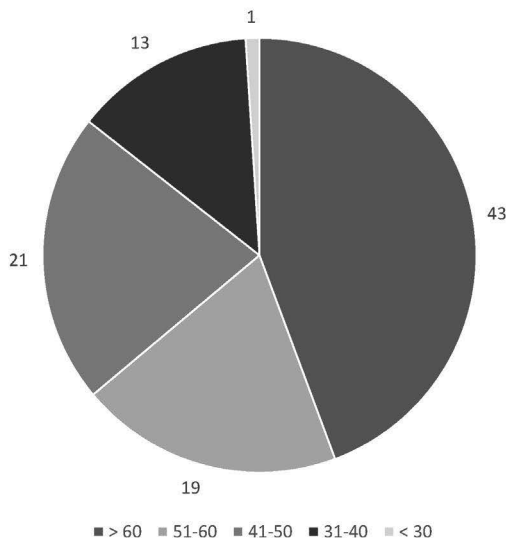

Abb. 1: Verteilung der Teilnehmenden nach Altersgruppen (97 Teilnehmende)

Für weit über ein Drittel (38,1 %) war die Übersetzungs- bzw. Dolmetschtätigkeit im Bereich Recht ein Vollzeitberuf, für 17,5 % nahm er 51 % bis 75 % der Arbeitszeit ein, für die restlichen 44,3 % einen Anteil von weniger als 50 %. Rechtsübersetzen und Gerichtsdolmetschen hielten sich für fast zwei Drittel der Befragten (61,9 %) gut die Waage, das heißt, sie übersetzten und dolmetschten in ähnlichem Maße. Für weniger als ein Drittel (28,9 %) überwog hingegen die schriftliche Übersetzungsarbeit. Praktisch alle (99,0 %) arbeiteten freiberuflich. Nur vier Teilnehmende waren auch in Teilzeit angestellt. Ein Befragter war ausschließlich im Angestelltenverhältnis als Rechtsübersetzer und Gerichtsdolmetscher tätig.

Hinsichtlich der Ausbildung überwogen die universitären Abschlüsse in Übersetzen (44,3 %) und/oder Dolmetschen (30,9 %) sowie in anderen sprachbezogenen Bereichen (29,9 %). Rund ein Fünftel (22,7 %) hatte (auch) eine andere Ausbildung, u. a. in Betriebswirtschaft, Ingenieurwesen, Politikwissenschaften oder Kunst, während 12,4 % (auch) einen Abschluss in Rechtswissenschaften besaßen. In Österreich sind Doppelstudien in zwei Fachbereichen möglich und beliebt, weshalb viele Teilnehmende mehr als einen Universitätsabschluss anführten. In Summe überwogen jedoch die Studienabschlüsse in Übersetzen und/oder Dolmetschen (54,6 %) im Vergleich zu den Studienabschlüssen in allen anderen Bereichen (45,4 %).

Fast alle Teilnehmenden (96,9 %) waren vorwiegend in Österreich tätig. Drei Personen erklärten hingegen, zum Zeitpunkt der Umfrage ihre Arbeit vorwiegend in der Schweiz, in Deutschland bzw. in Bulgarien auszuüben. Über die Hälfte der Befragten (52,6 %) gab zwei Arbeitssprachen – inklusive der in Österreich verpflichtenden Arbeitssprache Deutsch – an. 28,9 % arbeiteten mit drei Sprachen und die restlichen 18,5 % mit vier bis fünf Sprachen. Eng-

lisch war Arbeitssprache für ein Drittel (32,0 %) der Umfrageteilnehmenden. Es folgten Französisch (16,5 %), Russisch (13,4 %) sowie Spanisch, Bosnisch, Kroatisch und Serbisch (jeweils 12,4 %). Letztere drei Sprachen wurden systematisch gemeinsam angegeben. In Österreich gibt es für diese eng verwandten Sprachen, meist kurz *B/K/S* genannt, keine getrennten Studiengänge. Weniger repräsentierte Arbeitssprachen waren Arabisch, Polnisch, Portugiesisch und Tschechisch (5,2 %) sowie Italienisch, Rumänisch, Slowakisch, Türkisch und Ungarisch (4,1 %). Schließlich folgten Japanisch (3,1 %) und weitere Arbeitssprachen, die einen noch kleineren Prozentsatz des Gesamtanteils ausmachen, wie Griechisch, Urdu, Albanisch, Armenisch, Bulgarisch, Chinesisch, Finnisch, Slowenisch, Persisch und Punjabi.

Mehr als die Hälfte der Befragten (53,6 %) gab an, immer/oft Terminologie zu sammeln. Zu diesem Zweck dienten vorwiegend Textverarbeitungs- (67,3 %) und Tabellenkalkulationsprogramme (38,5 %) wie Word und Excel. Notizhefte und andere Medien aus Papier (46,2 %) waren ebenfalls ein beliebtes Mittel für das – auch nur vorübergehende – Erfassen von Terminologie. Der Großteil gab nämlich an, sowohl ein Textverarbeitungsprogramm als auch Papiermedien zu nutzen. Terminologieverwaltungskomponenten in Werkzeugen für computergestütztes Übersetzen oder Dolmetschen (9,6 %), *stand-alone* Terminologieverwaltungssysteme (3,8 %) und Datenbankprogramme (1,9 %) wurden bedeutend weniger oft als Antwort ausgewählt (siehe Abbildung 2). Dabei zeigte sich ein Unterschied zwischen den Generationen: Teilnehmende über 50 Jahre nutzten Textverarbeitungsprogramme bedeutend häufiger als jüngere (71,2 % vs. 48,5 %), während Teilnehmende unter 50 im Verhältnis öfter Terminologieverwaltungskomponenten in Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschwerkzeugen einsetzten (18,2 % vs. 3,4 %). Nur fünf Teilnehmende (5,2 %) erklärten, Terminologie nie zu sammeln, mit der Begründung, dass bereits genug Terminologieressourcen (für ihre Sprachen) existierten oder dass sie die notwendige Terminologie bereits im Kopf hätten.
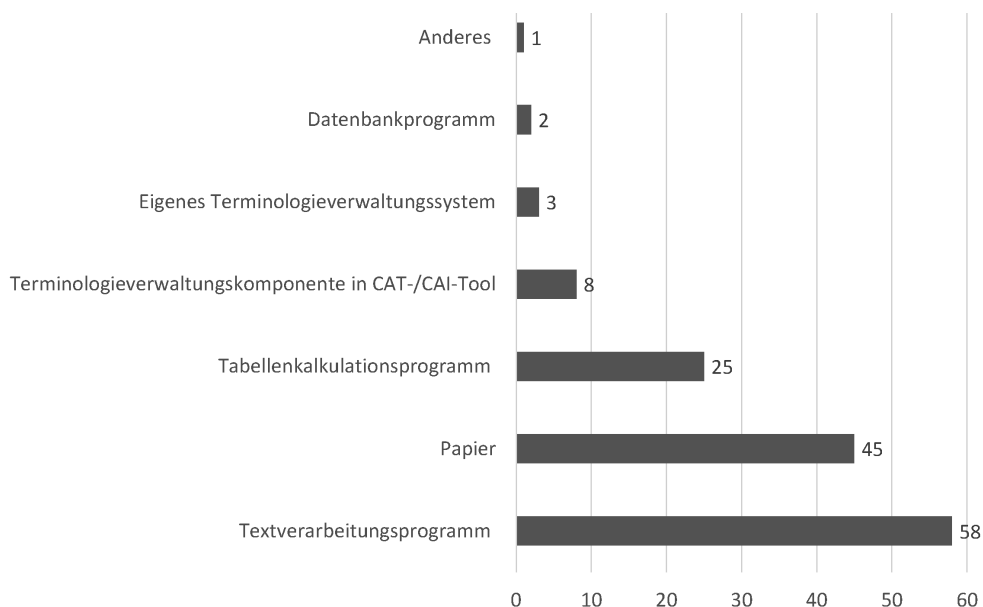

Abb. 2: Zur Sammlung von Terminologie verwendete Medien bzw. Werkzeuge (Mehrfachantworten möglich, 97 Teilnehmende, 142 Antworten)

Der Mehrzahl (57,7 %) der Befragten war bekannt, dass nationale und internationale Normen zur Terminologiearbeit und -wissenschaft existieren, besonders jenen mit einer Ausbildung in Translation (73,6 % vs. 38,6 %). Allerdings kannten über zwei Drittel (69,9 %) die wichtigsten Normen nicht und nur 10 Befragte hatten direkten Zugriff auf mindestens eine Norm. Von den 28 Befragten, die bestätigten, eine oder mehrere Normen zu kennen, gaben nur 11 an, dass sie sie auch gut kannten. Am bekanntesten waren die Normen in deutscher Sprache, also die österreichische *ÖNORM A 2704:2015 Terminologiearbeit – Grundsätze und Methoden* und die deutsche *DIN 2330:2013 Begriffe und Benennungen – Allgemeine Grundsätze*, gefolgt von der internationalen Norm *ISO 704:2009 Terminology Work – Principles and Methods.*

Folgende Daten stammen nur von 27 Befragten, die erklärt hatten, wenigstens eine Norm zu kennen. 18 davon antworteten, dass sie in ihrer Terminologiesammlung Benennungen nach den Vorgaben der Normen erfassen, das heißt, beispielsweise in der Grundform Nominativ Singular. Ebenso viele erklärten, dass sie die einzelnen Datenkategorien (u. a. Benennung, Fachgebiet, Definition) entsprechend den Vorgaben der einschlägigen Terminologienormen auswählten. 13 bestätigten, in ihrer Terminologiesammlung Definitionen nach den Vorgaben der Normen zu formulieren (z. B. unter Angabe des Oberbegriffs und der wesentlichen Merkmale sowie ohne Wiederholung der Benennung). Schließlich empfanden 19 die Umsetzung der Normen als sehr aufwändig.

Die Umfrage enthielt in der Folge drei Fragen mit beispielhaften Gegenüberstellungen unterschiedlicher Eintragsmodelle für die Organisation der Daten, insbesondere für die Erfassung von Benennungen und Definitionen. Sie richteten sich an alle noch teilnehmenden Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen. In der ersten Gegenüberstellung durften die Befragten zwischen unterschiedlichen Beispielen für die Organisation der Daten auswählen. Der Vorzug konnte dabei Beispiel A mit Benennung, Wortart und Genus im selben Feld, Beispiel B mit jeder Information in getrennten Datenkategorien, beiden oder keinem der Beispiele gegeben werden (siehe Tabelle 1).

Tab. 1: Gegenüberstellung von Eintragsmodellen für die Organisation der Daten

Beispiel A:

deu	*Benennung:*	**Richter**, Subst. m.
ita	*Termine:*	**giudice**, sost. m.

Beispiel B:

deu	*Benennung:*	**Richter**
	Wortart:	Subst.
	Genus:	m.
ita	*Termine:*	**giudice**
	Parte del discorso:	sost.
	Genere:	m.

Zwei Drittel der 87 Teilnehmenden (65,5 %) bevorzugten Beispiel A für die Organisation der Daten in einer Terminologiesammlung. Das Modell verstößt jedoch gegen das Prinzip der Datenelementarität. Dieses Prinzip besagt, dass ein Datenfeld jeweils nur ein einziges Datenelement enthalten darf (vgl. ISO 12616-1:2021, Abschnitt 3.23). Der Verstoß wurde von einer Person im freien Antwortfeld angemerkt: „A ist übersichtlicher, selbe Information platzsparender sichtbar. Verstößt aber gegen die Elementarität. B wäre für eine reine Erfassung der Terminologie maschinell jedenfalls leichter zu verarbeiten". Eine weitere Begründung für die Wahl von Beispiel B war: „Verschiedene Informationen trage ich in verschiedene Felder ein". Dennoch zog die Mehrheit Beispiel A vor, hauptsächlich aus Gründen der Übersichtlichkeit und/oder Kürze. Dabei lag der Fokus der Antworten eher auf der Darstellung als auf der Organisation der Daten. Beispielhafte Begründungen hierfür waren: „Die Information soll kurz und übersichtlich sein"; „Kann auf einen Blick erfasst werden"; „Wenn man Rechtsübersetzungen macht, so muss man sich bereits mit Wortarten perfekt auskennen! Keine unnötige[n] Informationen!"; „Platz und Speicher [s]paren, da bei mehrmaliger Zeilenschaltung die Datei größer wird"; „Weil es für mich und andere verständlich ist"; „Bin so gewohnt aus den Wörterbüchern".

Die zweite Gegenüberstellung (siehe Tabelle 2) betraf die Erfassung von synonymen Benennungen im selben Feld oder in getrennten Feldern. Wiederum konnten die nunmehr 86 Teilnehmenden das von ihnen vorgezogene Modell, beide oder keines auswählen und ihre Wahl frei begründen.

Tab. 2: Gegenüberstellung von Eintragsmodellen für das Erfassen von Synonymen

Beispiel A:

deu	*Benennung:*	**Europäische Union**
	Benennung:	**EU**
ita	*Termine:*	**Unione europea**
	Termine:	**UE**

Beispiel B:

deu	*Benennung:*	**Europäische Union (EU)**
ita	*Termine:*	**Unione europea (UE)**

Zwei Drittel der Befragten (65,1 %) zogen Beispiel B vor, welches gegen das Prinzip der Benennungsautonomie verstößt. Dieses Prinzip besagt, dass jede Benennung in einem Eintrag eigenständig ist; sie wird getrennt erfasst und kann durch denselben Satz von Datenkategorien beschrieben werden (vgl. ISO 12616-1:2021, Abschnitt 3.25). Die Begründungen für die Wahl von Beispiel B betrafen wiederum hauptsächlich die Kürze und Übersichtlichkeit der Datendarstellung: „Erscheint mir übersichtlicher. Es ist ja klar, dass der Ausdruck in Klammern die Abkürzung ist"; „Ist schneller erfassbar, wenn kein Zeilenwechsel"; „Kurze und übersichtliche Präsentation". Teilnehmende mit einer Ausbildung in Translation entschieden sich jedoch eher für Beispiel A. Beispielhafte Begründungen für dessen Wahl waren: „B verstößt gegen

die Benennungsautonomie und durch die Notation wird eine Benennung der anderen untergeordnet"; „Man kann leichter nach beiden Benennungen suchen"; „Bei Import in eine Terminologiedatenbank sind getrennte Felder von Vorteil".

Die letzte Gegenüberstellung (siehe Tabelle 3) betraf das Erfassen von Homonymen. In Beispiel A werden unterschiedliche Begriffe aus verschiedenen Fachbereichen im selben Eintrag definiert, während sie in Beispiel B in getrennten Einträgen erfasst werden.

Tab. 3: Gegenüberstellung von Eintragsmodellen für das Erfassen von Homonymen

Beispiel A:

Fachgebiet:	*Strafrecht, Völkerrecht*
Benennung:	**Nothilfe**
Definition:	1) Sonderform der Notwehr, bei der ein Dritter zugunsten des Angegriffenen eine notwendige Verteidigung ausübt. 2) Maßnahmen, die während oder umgehend nach dem Eintreten einer Katastrophe zur unmittelbaren Lebenserhaltung durchgeführt werden, etwa durch Versorgung der Menschen mit Trinkwasser, Nahrungsmitteln, Medikamenten.

Beispiel B:

Fachgebiet:	*Strafrecht*
Benennung:	**Nothilfe**
Definition:	Sonderform der Notwehr, bei der ein Dritter zugunsten des Angegriffenen eine notwendige Verteidigung ausübt.

Fachgebiet:	*Völkerrecht*
Benennung:	**Nothilfe**
Definition:	Maßnahmen, die während oder umgehend nach dem Eintreten einer Katastrophe zur unmittelbaren Lebenserhaltung durchgeführt werden, etwa durch Versorgung der Menschen mit Trinkwasser, Nahrungsmitteln, Medikamenten.

Das Ergebnis dieser Frage war viel ausgeglichener, zumal sich von den 83 Befragten 43,4 % für Beispiel A und 42,2 % für Beispiel B entschieden. Ersteres verstößt gegen das Prinzip der Begriffsorientierung, wonach jeder Eintrag nur einen Begriff beschreibt und Homonyme in getrennten Einträgen erfasst werden müssen (vgl. ISO 12616-1:2021, Abschnitt 3.24). Die Begründungen gingen auf die Übersichtlichkeit des ersten Modells und die größere Präzision des zweiten Modells ein. Wer Beispiel A vorzog, erklärte beispielsweise: „Ist für mich übersichtlicher für eine schnelle Information"; „Alles auf einen Blick"; „Unter einem Terminus sollten ALLE Definitionen zusammengefasst sein, sonst übersieht man leicht was". Wer sich hingegen für Beispiel B entschloss, gab u. a. folgende Motivationen an: „Erkennbarer, welche Definition welchem Fachgebiet angehört"; „Ich suche nach terminologischen Entsprechungen meist in

einem bestimmten Rechtsgebiet"; „übersichtlicher; wenn meine ‚Nothilfe' zum Völkerrecht gehört, ist das Strafrechtliche entbehrlich; wenn extra verzeichnet, leichter ‚auszublenden'".

Die letzte Frage ermöglichte es den Teilnehmenden, persönliche Überlegungen zu teilen und etwaige weitere Aspekte frei zu kommentieren. „Normen im Bereich Terminologie sollten besser bekannt gemacht werden", erklärte eine befragte Person. Einige sprachen das Thema Tools an, z. B.: „Einfachere Terminologietools wären hilfreich"; „Datenbanken sollten möglichst einfa[ch] zu handhaben sein, sonst nutzt man sie dann doch nicht". Der Bedarf an maßgeschneiderten Fortbildungen wurde ebenfalls behandelt: „Ich empfinde, dass Einführungen [von Toolanbietern] oft nur oberflächlich und allgemein gehalten werden und nicht unbedingt auf die Bedürfnisse von Gerichtsdolmetschern zugeschnitten sind". Um den großen Aufwand von Terminologiearbeit für Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen zu reduzieren, schlug eine Person Folgendes vor: „Eine sorgfältige terminologische Erfassung sollte an Universitäten und Forschungsabteilungen erfolgen, der/die einzelne ÜbersetzerIn hat dazu meistens keine Zeit und auch nicht den wissenschaftlich[en] Überblick". Schließlich fasst eine teilnehmende Person zusammen: „Terminologiearbeit ist für mich immer eine pragmatische Frage: So viel wie möglich, so wenig wie nötig und immer abhängig davon, wie viel Zeit zur Verfügung steht. Bei Kollegen und Kolleginnen stößt man regelmäßig auf großes Unverständnis, wenn man für die Übersetzungsrevision um die dokumentierte Terminologie bittet".

5 Diskussion

Die Teilnehmenden sind mehrheitlich weiblich und über 60 Jahre, was repräsentativ für den Verband ist, da 71 % der Verbandsmitglieder weiblich sind (ÖVGD 2020a) und der Altersdurchschnitt über 60 Jahren liegt (ÖVGD 2020b). Was die Beschäftigung anbelangt, arbeiten die meisten freiberuflich und in Teilzeit. Auch was die Sprachkombinationen der Teilnehmenden betrifft, mit Englisch als Arbeitssprache für ein Drittel (32,0 %), gefolgt von Französisch (16,5 %), Russisch (13,4 %) sowie Spanisch und B/K/S (jeweils 12,4 %), spiegelt es die Situation im Verband wider. Für einige Sprachkombinationen gibt es nur vereinzelt gerichtlich beeidete und zertifizierte Dolmetscher*innen und für einige Sprachen fehlen sie ganz. Beispielsweise gibt es für afrikanische Sprachen zurzeit keine Einträge auf der Liste der gerichtlich beeideten und zertifizierten Dolmetscherinnen und Dolmetscher.[16] Das führt dazu, dass für diese Sprachen Ad-hoc-Vereidigungen vorgenommen werden müssen.

Da die Kenntnis der einschlägigen Terminologie, sei es juristischer oder aus anderen Fachbereichen, zum Anforderungsprofil der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen zählt und die Abfrage der Terminologie einen Teil der Prüfung ausmacht, ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass mehr als die Hälfte der Befragten (53,6 %) angaben, immer/oft Terminologie zu sammeln. Es ist allerdings überraschend, dass der Prozentsatz nicht höher ausfällt. Bei der Kenntnis der Terminologie geht es nicht nur darum, dass die Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen die Äquivalente in den Arbeitssprachen kennen und diese verwenden, sondern dass Richter*innen es auch als die Aufgabe der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen erachten, juristische Begriffe selbständig zu erklären (Kadrić 2019: 147).[17] Umso wichtiger ist es bei der Sammlung der Terminologie, dass es sich nicht nur

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[16]   https://justizonline.gv.at/jop/web/exl-suche/do (23.01.2024).

[17]   Dies ist im Lichte des Rollenverständnisses in Civil-Law-Ländern zu sehen, bei dem den Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen eine viel aktivere Rolle zukommt als im Rollenverständnis in der anglo-amerikanischen Tradition (vgl. z. B. Nartowska 2015).

um zwei- oder mehrsprachige Glossare handelt, sondern dass diese Terminologiesammlungen auch mit Definitionen und Quellen angereichert sind.

Bei den Antworten zu den Terminologieverwaltungswerkzeugen ist ein Generationenunterschied erkennbar, da vorwiegend von älteren Teilnehmenden Textverarbeitungsprogramme, Tabellenkalkulationsprogramme und Papier für das Sammeln und Bearbeiten von Terminologie verwendet werden, wohingegen die jüngeren Teilnehmenden (unter 50 Jahren) eher Terminologieverwaltungskomponenten in computergestützten Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschwerkzeugen verwenden. Auch in diesem Fall ist es jedoch überraschend, dass noch recht wenige jüngere Befragte (18,2 %) mit einschlägigen Werkzeugen arbeiten. Hier könnten gezielte Schulungsmaßnahmen u. a. des Verbandes, die auf die Bedürfnisse der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen abgestimmt sind, Abhilfe schaffen. Dabei sollte nicht nur die Vorstellung bestimmter Terminologieverwaltungswerkzeuge im Vordergrund stehen, sondern auch die generellen Prinzipien der Terminologiearbeit und wie man als Gerichtsdolmetscher*in schnell und effizient Terminologiearbeit betreiben kann.

Bei den Fragen zu den unterschiedlichen Eintragsmodellen wurde häufig dem Beispiel der Vorzug gegeben, das kürzer und übersichtlicher war, aber gegen Grundprinzipien der Terminologie wie Datenelementarität, Benennungsautonomie und Begriffsorientierung verstößt, was auch in den Kommentaren angesprochen wurde. Dies ist auch nicht verwunderlich, da sehr viele Ressourcen für die Österreichische Rechtsterminologie oft nur in gedruckter Version (oder als PDF) erhältlich sind und daher eher der Form und dem Aufbau von lexikografischen Ressourcen folgen und die Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen an diese Ressourcen gewöhnt sind.

Was aber die Maschinenlesbarkeit und die Möglichkeit des Datenaustausches betrifft, sind Eintragsmodelle, die die Grundprinzipien der Terminologie berücksichtigen, vorzuziehen. In vielen Tools können die Nutzer*innen auch andere übersichtlichere Ansichten auswählen, die aber keinen Einfluss auf die Datenstruktur selbst haben. Solche Informationen könnten auch in Weiterbildungsformaten vermittelt werden. Weiters wäre es ein Desiderat, terminologische Ressourcen, die beispielsweise vom Verband erstellt werden, auch in standardisierter, maschinenlesbarer Form zur Verfügung zu stellen, die man dann direkt in ein Terminologieverwaltungswerkzeug oder ein Werkzeug für computergestützte Übersetzung bzw. computergestütztes Dolmetschen importieren und verwenden könnte, besonders im Hinblick auf die jüngere, technologieaffinere Generation von Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen.

Ein häufiges Argument für maschinenlesbare und standardisierte Datenformate und den Austausch von Daten ist die Kollaboration. Bei den Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen ist diese Zusammenarbeit zumeist im Bereich der Übersetzung und deren Revision gegeben. Aber bis der Austausch der terminologischen Daten bei Übersetzungsrevision als Standard angesehen wird, muss noch mehr Überzeugungsarbeit geleistet werden, wie das folgende Zitat zeigt: „Bei Kollegen und Kolleginnen stößt man regelmäßig auf großes Unverständnis, wenn man für die Übersetzungsrevision um die dokumentierte Terminologie bittet". Hierbei könnten Berufsverbände eine führende Rolle spielen: zum einen, wenn sie ihre eigenen Glossare u. Ä. in maschinenlesbaren und standardisierten Formaten zur Verfügung stellen, und zum anderen durch Weiterbildungsangebote aus dem Bereich der toolgestützten übersetzungsorientierten Terminologiearbeit.

Die Ergebnisse der Umfrage haben auch gezeigt, dass Informationen über Terminologienormen sowie Best Practices in der Terminologiearbeit unter Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen besser verbreitet werden sollten. Dies könnte wiederum mittels gezielter Weiterbildungsmaßnah

men erfolgen, wie man beispielsweise schnell und effizient toolgestützte Terminologiearbeit betreiben kann, ohne dabei grundlegende terminologische Prinzipien zu verletzen.

Eine Fragebogenerhebung wie die vorliegende kann nur einen ersten Einblick in die aktuelle Situation geben und erhebt keinen Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit und Repräsentativität. Eine weitere Vertiefung der Ergebnisse, beispielsweise durch Interviews mit Mitgliedern des ÖVGD, könnte ein genaueres Bild ergeben. Auch war die in diesem Beitrag vorgestellte Umfrage vorwiegend auf die Kenntnis von Terminologienormen ausgerichtet. Abschnitt 3 zeigt aber auf, dass es auch weitere Informationsquellen zu den Grundprinzipien der Terminologie und zu den Methoden für das Erfassen von Terminologie gibt, die es in weiteren Forschungsvorhaben zu erörtern gilt.

6 Schluss

Der Beitrag unterstreicht die ausschlaggebende Rolle der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen im österreichischen Justizsystem. Diese Berufsgruppe spielt durch ihre Arbeit eine wichtige Rolle bei der Umsetzung grundlegender Menschen- und Sprachenrechte vor Gericht. Terminologie im Bereich Recht und in anderen relevanten Fachbereichen gehört zum Berufsalltag der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen. Sie ist ein wichtiger Qualitätsfaktor und daher auch Teil verschiedener beruflicher Kompetenzrahmen sowie der einschlägigen Fachprüfung in Österreich. Terminologiearbeit fällt als Teil der Vorbereitung auf Dolmetscheinsätze und bei Übersetzungsaufträgen an.

Bisher fehlten allerdings (quantitative) Daten zur Kenntnis der Grundprinzipien der Terminologiearbeit und der einschlägigen Terminologienormen vonseiten der Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen in Österreich. Die in diesem Beitrag vorgestellte Umfrage zielte darauf ab, damit zu beginnen, diese Lücke zu füllen. Die Ergebnisse der Fragebogenerhebung, die im Sommer 2021 unter den Mitgliedern des österreichischen Verbandes ÖVGD durchgeführt wurde, skizzieren das Bild eines alternden, vorwiegend weiblichen Berufs. Terminologie wird meist unter Zeitdruck auf für strukturierte Datensammlungen ungeeigneten Medien (Papier, Word-Dateien) erfasst. Wichtig sind dabei Aspekte wie Übersichtlichkeit für den Menschen, weniger die Maschinenlesbarkeit und daher Austauschbarkeit der Terminologiedaten.

Daraus lässt sich ableiten, dass gezielte Aus- und Fortbildungsmaßnahmen für diese Berufsgruppe wünschenswert wären. Dabei sollten nicht nur allgemeine Prinzipien der Terminologiearbeit angegangen werden. Es sind praktische, nicht nur auf das Übersetzen, sondern auch auf die besondere Situation des Gerichtsdolmetschens, bei der Fachleute meist mehrere Stunden alleine dolmetschen, abgestimmte Fortbildungen gefragt.

Weiters wäre es wünschenswert, den Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen durch gezielte Informationskampagnen zu vermitteln, Normen nicht als zusätzliche Auflage oder Bürde zu sehen, sondern als Hilfsmittel und nützliches Werkzeug, das sie mitgestalten können. Denn Gerichtsdolmetscher*innen können bei der Entstehung von Normen auch aktiv mitwirken, sei es durch direkte Teilnahme an spezifischen Komitees oder durch die Abgabe von Stellungnahmen zu Norm-Projektanträgen oder Norm-Entwürfen, die zur Kommentierung durch die Öffentlichkeit aufliegen (Austrian Standards 2024).

Zudem ist es ein Desiderat, dass terminologische Ressourcen für diese Berufsgruppe auch in Formaten zur Verfügung gestellt werden, die nahtlos in Werkzeuge für computergestützte Übersetzung und computergestütztes Dolmetschen eingebunden werden können. Auf diese Weise würde zum einen die Nutzung von einschlägigen Tools für eine effizientere Termino-

logiearbeit gefördert und zum anderen die leichtere Aktualisierung und der Austausch von Terminologiesammlungen ermöglicht werden, die aktuell teilweise als nicht verschriftlichtes Wissen, auf Papier oder in Word-Dateien vorliegen.

7 Dank

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User Feedback on Plain Language Summaries: A Qualitative Study in a German General Population Sample

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Abstract Plain Language Summaries (PLSs) describe scientific studies in a lay-friendly way to support public understanding of scientific evidence. This study investigates user feedback on PLSs based on a conceptual PLS framework. Our aim was to explore the users' perspective on PLSs and to verify whether the topics named by users correspond to the conceptual framework categories. In an online study, we presented German PLSs of psychological studies to participants. They were asked for their feedback in three open questions. We received 2032 responses from 1098 participants, which were coded by two raters based on the conceptual framework. Participants had homogeneous views on some topics (e. g., the content of the PLSs). These results provide direct clues for users' expectations towards PLSs. We observed diverging views on other topics (e. g., text length). These results indicate different needs among users. We conclude that a good fit between PLS and target group is important. The presentation of PLSs should allow users to choose information according to their needs. Finally, not all of the framework's categories were mentioned by the participants. Implications of this finding are discussed.

Keywords plain language summaries, public understanding of science, science communication

1 Introduction

Technical language is part of scientific publications in all disciplines. Oftentimes, scientists develop jargon that is only understandable for experts in their special field. It diverges in many ways from common language (Kretzenbacher 1998, Weinrich 1998). The content of scientific publications, however, is relevant and interesting to a wider audience beyond scientific experts. This is all the more important as digital media with their various platforms are becoming an increasingly popular resource for knowledge (Brossard 2013, Peters et al. 2014). Encountering fake messages, conspiracy theories or pseudo-scientific content on these platforms is not uncommon (De Coninck et al. 2021, Pennycook/Rand 2021). Scientific publications may seem less attractive and accessible to those not involved in the scientific community, especially when compared to the abundance of information that is readily available through digital media (Khan/Brohman/Addas 2022). To enable non-scientists to gain knowledge based on scientific findings, a viable way could be to present the information in a less technical but more engaging and comprehensible manner. Therefore, science communication as a means to enhance the public understanding of science receives growing attention.

To use Hoffmann's (1984) parameters adapted by Czicza/Hennig (2011), this kind of communication occurs in the milieu of knowledge transfer outside of universities, under partici-

pation from both scientists and laypersons. It requires researchers to adapt their language and to shift their perspective. As a science communication offer and as a way of communicating scientific studies in text form in a generally understandable way, Plain Language Summaries (PLSs) have been introduced. PLSs have been subject to empirical investigations, but this research field is still in its early stage. There are diverging ideas of how a (good) PLS should look like. For this reason, our research group developed a conceptual framework with 12 categories depicting a researcher's perspective on PLSs based on theory, empirical findings and writing guidelines (Stoll et al. 2022). In our study, we explored the users' perspective on PLSs and verified whether their feedback to PLSs corresponds with the categories represented in the conceptual framework. Our research questions were: How do users perceive PLSs of psychological meta-analyses? Which features are of particular relevance for them? To what extent do the topics mentioned by the users fit the categories identified in the researchers' framework model?

1.1 Plain Language Summaries (PLSs)

PLSs are short, lay-friendly summaries of scientific evidence. They have been established as complements to scientific abstracts, mainly in the medical sciences (FitzGibbon et al. 2020), but also in other disciplines (e. g., Shailes 2017, Hauck 2019). In the psychological sciences, PLSs are still nascent. Yet, psychological evidence is becoming increasingly important for decision-makers as well as for the general population, for example regarding behavioral or decision-making processes in the context of climate change (Clayton et al. 2015, Van Lange/Joireman/Milinski 2018) or pandemic events (Karayianni et al. 2022). But although PLSs are important for the communication of research (Kuehne/Olden 2015, FitzGibbon et al. 2020), there is no consensus on what distinguishes a good PLS from a bad PLS. As our literature review has shown, writing guidelines for PLSs as well as empirical evidence on PLSs' effectiveness are heterogeneous (Stoll et al. 2022).

1.2 Research on PLSs

Quantitative research has shown advantages of PLSs over graphical abstracts, scientific abstracts (Anzinger/Elliott/Hartling 2020), and systematic reviews (Opiyo et al. 2013). Comparisons of different versions of PLSs have further provided evidence for a superior performance of PLSs with medium text difficulty compared to PLSs with a low or high text difficulty (Silvagnoli et al. 2022). Qualitative research on PLSs mainly evaluated current PLS formats and identified potential needs for improvement (e. g., Brehaut et al. 2011, Busert et al. 2018). However, the studies examining PLSs are heterogeneous in their assumptions of what defines them. The investigated PLS formats differ greatly in their characteristics, such as text length and content. Additionally, the examined target group varies, which has implications for the design and aims of PLSs. For these reasons, it is difficult to compare the results of the studies. The empirical literature clearly demonstrates a variety of perspectives on PLSs, which is further reflected by the diversity of guidelines for writing PLSs (Stoll et al. 2022). This heterogeneity suggests that researchers may have different assumptions and concepts regarding the purpose, usefulness, and the users or target audience of PLSs.

1.3 Conceptual framework

To elaborate overarching structures and underlying similarities in this research field, our group developed a conceptual framework structuring the literature on PLSs (Stoll et al. 2022). It also aims to be a comprehensive tool for analyzing PLSs and encompasses categories for the questions "What purpose do PLSs serve?" (PLS-aims) and "What do PLSs consist of?" (PLS-characteristics). The framework connects these theoretical categories to elements of PLS-research (i. e., outcomes of studies on PLSs) and PLS-policy (i. e., criteria of PLS guidelines).

Six categories are proposed to represent **PLS-*aims***:
1. The category *Accessibility* describes that PLSs should aim for a low threshold, both in terms of technicality and content.
2. The category *Understandability* is concerned with the content-related comprehensibility of the research questions, methods, and results.
3. The category *Knowledge Acquisition* describes all formulated aims of PLSs that involve laypeople acquiring knowledge based on scientific evidence.
4. The category *Empowerment* focuses on the aim of promoting self-determined, science-based decision-making.
5. The category *Communication of Research* outlines the more abstract aims that involve the dissemination of scientific content.
6. The final category *Improvement of Research* describes the aim of advancing research itself and research practices.

Furthermore, the framework proposes six categories representing **PLS-*characteristics***:
1. The first category *Linguistic Attributes* includes language-related features, such as the tone or word choice.
2. The category *Formal Attributes* encompasses formal structure and formal features (e. g., text length).
3. The category *General Content* details both content structure and content characteristics.
Further categories focus on the
4. *Presentation of Results*,
5. *Presentation of Evidence Quality* (e. g., whether the PLS names authors' conflicts of interests), and
6. *Contextual Attributes* (e. g., information about the writing or publication process).

1.4 Capturing users' perspectives

What are other frameworks for user experience and how have they been used to capture users' perspectives on PLSs? One particularly relevant framework is Rosenbaum's (2010) framework for user experience for evidence, which is based on Morville's (2004) reflections. From a designer's perspective, Morville's (2004) model of a "user experience honeycomb" provides seven facets: *useful, usable, desirable, findable, accessible, credible, valuable*. According to the author, the model is a tool to advance the conversation beyond usability, and to demonstrate the topics people need to consider if they want to design products in terms of user experience. The "user experience honeycomb" therefore is a tool developed from a practitioner's perspective to speak about user experience. Rosenbaum (2010) investigated users of scientific evidence and revised the honeycomb model based on her empirical findings by removing the

facet "valuable" and adding the facets "understandability" and "affiliation". She also included the dimensions of time and motivation, which she named "recognition", "exploration", and "reliance". Thus, Rosenbaum used Morville's honeycomb model and an empirical approach to develop a framework model for user experience of scientific evidence. Building on Rosenbaum's (2010) framework, Busert et al. (2018) conducted an empirical user experience study with the aim of developing a summary format suitable for public health-decision makers in German-speaking countries. They applied the think-aloud method and categorized participants' answers via Rosenbaum's (2010) facets. Based on the results of their analysis, they were able to make adaptations that favorably influenced the user experience of their summary format. Busert et al. (2018) thereby exemplified how to use and adapt a user experience framework for coding qualitative data on evidence summary formats.

1.5 Study aim

In our study, we adopted the methodical approach applied by Busert et al. (2018) to investigate user feedback on German PLSs of psychological meta-analyses. We used the conceptual framework by Stoll et al. (2022) to explore the users' perspective. This model, in contrast to the models mentioned above, is characterized by its development based on the scientific literature on PLSs from a researcher's point of view. Yet, it is unclear whether the framework adequately represents the user perception of laypersons when reading PLSs. In our study, we thus conducted a qualitative analysis of user feedback gathered in an online-experiment with N = 2451 participants from the German general population. Our aims were to include the user perspective in the picture, to find out how users experience PLSs and to learn more about features that are particularly relevant for them. To that end, we evaluated users' feedback data via a qualitative structuring content analysis and examined how often particular topics were mentioned. Finally, we also investigated the fit between the user feedback and the conceptual framework.

2 Methods

2.1 Context

This study is part of the project "PLan Psy", which aimed at developing an evidence-based guideline for writing German PLSs of psychological meta-analyses. The user feedback investigated in this study was taken from the project's third experimental study, for which a general-population sample (N = 2451) stratified by age, education level and sex was recruited (Kerwer et al. forthcoming). Participants received two research summaries of the same style on two distinct topics. The summaries were either written in the style of PLSs or scientific abstracts.[1] The research summaries reported results from meta-analyses on the topics of different psychotherapy interventions for the treatment of depression (Cuijpers et al. 2008, Barth et al. 2013) and on the positive effect of videogames on various domains of cognition (Bediou

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[1]   The type of information included in these summaries varied depending on the experimental condition. The summaries varied in the reported number of effects, in the presented information on conflicts of interest, publication bias and whether a statement on practical relevance of scientific findings was shown. The aim of the experimental study was to investigate the effects of these features on a priori defined outcomes (e. g., content-related knowledge, epistemic trustworthiness).

et al. 2018). We asked participants for feedback on the summaries via voluntary answers to open-ended questions, and will provide analyses of these answers in the current study. All study procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of Trier University.

2.2 Data

2.2.1 Data collection methods

The study was conducted online using the survey software Unipark (www.unipark.com) in October and November 2021. The large general population sample was obtained via the panel provider "Bilendi & respondi" (www.bilendi.de). Answering the open-ended feedback questions was not mandatory for completing the survey.

2.2.2 Data collection instruments and technologies

User feedback was collected using the following general instruction: "To conclude our survey, we are interested in your opinion on the survey content. It would be great if you could help us to further develop our service. In this way, the wishes and needs of future readers can better be taken into account." This was followed by three open-ended questions, which each allowed participants to enter an answer (no word limit) into a textbox:
– "What did you like about the summaries? We want to continuously improve our summaries. Your feedback can help us in doing so. Feel free to highlight positive aspects here." We call information gathered from answers to this question *positive feedback*.
– "What did you not like about the summaries? We want to continuously improve our summaries. Your feedback can help us in doing so. Here you are welcome to write what we could improve in the future." We call information gathered from answers to this question *suggestions for improvement*.
– "What else would you like to tell us? Here is space for anything else you might want to share with us." We call information gathered from answers to this question *additional feedback*.

2.2.3 Units of study

For the qualitative content analysis of the study, we only considered user feedback on PLSs, not on scientific abstracts. From the 2451 study participants, 2256 completed the survey. Of these, 497 participants were assigned to read scientific abstracts and therefore excluded from our qualitative analysis. Thus, 1759 participants assigned to read PLSs remained. These participants had the option of answering none, one, two or three of the open-ended questions described above. Response fields left blank were not considered in the further coding phase. Data from participants who answered none of the three questions were excluded from the qualitative analysis. After this removal, 1217 participants with 2817 responses were included in the qualitative analysis. During coding, we found 785 meaningless responses (e. g., "Ndnfnf", "xxx", "…"). After removing these responses, our final dataset contained 2032 responses from 1098 participants. There were 978 positive feedback responses, 870 suggestions for improvement, and 184 additional feedback responses.

2.3 Researcher characteristics and reflexivity

The first author (Marlene Stoll, MS) was involved in the design and execution of the experimental study that, among other variables, collected the qualitative data analyzed here. MS is also the primary author of the systematic review for the underlying conceptual PLS framework. To have independent and unbiased raters coding the data, Michelle Bähr (MB) and Eva Becker (EB) coded the feedback answers. Aside from being involved in the larger project, they had not been involved in designing the experimental study or in developing the conceptual framework.

2.4 Analysis and trustworthiness

2.4.1 Analysis

To meaningfully summarize and interpret the feedback content, we wanted to find a comprehensive and economical representation by leaning on the framework categories (Qualitative Content Analysis according to Mayring 2014). To achieve this, EB and MB used the 12 categories of the conceptual framework by Stoll et al. (2022) as a coding system to categorize 100 feedback answers in an initial inductive phase. EB, MB and MS then reviewed the results of this initial phase and revised the coding system by adding new subcategories.

In the following second pilot phase, EB and MB coded 200 items with the revised system. This revised coding system was again checked by EB, MB and MS, and final adjustments were made. The resulting set of categories formed the final coding system. Final coding of all answers was carried out by EB and MB. Depending on the type and quantity of addressed topics in the feedback answers, the coders assigned between one and three categories for each answer. For example, the feedback response "clear presentation and interesting results" was assigned to the categories *Formal Display* and *General Content* and no third category, because the two categories exhaustively covered the content of the response. After all feedback responses were coded, EB and MB compared their categorizations and resolved discrepancies via discussions. If a consensus could not be reached, agreement was obtained via consultation with MS. For the final evaluation, the results were interpreted narratively and frequencies of each category and subcategory were counted.

2.4.2 Categories

The final set of categories can be seen in Figure 4 (see below in section 3.4.6) and Table 1 (see Appendix). The 12 PLS-aims and PLS-characteristics categories of Stoll et al. (2022) provided the basic framework and initial coding system for this study. After the first and second pilot phase, the final set of categories comprised 2 unspecific main categories and the 12 main categories provided by the initial system. These branched further into 19 subcategories.

2.4.3 Techniques to enhance trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the data analysis and methodological integrity, two researchers (EB, MB) reviewed the data. Results were discussed by all study authors. Our results are reported in accordance with the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR, O'Brien et al. 2014).

3 Results

3.1 Sample

Our sample included 2032 analyzable responses by 1098 participants. The longest responses contained 350 (positive feedback), 1003 (suggestion for improvement) and 1235 characters (additional feedback). Of the 1098 participants who provided feedback responses, 566 (52 %) were male and 532 (48 %) female. The mean age was 49 years (Range: 18–85, SD = 15.5). Of all participants, 392 (36 %) had "Abitur" (higher track, German university entrance qualification), 375 (34 %) a "Realschulabschluss" (middle track), and 331 (30 %) a "Hauptschulabschluss" (lower track). Inclusion criteria for the study were: (1) German language skills at native speaker level, (2) secondary school graduation, (3) no degree in psychology, (4) no psychology student, (5) at least moderate interest in psychological research (4 or higher on an 8-point Likert scale for the item "I am interested in psychological research.", 1 = fully disagree to 8 = fully agree).

3.2 Unspecific categories

The unspecific feedback categories include responses that generally praise or criticize PLSs without mentioning concrete content. Responses were assigned to the general categories *in favor of the PLS* (e. g. "all good", "no improvement needed")[2] and *to the disadvantage of the PLS* (e. g., "nothing good", "everything needs to be improved"). Overall, there were 529 unspecific feedback responses in favor of the PLSs, a share of 26 % of all 2032 responses, and 54 (3 %) unspecific feedback responses to the disadvantage of the PLSs (Figure 1).
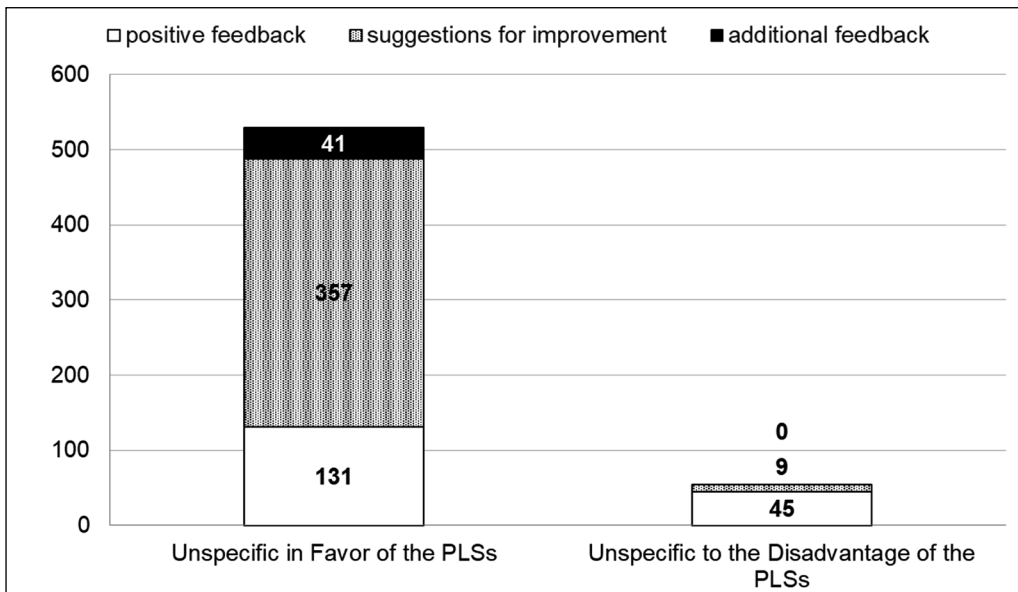

Figure 1: Number of unspecific feedback responses, split into positive feedback, suggestions for improvement and additional feedback

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2   All answers were given in German but were translated to English for this publication.

3.3 Specific categories: PLS-characteristics

The specific feedback categories include responses with concrete content. Responses that mentioned PLS-characteristics were classified into six PLS-characteristics categories, which are shown in Figure 2 and which are described in detail with examples below.
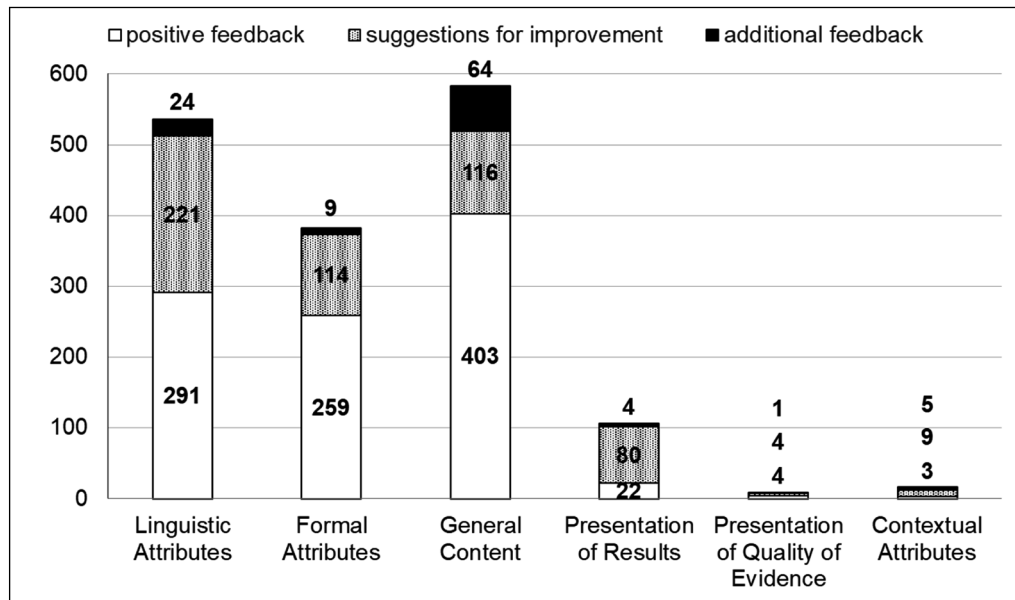

Figure 2: Number of specific feedback responses in "PLS-Characteristics" main categories, split into positive feedback, suggestions for improvement and additional feedback

3.3.1 Linguistic attributes

The category *Linguistic Attributes* was the second most frequently mentioned main category, with 536 responses (Figure 2, see above). We identified five subcategories: *General Linguistic Attributes, Comprehensibility of the Language, Use of Technical Terms, Use of Gender-Neutral Language*, and *Sentence Structure*. Participants' comments on *General Linguistic Attributes* of the PLSs were, for example, that the texts were "clearly and concisely written" or that they were "written a bit strange". *Comprehensibility of the Language* received comments such as this typical response to the positive feedback question: "Simpler (but not overly simple) language has been used that conveys the key messages of the study to a layperson like me", while a typical suggestion for improvement was: "Too many incomprehensible explanations, it would be better to use universal expressions."

The *Use of Technical Terms* was mainly criticized and garnered less praise. Participants complained that the text contained technical terms that were not self-explanatory and that terms appeared that "are not known by a person who did not attend university". One exemplary positive feedback response was that the person was "positively surprised because I was concerned that too many technical terms are in it. This was not the case". The *Use of Gender-neutral Language* was solely mentioned negatively, for example: "the gender-neutral terms unfortunately disrupted my reading flow. I considered stopping reading", "I think that gender-

ing in scientific texts is nonsense!". Lastly, regarding the *Sentence Structure*, it was positively mentioned "that the sentences were not so long", while it was also criticized that there were "too many, too long sentences that you had to read as a normal person who did not attend university".

3.3.2 Formal attributes

The main category *Formal Attributes* was the third most commonly named main category in the feedback answers, with 382 responses. We identified three subtopics: *General Formal Attributes*, *Text Length* and *Formal Display*. *General Formal Attributes* were mentioned positively in responses stating that the texts were "well structured" or "well comprehensible, such as the same order of mentioned parameters and the content statements". A typical suggestion for improvement was that the PLSs were "somewhat unclearly structured, a few highlights or graphics would have been good".

The second subtopic that emerged was *Text Length*. An exemplary positive feedback emphasized "short and concise information on an important topic that can be easily read and understood in a few minutes". Suggestions for improvement included responses on the text being too long ("There was too much text, I was totally staggered") as well as too short ("For me personally, they were too short, i. e. I like to have more detailed information on psychological topics. Psychological topics are so complex that they actually seem too superficial in a short version"). We observed more responses on the text being too long ($n = 69$) than too short ($n = 15$). The third subtopic was *Formal Display*. It was positively mentioned, for example, that the text was "clearly designed". Suggestions for improvement were more specific, for example: "The central points should be highlighted in bold and/or italics. This makes reading easier and focuses on the central points".

3.3.3 Content

The most frequently mentioned main category was *Content* with 583 responses. We identified the three subtopics *Content in General*, *Amount of Information in the PLSs* and *Interest in the Topic of the PLSs*. Positive and additional feedback responses on *Content in General* outlined that the content was an "illumination of topics on which I had not previously focused my attention" or that "the topics were well chosen". There were fewer suggestions for improvement. For instance, they stated that it was "boring that only one key statement was ever made and nothing else was elaborated upon". The *Amount of Information in the PLSs* was a subtopic on which participants expressed polarized opinions. Some participants commented positively on the high amount of information (e. g., they valued "that a lot of information on a topic was given"), while others commented that there was too much information in the PLSs (e. g., "borderline much input in a short time", "too much information at once to process quickly"). Contrastingly, participants also commented positively on the low amount of information, and at the same time others commented that there was too little information (e. g., "they could have gone into a bit more depth", "there was little background information, […] more details/ info on the respective studies would have helped").

There were also responses describing the amount of information as just right (e. g., "Very well to the point and even a layperson could understand the subject matter", "The summaries are short and understandable. Important things are included. Unimportant things are not

mentioned"). In sum, we found more responses requesting more information ($n = 40$) than responses requesting less information ($n = 12$). Another subtopic in this category was the *Interest in the Topic of the PLSs.* There were few suggestions for improvement mentioning a personal lack of interest (e. g., "it is not my field of interest!"). Among the positive feedback responses, participants mentioned, for example, that "[t]he studies are interesting. And you also learn things that you don't hear otherwise".

3.3.4 Presentation of results

The main category *Presentation of Results* was mentioned in 106 responses. We identified no additional subcategories in the investigated responses. Positive feedback responses included praise for "the brevity and the overview of the most important results", or that "the valence of the Cohen value was always given in parentheses, so you knew right away how to understand the value". Suggestions for improvement were more frequent than positive feedback. The suggestions for improvement often commented that the numeric values and the measurement units were confusing (e. g., "I'm not sure if people with a lower level of education […] can handle the units of measurement used (Cohen's d) or if they don't get off when reading there. Perhaps there is another way to explain it"). The additional feedback responses were also mostly critical (e. g., "Communicate the results in a less complicated way and in simple understandable words!", "Instead of texts, I would like to see the results listed in tabular form").

3.3.5 Presentation of quality of evidence

Presentation of Quality of Evidence was mentioned in 9 feedback responses only. There were 2 positive feedback responses praising transparency. Apart from that, responses were critical (e. g., that "nothing was said about the quality of the studies"). One participant wrote: "Are the studies real? I found the second one very questionable. […] Was the time factor of use taken into account? Who funded the study?".

3.3.6 Contextual attributes

There were 17 responses that we could categorize into the main category *Contextual Attributes.* No additional subcategories were necessary in this main category. Most responses commented on missing sources (e. g., "Overall, I find the meta-analysis good, but it does not disclose with any footnote which studies it has taken into account", "Links for the studies would be interesting. So that you can read everything again in detail"). Also, participants lacked information about the authors (e. g., they did not like "that it is not stated who exactly wrote the meta-analysis").

3.4 Specific categories: PLS-aims

Responses that mentioned PLS-aims were classified into six PLS-aims categories. These categories are shown in Figure 3 and described in detail with examples below.
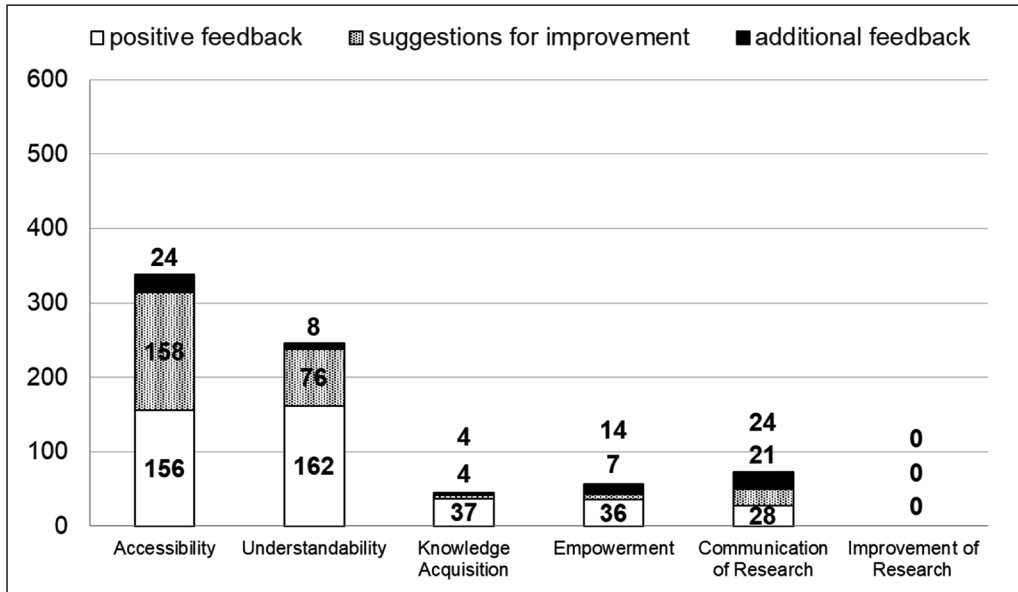
Figure 3: Number of specific feedback responses in "PLS-Aims" main categories, split into positive feedback, suggestions for improvement and additional feedback

3.4.1 Accessibility

There were 338 responses in the main category *Accessibility*. We could not rationalize the creation of additional subcategories here. Some participants mentioned positively that the texts are accessible for non-experts (e. g., "That attempts are being made to bring people like me, too, closer to such studies"). Other participants used the questions on suggestions for improvement or additional feedback to emphasize a lack in text accessibility or attractiveness for people with lower level of education (e. g., "For people with low education and not affected, certainly difficult to read and interpret", "quite overwhelming for non-experts. Maybe you should change the target audience").

3.4.2 Understandability

The main category *Understandability* was mentioned in 246 responses. We specified three subcategories: *Understandability in General*, *Understandability of the Scientific Method*, and *Understandability of the Results*. See Table 1 (Appendix) for frequencies of responses categorized to these subcategories. Responses on *Understandability in General* appeared both in the positive feedback responses (e. g., "was quite understandable for laypersons") and the suggestions for improvement (e. g., "Well, a secondary school student won't understand it.", "For a layperson the summaries were not so easy to understand. It's more for psychologists").

      Regarding the *Understandability of the Scientific Method* and the *Understandability of the Results*, we observed divergent opinions. On the one hand, participants commented that they "find that the summaries help laypersons better understand the complex study and results. A study is often complicated and hard for outsiders to understand. The results have been simply

represented here". On the other hand, participants criticized the lack of understandability: "Too many numbers where hardly anything was understood" or "The results are confusing. I didn't understand what follows from the summary".

3.4.3 Knowledge acquisition

There were 45 responses containing content assigned to the main category *Knowledge Acquisition*. No subcategories were identified. In sum, participants liked that they could learn something by reading the PLSs. One participant commented: "I found the summaries very good. Even as a layperson in the field, I was able to comprehend the facts and thus also acquire new knowledge", another wrote: "Anyone who is interested in the subject matter was able to learn something here". Suggestions for improvement underlined that there was not enough information to learn something and that the users would need to know more about the details to learn something new.

3.4.4 Empowerment

Further 57 responses have been assigned to the main category *Empowerment*. We saw the need for two subcategories: *Empowerment in General* and *Personal Relevance*. Examples for *Empowerment in General* responses were: "The studies help to see certain issues more simply, or to act more explicitly on problems!" and "The results in short sentences in simple language can help people who are not familiar with the subject. For example, in finding the answer whether to start psychotherapeutic treatment or not". One rather critical response was that the PLSs contained too little information to have a say on the topic.

The second subcategory was the *Personal Relevance* of the topic and the attractiveness or usefulness resulting from it. Participants wrote that the "first topic concerns me privately, therefore interesting" and that they "found both topics very interesting because the topics affect me personally". However, there were also negative comments (e. g., „I did not find the first study so exciting because it did not affect me directly", "The summaries are certainly good, but not relevant for me").

3.4.5 Communication of research

We assigned 73 responses to the main category *Communication of Research*. Three additional subcategories were identified: *Communication of Research in General*, *Opinion about Psychology*, and *Credibility of the Study*. The subcategory *Communication of Research in General* includes responses from participants who liked that "one has received new knowledge about the preparation of scientific work in relation to studies" and that "for a layperson like me, this is a whole new field of how the psyche is actually composed and how the studies are done".

The second subcategory was participants' *Opinion about Psychology*, which occurred mostly in suggestions for improvement or additional feedback. For instance, one participant demanded that "a good psychologist should deal less with books and venture out among the people". The third identified subcategory was the *Credibility of the Study*. It was positively mentioned that "it has been honestly described what exactly has helped and what has not" and that it "appears unbiased". However, it is noteworthy that there was a comparatively high number of suggestions for improvement that included doubts about the credibility or scepticism

(e. g., "I can't imagine that the second study was done properly", "The summaries only go in the direction that the people concerned want in order to strengthen or confirm their so-called analyses. Most of the time they do not correspond to reality [...]. Results which do not correspond to the conceptions are dropped under the table and do not appear accordingly. They would reveal that the results are not as they are presented").

3.4.6 Improvement of research

No feedback response could be assigned to the category *Improvement of Research*.

An overview of all categories and subcategories with examples is provided in Figure 4.

4 Discussion

4.1 Key findings

The aim of this study was to analyze user feedback on PLSs and to examine whether this user perspective fits the conceptual framework (i. e., the researcher perspective) on PLSs (Stoll et al. 2022).

4.1.1 User feedback on PLSs

In the analysis of the user feedback on PLSs, we observed that over 25 % of responses were unspecific feedback in favor of the PLSs, showing us that a large number of users were generally satisfied with the summary format. Additionally, there were many more detailed feedback responses. On some topics, there was high overall agreement among participants. For example, many commented positively on the content of the PLSs or made suggestions for the use of technical terms. Other topics were mentioned both positively and negatively ("ambivalent topics"). These are characterized by strong opinions both on positive and negative sides of the framework category, for example for the subcategories *Text Length* or *Amount of Information*. Overall, the categories with the highest number of responses were *General Content*, *Linguistic Attributes*, *Unspecific Category in Favor of the PLSs*, and *Formal Attributes*. Answers related to the main categories *Accessibility*, *Understandability*, and *Presentation of Results* were moderately frequent. We observed comparatively few answers in the main categories *Knowledge Acquisition*, *Empowerment*, *Communication of Research*, and (almost) no answers in the main categories *Quality of Research*, *Contextual Attributes*, and *Improvement of Research*. We therefore conclude that users initially form their impression of the PLSs by evaluating the general appearance and content of the PLSs and pay less attention to PLS-aims or more detailed PLS-characteristics.

4.1.2 Conceptual framework fit

The conceptual framework was comprehensive enough for categorizing the participants' feedback answers, but not exhaustive. The framework's main categories covered all PLS-aims and PLS-characteristics that were named in the feedback responses. We formulated 19 subcategories (8 for PLS-aims and 11 for PLS-characteristics) to better represent the details in the feedback responses. It was further necessary to introduce two new main categories for *Unspecific*
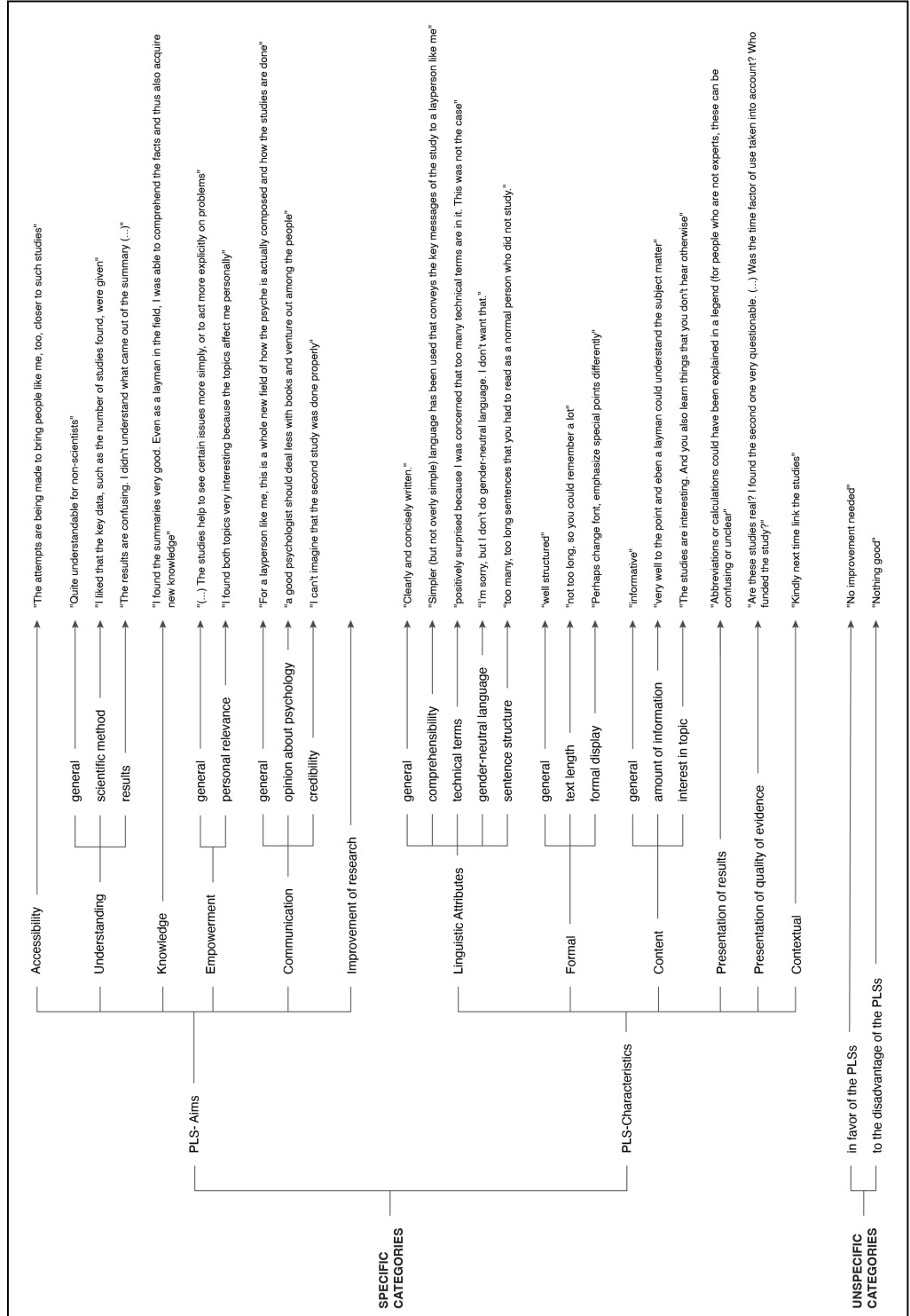
Figure 4: Categories and subcategories with feedback response examples

Feedback Answers in Favor of the PLSs and *Unspecific Feedback Answers to the Disadvantage of the PLSs* to capture broad feedback answers given by many participants.

Some framework categories were only rarely or not at all mentioned in the user feedback responses. For example, participants in our study seldom named topics belonging to the *Presentation of Quality of Evidence* and the *Contextual Attributes* categories, and topics from the PLS-aims-category *Improvement of Research* were not mentioned at all. We interpret this as a sign that these categories of the conceptual framework are less salient for the target group of the PLSs, and more salient from a theoretical viewpoint taken by authors of PLSs or writing guideline developers. Overall, the conceptual framework turned out to be a suitable basis for assessing and structuring qualitative user feedback on PLSs.

4.2 Comparisons with previous work

The findings of this study are mostly in accordance with previous studies on PLSs. The topics mentioned by users in this study coincide with topics identified in previous studies. For example, our findings are in line with Brehaut et al.'s (2011) findings from a user feedback study on consumer summaries of Cochrane reviews: They identified the amount of detail, layout and language, source credibility, and preparation for decision-making as user relevant topics. These topics were also mentioned by our study participants. Our finding that participants commented mainly negatively on the presentation of results matches research from Buljan et al. (2020): They examined consumer preferences for different summary formats and found several problems in readers' understanding of current scientific formats, specifically the presentation of numbers and the understanding of uncertainty. Lastly, previous studies on research summaries for decision-makers have also found ambivalent topics. This is in line with our observations that participants reported diverging views on certain topics, for example regarding text length or depth of information (Dobbins et al. 2007, Ellen et al. 2014, Mijumbi-Deve et al. 2017, Busert et al. 2018).

4.3 Strengths and limitations

A strength of our study is that data were generated using a large sample of participants with diverse age, gender, and education level. Additionally, the employed category system was built on a conceptual framework drawn from a rigorous systematic review of PLSs literature. However, there are also limitations to consider. First, participants were only able to give short answers or skip the feedback process entirely. Since providing feedback was not necessary to complete the study, this may have introduced biases. For instance, only participants already highly interested in the PLSs may have felt inclined to provide feedback responses. Second, the open question format did not name specific PLS aspects, such as evidence quality. Users may have thus mentioned these less publicly discussed aspects less frequently. This does not mean that these topics are less relevant from a user's point of view, but simply less salient. Third, we did not randomize the presentation order of the questions. Readers always received the positive feedback question first, which may explain the higher rate of positive feedback compared to suggestions for improvement or additional feedback. The motivation to answer may have decreased over time. Fourth, due to the experimental study design, the amount of information presented in the PLSs varied between participants (cf. also Kerwer et al. forthcoming). Focusing on a single PLS for all participants would have allowed us to interpret feedback more

specifically. For instance, if all participants had read a PLS on the topic of psychotherapeutic interventions for depression, and the PLS reported one effect and no conflict of interest, we would have greater confidence in the participants' shared opinion on that specific PLS and its characteristics. When interpreting the findings of our study, it is therefore important to keep in mind that the participants spoke about PLS versions that varied slightly in their characteristics. Simultaneously, this may have positively impacted the generalizability of our findings. The study obtained views on different PLSs, for example, PLSs reporting one or four effects and PLSs reporting or not reporting a conflict of interest. In reality, these characteristics will vary among PLSs, so the responses in the study provide an initial indication of the impressions that different PLSs will make on their readers. Lastly, it is important to keep in mind that our results are only based on participants with at least moderate interest in psychological information, as defined by the inclusion criteria.

4.4 Meaning of the findings and implications

4.4.1 User feedback on PLSs

As described above, participants had homogeneous views on certain categories. These views provide us with implications for further improvement of our PLSs. For example, we should maintain our choice for the content of the PLSs. We also identified critical PLS-characteristics where participants universally reported difficulties or claimed need for improvement (e. g., the *Use of Gender-Neutral Language*, or the *Presentation of Results*). This indicates that these topics are relevant and worth considering when communicating (psychological) scientific evidence to laypersons. In terms of practical relevance, PLS writers or policy makers may use these findings to improve PLSs to increase their usefulness.

We were further confronted with the fact that over a quarter of the answers fell under the category *Unspecific in Favor of the PLS*. Examples of typical responses to the question "What did you like about the summaries?" that fit this category include "Was all right", "all good", or "everything". This raises the question of whether these participants were genuinely satisfied with the PLSs or whether there were other reasons for their response. Answering the question was optional, so participants could have skipped it if they had nothing more to say. Instead, one explanation could be that the participants reported a holistic view instead of naming specific aspects of the text because they perceived the PLS as a whole and remembered the overall impression rather than specific content. Another possibility is that readers have different subjective ideas of what constitutes an understandable lay-friendly text that reports scientific findings. This could have further implications on whether those readers benefit, for example by gaining knowledge, from PLS depending on their overall impression or subjective idea of a PLS. Our methodology does not allow us to make a judgement on this matter, but it would be an interesting topic for further research.

We also found ambivalent topics that were evaluated positively and negatively by different users. For example, some participants deemed the length of the PLSs appropriate, whereas others viewed them as too short or too long. One possible explanation concerns different underlying needs related to these topics on an interindividual level, for example due to different literacy levels (cf. also the literature on health literacy and health information, e. g. Nielsen-Bohlman/Panzer/Kindig 2004, Berkman/Davis/McCormack 2010). The present study does not allow any conclusions about whether certain groups of readers share the same needs

with regard to PLSs. For example, it is possible that readers with higher literacy levels, such as practitioners or science communicators, may be more interested in a more differentiated text and benefit more from additional details than readers with lower literacy levels. Ideally, readers experience a congruence between their personal literacy level and situational factors, such as the literacy requirements posed by the reading material. This close match can lead to positive outcomes (e. g., knowledge gain), which bears resemblance to conclusions drawn by person-environment fit theory (e. g., Edwards et al. 2006). This theory describes that a fit between a person's values, needs or skills and situational factors such as environmental culture, supplies or requirements leads to positive outcomes (e. g., satisfaction, performance, or well-being) (Edwards et al. 2006).

To put these results into practice, we must consider how to improve the fit between readers' needs and the PLS requirements. We see several options for this: First, PLS-writers could aim to create a perfect fit between the PLSs and each individual's needs by writing individually tailored PLSs. Depending on the nature of the science communication offer, it may be appropriate to define the target audience, survey their common needs, and create PLSs that optimally match these needs. In the present case, the target group is broadly defined as the interested general population. Therefore, a second option may be expedient: to create a situation where a person can choose between options depending on their needs. For instance, additional information could be made accessible by hyperlink to provide on-demand information. Additionally, presenting the core information at the beginning of the PLS and additional details towards the end may allow users to stop reading when it becomes too demanding, without missing essential information.

Our findings in this exploratory study provide topics that might be worth investigating in future research such as: How do PLSs of psychological studies affect opinions on psychology as a discipline and the credibility of the summarized studies? Furthermore, the sweet spot of text length and the amount of information in relation to the different PLS-aims is a promising area of research, specifically in light of the needs of different target groups.

4.4.2 Conceptual framework

Our conceptual framework developed from a researcher's point of view (Stoll et al. 2022) helped us to structure user feedback on PLSs. It may thus not only be used for designing experimental studies on different PLS versions or for the development of PLS writing guidelines, but also for structuring and analyzing qualitative user data related to PLSs. In comparison to the models by Morville (2004) and Rosenbaum (2010), this framework is specifically geared towards PLSs, while Morville and Rosenbaum respectively provide models for user experience in general and user experience of evidence. While our framework is certainly limited in its application to PLSs, it is therefore also more suitable to identify and structure topics for this particular format type. PLSs (and other forms of lay-friendly summaries of published research) are becoming increasingly important in the scientific community, while there is presently still no clear consensus on quality standards. Therefore, we believe the specificity of the conceptual framework (Stoll et al. 2022) is needed for PLSs as a promising format of science communication.

How can we integrate the user perspective into this framework? We have found in this study that there are ambivalent topics for which the target group reports varying views. This is an issue that is not captured in the conceptual framework. Our conclusion is that the frame-

work is able to *identify* such topics, but not to *resolve* them. Solutions for the specific use case must be found in the practical implementation and in exchange with the users. We conclude that the theoretically developed conceptual framework covers all the topics mentioned by PLS users, and is suitable to identify subtopics that are relevant for PLS users.

4.4.3 Contribution and generalizability

The unique contribution of this study lies in the identification of user views on PLSs. Since we surveyed a large German general population sample, the views and topics outlined here might be a good reference point for the views of German laypeople interested in psychology. Taking this into account, future research questions can also be derived from the findings of this study. Additionally, this was the first time we exemplified possible applications of this conceptual framework by analyzing qualitative field data.

4.5 Conclusion

The first aim of this study was to explore the user perspective on German PLSs of psychological meta-analyses. The second aim was to check the overlap between topics named by participants and those suggested by the conceptual framework on PLSs by Stoll et al. (2022).

The results show a cornucopia of views on PLSs, which we were able to structure by using the conceptual framework. The framework showed to be comprehensive, but did not fully cover some more specific categories mentioned by the users. Also, some topics of the framework were only rarely or not at all mentioned by the participants. The topics we identified as frequently mentioned in this study give an indication for the central user concerns surrounding PLSs. They further can be used to derive future research questions. An important point is the fit between PLSs and target group, which can be addressed in two ways. PLSs can either be tailored to the specific needs of a target group, or PLSs can be presented so that users can select additional information on demand. We conclude that the conceptual framework is well suited to describe user feedback data and to identify potentials for further development of PLSs and PLS writing guidelines.

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Appendix

Table 1: Frequencies of positive feedback, suggestions for improvement, and additional feedback per subcategory

	positive feedback	suggestions for improve-ment	additional feedback
Specific Categories: PLS-aims			
Accessibility	156	158	24
Understandability: Understandability in General	157	63	4
Understandability: Understandability of the Scientific Method	2	3	4
Understandability: Understandability of the Results	3	10	0
Knowledge Acquisition	37	4	4
Empowerment: Empowerment in General	8	2	1
Empowerment: Personal Relevance	28	5	13
Communication of Research: Communication of Research in General	19	0	5
Communication of Research: Opinion about Psychology	2	9	16
Communication of Research: Credibility of the Study	7	12	3
Improvement of Research	0	0	0
Specific Categories: PLS-characteristics			
Linguistic Attributes: General Linguistic Attributes	204	84	5
Linguistic Attributes: Comprehensibility of the Language	61	24	7
Linguistic Attributes: Use of Technical Terms	20	101	3
Linguistic Attributes: Use of Gender-neutral Language	1	11	7
Linguistic Attributes: Sentence Structure	5	1	2
Formal Attributes: General Formal Attributes	38	15	0
Formal Attributes: Text Length	167	87	6
Formal Attributes: Formal Display	54	12	3
Content: Content in General	129	59	19
Content: Amount of Information in the PLSs	100	52	5
Content: Interest in the Topic of the PLSs	174	5	40
Presentation of Results	22	80	4
Presentation of Quality of Evidence	4	4	1
Contextual Attributes	3	9	5
Unspecific Categories: in Favor of the PLSs	131	357	41
Unspecific Categories: to the Disadvantage of the PLSs	45	9	0

Corporate Elites on Stage: Speech Acts and Genre Positionings in Professional Communication

Henrik Rahm & Alexander Paulsson

Abstract Inspired by Austin's work on the performativity of speech acts, Goffman's notion of speaker positionings and Swales' notion of genre moves, this paper explores how annual general meetings as a corporate genre are governed and propelled by the *Swedish Companies Act*, the *Swedish Code of Corporate Conduct* as well as explicit and tacit genre expectations. While observing more than thirty corporate annual general meetings for listed companies at Nasdaq Stockholm in Sweden over three years, we identified that the corporate elites populating the stages at these meetings act as meeting-professionals. Being meeting-professionals, the corporate elites have acquired knowledge of how to conduct a formal meeting by learning the genre, identifying which positions are available during a meeting and, based on these two pieces of knowledge, utter speech acts. Our concluding discussion points to the need for future studies of how corporate elites learn and use genres of corporate communication to utter speech acts that ultimately form these kinds of formal meetings and perpetuate capitalist relations.

Keywords corporate annual general meetings, genre moves, meeting-professionals, performative speech acts, speaker positionings

1 Introduction

There is a considerable literature on the performative implications of speech acts in professional communication. Earlier research has used speech act theory to understand why certain messages "succeed" and others "fail" in professional communication (Hamermesh 1981, Ewald/Stine 1983, John/Brooks/Schriever 2019) or why "misleading" speech acts may have certain ethical implications (Riley 1993). Even though speech acts are built on intentions, beliefs and conventions (Austin 1962, Searle 1979), professional speech acts are predominantly about the coordination of social relations and interactions (Geurts 2019). In this article, the aim is to explore how speech acts coordinate professional relations in a specific organizational setting, namely corporate annual general meetings. Unlike most earlier studies, we are interested in exploring how such meetings are performed by analyzing the linkages between speech acts, positionings and the genre of professional communication. More specifically, this study deals with annual general meetings for listed companies at Nasdaq Stockholm. As we will explore annual general meetings in Sweden, the *Swedish Companies Act* (Ministry of Justice 2005) and the *Swedish Code of Corporate Governance* (Swedish Corporate Governance Board 2020) are at the forefront as they oblige companies to arrange such meetings for their owners.

We are inspired by previous studies of professional communication at the intersection of ethnographical research, conversation analysis, and genre analysis. For example, in commu-

nication ethnography research, studies have made comparisons of negotiations of incident reporting in elderly care and the manufacturing industry (Karlsson/Nikolaidou 2016). In this type of research, field notes are of most importance to gain an understanding of the communicative and professional setting. To record the events would not be an alternative, neither regarding ethical standards nor from the perspective of gaining access and trust. Another example is Jansson/Wadensjö/Plejert (2017), investigating how an older person's negative experiences are managed in a multilingual setting, combining ethnographic and conversation analytical methodologies in order to analyse how the caregivers attempt to renegotiate a negative stance into something positive. Skulstad (2002) takes an interest in business genres such as the annual report, proposing a model for discerning compulsory and facultative genre moves. Landqvist (2015) looks into how German and Swedish police officers understand discrimination in the workplace based on essay questions from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. What the studies have in common is the interest in communication in professional settings, using different methodological approaches which only partly are of relevance for our study as we were not allowed to record the annual general meetings we visited (see section 3: Data and methodology). However, these studies do not take any interest in the performativity of language. As far as we know, there are few studies applying performativity of language to annual general meetings.

The structure of this article is as follows. In section 2 we discuss performativity of language from the perspectives of speech acts, genre moves and speaker positionings. In section 3 we present the data investigated and the outline of our methodological approach for studying annual general meetings. In section 4 the narrative accounts of annual general meetings are provided and interpreted. In section 5 and 6 we discuss our analysis and provide a conclusion.

2 The performativity of language

In this section, we revisit speech act theory and try to socially sensitize this by bringing in a genre perspective as well as the notion of speaker positionings. The first subsection, *2.1 Revisiting speech acts,* presents Austin's and Searle's theories of speech acts. In *2.2 Genres and genre moves* the notions of genre and genre moves are discussed. Inasmuch as speech acts draw upon an established genre, they, too, draw upon certain positionings. We present Goffman's five speaker positions in *2.3 Speaker positionings.* Taken together, it is our ambition to add knowledge to the ongoing debates in the rich scholarship on professional communication and language at work by drawing upon and combining these theoretical frameworks.

2.1 Revisiting speech acts

There is a long tradition of exploring how language shapes social actions. There is, we suggest, a performative power in both the everyday language-use and in the rituals we previously discussed. This means that words expressed by one person may lead to specific outcomes, at least if it is "the right person" that utters certain words at "the right time". Yet, speech acts are a common feature of ordinary language usage as well. A speech act may be defined as a linguistically performed act which "has a certain purpose and is controlled by the speaker and entails a certain degree of responsibility for what is said" [our translation] (Teleman et al. 1999: 225). Much debate about speech acts is centred on the following forms: question, statement and exhortation. A direct speech act is recognized by its form, for example when a question begins

with an interrogative (e. g., *how*, *why*, *when*) and ends with a question mark. But the reverse is also common, that is, the question is expressed as a statement. In that case, the speech act is indirect (Searle 1979, Gunnarsson 1989).

Austin (1962) distinguishes between three levels of speech acts: locutionary (what is said), illocutionary (what is meant and can be interpreted) and perlocutionary (the effect achieved). Besides this distinction, Searle has devoted much energy to understanding how certain speech acts are made possible by virtue of the speakers' formally recognized position in an organization, in a professional setting or in society at large. Searle (1979) has thereby "socialized" the notion of speech acts by bringing in both the social status and the (political) power of the person uttering the speech act. This means that there is a connection between power and performativity, or as we would like to frame it, a connection between speech acts and the genre in which the speech act is uttered. Leezenberg (2013) gives a broad perspective of power in speech actions, although he criticizes Searle for not taking power relations into account seriously: "the arrogation and contestation of – the struggle for – power is empirically rather more frequent and theoretically more significant than Searle allows for" (Leezenberg 2013: 295). Thus, speech acts also connect to power and power relations. Unless this is included in the analysis it is difficult to understand why certain speech acts become performative whereas others misfire and ultimately become non-performative. It is against this observation we want to explore how speech acts are coupled to the specific genre in which individual speech acts are uttered.

2.2 Genres and genre moves

All speech acts are expressed in some forms of genre. The concept of genre allows us to better understand how speech acts mobilize an underlying structure of established ways of performing language, in our case during an annual general meeting. Bazerman (2004: 311) describes the relation between speech acts and genres as "acts carried out in patterned, typical, and therefore intelligible textual forms or genres, which are related to other texts and genres that occur in related circumstances". He stresses that speech acts can only be interpreted within genres and the social setting, "accomplishing certain acts in certain circumstances" (Bazerman 2004: 316).

A genre may be defined as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (Miller 1994: 155). With these rhetorical actions, language is performed and accomplishes certain things. Originally the notion genre has been used in literary studies and then extended its usage to both written, oral and multimodal text sorts. We adopt a dynamic rhetorical genre view to be used also for a primarily (but not only) oral text event such as corporate annual general meetings. While many have used Miller's definition to understand genres, Swales (1990, 2004) has suggested that genres draw upon *moves*, which may be compulsory or facultative. Building upon the seminal definition by Miller, Swales argues that the notion of *moves* in genre analysis should be defined as "discoursal or rhetorical units performing coherent communicative functions in texts" (Swales 2004: 228 f.). Even though *moves* are not at the centre of our investigation (but rather positionings), the compulsory *moves* are important to identify in order to unpack the structure of communication in the genre of annual general meetings, which is underlined in Moreno/Swales (2018). These *moves* are compulsory because of the requirements in two legal-normative frameworks: the *Swedish Companies Act* and the *Swedish Code of Corporate Governance*.

2.3 Speaker positionings

How is then the genre articulated and by whom? We want to approach this dual question by sensitizing the notion of position. To understand what positions a speaker takes on when speaking, we draw upon Goffman and his interest in social interaction from a perspective of ritual, a perspective he used "both at the beginning and at the end of his career" (Persson 2019: 25). Goffman (1981) proposes five terms to describe the positions a speaker assumes: *principal*, *animator*, *author*, *figure* and *footing*. These five terms are, we believe, also useful for understanding the professional communication at corporate annual general meetings.

These speaker positionings relate to each other and overlap in practice. When the speaker is a *principal,* s/he is also responsible for the utterances. This role is often combined with the *animator,* since the speaker is saying what s/he is responsible for. As an *author*, the speaker is the originator of the content, typically also the one formulating the words to be uttered. This positioning could be collective as for example the authors of a framework or a law. *Figure* denotes someone who is mentioned, but not as the author, animator or principal. *Footing* is the position, perspective or foothold the speaker has in communication with others. Depending on the relationship with others, the degree of formality or power, the footing might change during communication. Goffman (1981: 128) suggests that footing is "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance". As these terms have been used to analyze a variety of communicative and professional contexts, we build upon this rich body of literature in our analysis of annual general meetings. But we also want to situate the positioning of the speaker in the genre that constitutes the corporate annual general meeting.

Taken together, this means that the genre of the annual general meeting is constructed from the pillars described above – genres moves and positionings which are realized by the professional actors at the annual general meeting. The actors are professional not only in their professions as e. g., auditor and CEO, but also because they have a profound and professional knowledge and competence of the annual general meeting as a genre, enabling certain speech acts to be performed in certain positionings. We conceptualize this category of speakers as meeting-professionals. But more on this later.

In sum, performativity of language can be discerned by using the notions speech acts, genre and speaker positionings. The performative power of speech acts is central for a certain genre setting, in our case the corporate annual general meeting. To understand this further, we will also investigate how the speech acts are uttered by the interlocutors applying the concept of speaker positionings coined by Goffman. Thus, we seek to combine these three perspectives to lay the foundation for an analysis of the corporate annual meeting.

3 Data and methodology

There are many categories of annual meetings, varying in style and content but connected by the common goal to wrap up the preceding year and to prepare for the following year of activity. Thus, there are similarities and differences between different organizations' annual general meetings of e. g., a charity association, a tenant-owner association, a political party or a company. The similarities are numerous. The invitation to annual general meetings must be circulated in due time before the meeting, often as prescribed in the organization's statutes and/or in legislation. Besides this, there must be a formal agenda and the financial statements

as well as submission and approval of the auditor's report. The board is made accountable through a vote on whether to discharge the board of any responsibility. A new board and new auditors must be elected at the annual general meeting, too. The corporate AGMs differ from other AGMs as the power of the participants is uneven distributed as the shareholders have varying number of votes according to their ownership. Thus, the main shareholders (usually representatives for pension funds, investment companies or other companies) have the main saying while the votes of the individual shareholders in the assembly hall always remain the minority.

In 2017 and 2019 we attended 30 annual general meetings. Ahead of the corporate annual meeting season, which usually runs between April and May each year, we contacted approximately 20 randomly selected companies listed on Large Cap at Nasdaq Stockholm. The companies were approached through emails, in which we explained what research we were doing and why we would be interested in attending the corporate annual general meeting. In all cases, this was a non-issue. We received formal invitations to the annual general meetings from all the enterprises we contacted. Out of the 30 we approached, we attended on average 10 meetings each year.

As none of us owned any shares in the companies, we were informed that we were not allowed to utter anything or to vote on issues during the meeting, which we were aware of in our role as observers. The companies permitting our attendance did not allow audio or video recordings of the AGMs. We were four researchers in the project, dividing the meetings between us aiming at visiting each AGM in pairs. This, we thought, would later enable comparisons between our observations and ensure that we did not miss anything substantial. Sometimes we took notes on a laptop, sometimes we wrote down observations in notebooks. It should be underlined that we have observed oral communication, not analyzed transcripts of texts. For obvious reasons we cannot quote verbatim, but the data is reliable as we have field notes from two or three researchers from most of the corporate annual general meetings. As mentioned, it was never an option to record what was uttered as we were granted permission on the condition that we guaranteed not to record the meeting in any way.

All listed corporations have to follow a framework set out in the *Swedish Companies Act* (Ministry of Justice 2005). In chapter 7 of the *Swedish Companies Act*, the following issues are stipulated for the agenda of the corporate annual meeting:

- Adoption of the Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheet as well as the Consolidated Profit and Loss Account and Consolidated Balance Sheet
- Allocation of the Company's profit as shown in the Balance Sheet adopted by the meeting
- Discharge from liability of the Directors of the Board of Directors and the President
- Determination of remuneration to the Directors and the Auditor elected by the meeting
- Election of Directors as well as Chairman of the Board of Directors
- Election of Auditor
- Other matters that are the responsibility of the meeting according to law or the company's articles of association

Thus, the issues of the corporate annual meeting stipulated by the *Swedish Companies Act* will also function as compulsory genre moves, being listed in the notice for the suggested agenda of the corporate annual meeting.

The genre is also governed by the *Swedish Code of Corporate Conduct* (Swedish Corporate Governance Board 2020) on how to organize an annual meeting. Even though nothing is compulsory, the Code is of uttermost importance as it states that a company may deviate from the Code only if the deviations are explained. The key phrase is "comply or explain" (p. 6). Thus, the function is that the Code should act "as a complement to legislation and other regulations by specifying a set of norms for good corporate governance at a higher level of ambition than the statutory regulation" (p. 2), also stressing that even though it is mandatory, the self-regulation is important in order to avoid further government regulation. We interpret the overarching function of the Code and the moves in Table 1 below as formally facultative, in reality compulsory.

Other items of the agenda also operate as facultative/compulsory genre moves, such as the speech of the CEO and the item opening up for questions from the floor after the meeting. It should be observed that the president's speech but not the possibility to ask questions is listed in the agenda. The Code does not mention either of these items, but it is not possible according to the traditions and expectations of the genre to refrain from these components of the corporate annual meeting. Thus, we also consider the president's speech and questions from the floor as facultative/compulsory genre moves. See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Genre moves of the corporate annual general meeting

Genre move	Governed by	Compulsory or facultative
Adoption of the Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheet as well as the Consolidated Profit and Loss Account and Consolidated Balance Sheet	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Allocation of the Company's profit as shown in the Balance Sheet adopted by the meeting	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Discharge from liability of the Directors of the Board of Directors and the President	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Determination of remuneration to the Directors and the Auditor elected by the meeting	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Election of Directors as well as Chairman of the Board of Directors	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Election of Auditor	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
Other matters that are the responsibility of the meeting according to law or the company's articles of association	Swedish Companies Act	Compulsory
"[N]o more than one of the directors elected by the shareholders' meeting may be on the executive management team of the company." (p. 9)	Swedish Code of Corporate Conduct	Formally facultative, in reality compulsory
"[A] majority of the members of the board are to be independent of the company and its management." (p. 9)	Swedish Code of Corporate Conduct	Formally facultative, in reality compulsory
Speech of the CEO	Genre tradition	Formally facultative, in reality compulsory

Genre move	Governed by	Compulsory or facultative
Questions from the floor	Genre tradition	Formally facultative, in reality compulsory

Nearly all corporate annual general meetings follow the same protocol, which is grounded in the legislation governing corporations and the industry code (see above). In many cases, the chairman of the board is also elected as chairman of the annual general meeting. Because of these similarities, we could probably have chosen to study just about any of the annual general meetings we attended, and our interpretations or even conclusions would have been very similar. However, we strove to visit companies from a variety of sectors – banking, real estate, manufacturing, investment. Another methodological inspiration is Nyqvist (2015), who from a perspective of social anthropology observed 35 AGMs and interviewed key persons. We connect to her view of the event as a pervasive drama where roles are performed by the key actors in order to construct, structure and legitimize the corporation. Also, the board is accountable to the annual meeting and can only be discharged from responsibility by the shareholders at the annual meeting.

We analyzed the professional communication between the speakers on the stage and the audience, that is, the owners and others at the annual general meeting, by using the theoretical framework described above. The 30 annual general meetings we attended are synthesized into one narrative. This, we argue, is possible because not only were the meetings very similar, but occasionally included the same persons, albeit in different roles. Speech act theory, combined with Goffman's speaker positions, was used both when interpreting communication in real-time at the annual general meetings and in our detailed written-down notes afterwards.

4 Performing the meeting

The agenda of corporate annual general meetings are standardized because of legal demands and the industry code. *The Swedish Companies Act* works as a point of departure for the agendas, as well as for the structure and form of the annual general meetings. *The Swedish Code of Corporate Governance* and each company's statutes also shape this. The Swedish Corporate Governance Board and the legislator are the authors of these texts and also the principals, metaphorically speaking. This can be seen in the wording of certain items on the agenda, for example the items whether to approve the income statement and balance sheet, to decide on how the dividend is to be used (dividend policy) and to decide on discharge from liability for the Board of Directors and the President. The Chairman of the Meeting takes on the position of the author as s/he (though most often a "he") proposes the Chairman of the Board of the company for the coming year. At the same time, the chairman assumes the role of animator through the way of presenting the items on the agenda.

But it is also common to appoint an external person as the Chairman of the Meeting, that is *not* also the Chairman of the Board. This means a change in positions. The Chairman of the Meeting is, then, the animator and author-interpreter, but not the author, as this would be the Chairman of the Board. While this might give the Chairman of the Meeting a larger amount of freedom during the meeting, there is also responsibility and commitment towards the underlying textual sources – the law and the industry code – that govern the annual general meeting.

Equally important as the author, we suggest, is the genre and its tradition. Of course, there are exceptions to the tradition. There are companies which arrange their annual general meetings in less traditional ways. But as mentioned above, a large part of the content of the meeting is set out in the legal text and in the Code. Even so, these texts do not say anything about *what* should be addressed and *how*, or for that matter what should *not* be addressed.

In the following sections we will analyze the data from two perspectives: *4.1 Speech acts as genre* and *4.2 Genre articulated by positionings*.

4.1 Speech acts as genre

Both the CEO's annual speech and the Q&A, that is the opportunity for shareholders to raise questions to the Board and the CEO, occur in all of the annual general meetings we attended, albeit not as items on the agenda. The speech and the Q&A are neither governed by legal texts or the Code, but by the expectations within the genre of the annual general meeting. Thus, the CEO's speech and Q&A are in reality compulsory genre components, in the sense that the genre would not work as a text-bound activity without these oral items on the agenda. Other items do not have an equally obvious place in the agenda, but they are there nonetheless. Such examples include film presentations of products or product lines or prize ceremonies, celebrating staff who have made special contributions to the company, for example innovations or improvements. For some companies, this may be routine at their annual general meeting, while for others it is conceivable but not obvious. At the other end of the spectrum: expected/required or mandatory/optional are things like presentations of other people than the CEO or presentation of the coming year's activities. Because of the stock market's regulations, none of the things said during the annual general meeting is supposed to disclose new information that could potentially impact the value of the traded stocks.

Whereas the legal texts set limits on the degree of formality, the author is more bound by the expectations and traditions of the genre, which is upheld both by those who arrange the meeting and those who participate, that is the audience. As the meetings are planned meticulously, the front-stage is a place where the chairman stylishly confirms decisions by formulating decisions as questions, addressed to the owners who are attending the meeting (e. g., *May the meeting decide so? we decide so?*).

The chairman either requests the decision by addressing the owners as an impersonal entity, or as a *we* that includes the attendees, formally entitled to vote by virtue of being owners. Decisions are almost always made by acclamation, which means that the chairman makes an instant assessment of whether a majority of the owners is behind the proposed resolution. Of course, not all voters say *yes*. The chairman has to decide whether there are any objections to the proposal (Unger 2014). And since all proposals are formulated as a *yes-or-no* question, there is the possibility to say *no* loudly. If that is the case, the next step for the chairman is to ask for a formal vote, where *yes*-votes and *no*-votes are counted separately. In the annual general meetings we attended the results of such voting were announced by the chairman in the following ways:

Then I find that the meeting decided accordingly.

I find that the required majority has answered yes.

Then we decide so.

Then we say so.

Then we have decided accordingly.

Here, the chairman has formulated the owners as a collective, based on the calculus that there was a majority of owners supporting the decision, or based on the inclusion of both the chairman and the owners in the pronoun *we*.

4.2 Genre articulated by positionings

The Goffman concept of footing visualizes shifts in perspective that take place during the meeting. The chairman is often strict in the choice of words when opening the meeting, as the legal texts govern the procedures for how to set up the meeting. But after some time, it is common practice for a change to a more informal footing, often connected to a joke. A joke is part of a playful re-positioning, for example by the chairman, or any other speaker, be it the CEO or auditor, often in connection with a transition in the order of speakers when the floor is handed over to another speaker. However, the element of humour is necessarily short. Should it take up too much space, we conclude from our observations, there would be a risk that the annual general meeting would not be perceived as sufficiently serious and would risk losing legitimacy. The change to a playful and humoristic footing must be planned carefully, as well as the switch back to the serious footing.

The CEO's speech occupies a large part of the time at the meeting, between a third and half of the meeting, which usually lasts 60 to 90 minutes. The speech is often styled as a presentation of the company, well-prepared and usually rhetorically well-thought out. Judging solely from the speech, it is difficult to tell whether the CEO is the actual author of the speech. However, given the key position of the speech in the meeting, it is probably the case that one or more persons work on the presentation in more or less close collaboration with the CEO. Thus, a collective and composite author is the normal case. For some of the companies we approached, the communication staff were key figures in planning the annual general meeting.

The CEO takes on the role of animator and – depending on how much the CEO has written of the speech – the role of interpreter. However, the footing rarely varies during the speeches, primarily because what is expected of the meeting is that the CEO gives an enthusiastic and trustworthy presentation of the company to its owners. The CEO leaves the footing of enthusiastic presenter when opening up for questions from the floor, taking on a various footing depending on the type of questions, e. g. connected to defence, explanation or humour.

In fact, the greatest variation in footing takes place during the Q&A, when shareholders are given the opportunity to ask questions to the CEO and possibly also to the Chairman of the Board. Institutional shareholders, mostly representatives of pension funds, raise questions concerning future growth, profitability or sustainability measures, connected to a serious footing in their utterances. The position of the representative for an institutional shareholder is of course the animator, but s/he might also be one of the authors of the question raised. The organization Swedish Shareholders Association (Aktiespararna) represents small shareholders and its representative at the AGM is prepared with questions about how well small shareholders' interests are safeguarded. The position here is also a combination of animator and author. It is also common that the representative raises questions on issues of growth, profitability or sustainability. However, the representative of the Swedish Shareholders Association combines

these perspectives with less critical perspectives. At several meetings, we witnessed how the representative of Swedish Shareholders Association only praised the company for its performance, and in a few cases, praised the CEO as a gifted rhetorician. Thus, the footing of the representative of Swedish Shareholders Association could both be the same as of the institutional shareholders but also change to footings characterized by praise of the company or even admiration of the CEO.

The CEO presents the company as the official representative, resembling an enthusiastic salesman or politician. When the floor is opened up for questions, the CEO either keeps the enthusiastic footing, changes to a defensive footing, uses a footing with jokes as answers or even a footing where an individual shareholder is ridiculed. The individual shareholders make use of various footings in themes such as reflections on sustainability, investment policy and dividend, or personal reflections on the organization of the meeting

The greatest variety of positionings we observed for individual shareholders. Among these, footings range from reflections on environmental policy and future financial prospects to purely personal reflections, more or less connected to the agenda. Such reflections concerned how the meeting was organized, whether the shareholders could have financial statements and other materials mailed to their home address in printed form and other things. The CEO did in some cases change footing by trying to joke and so dodge a difficult question. In a few rare cases, the CEO changed from the polite and professional footing to a power perspective where the questioner was literally ridiculed. While compulsory *moves* are significant to identify to unpack the structure of communication in the genre of annual general meetings, this genre is articulated through a specific patterning of speech acts and involving actors with a limited number of positionings that can be exercized at specific moments during the genre.

5 Discussion

The corporate annual general meeting is a place for different actors, speakers, positionings and genre expectations and traditions to converge. Superficially it may be interpreted as a tumultuous place for formulaic expressions, or clichés stacked on top of each other. But such a view is too simplified. The meeting must decide on the approval of the Income Statement and Balance Sheet as well as on Discharge from liability. These decisions are meticulously prepared for the meeting, given dignity with well-known formulae with a high degree of formality. In a way, many of these are typical speech acts in the Austinian sense. The chairmen of the meeting, like the registrar at the wedding, express themselves in predictable, solemn and formal ways, as they expect a predictable, solemn and affirmative answer. In this lies the performative power of speech acts. A *no*-answer breaks the performative power in a drastic way.

Genre traditions are a stabilizing force that can be observed both in the annual general meetings recurring expressions and formulations and in the items of the agendas with e. g. the speech of the CEO as a compulsory component. Yet, the company's representatives are nowadays often in the foyer to meet the shareholders and to present the company's products and services before and after the meeting. As we can compare meetings over the past three to four years, we see that there is more that unites than separates them.

Based on Goffman's (1981) conceptual framework, we suggest that the persons on stage at these meetings are meeting-professionals as they are acquainted with, and obviously socialized into, the genre used at these meetings. In a formal sense, the people on stage represent

different functions of the company, such as CEO, Chairman of the Board, Chairman of the Meeting, Auditor, Chairman of the Election Committee and so on. As they are professionals, however, they are entering certain positions and, in those positions, perform speech acts by reproducing the established genre structure.

Having acquired genre knowledge and understood which positionings are available within the meeting, these persons have developed professional know-how and competence, useful in the genre and therefore also useful for uttering certain speech acts at certain occasions. This echoes Bazerman's (2004) notion, that speech acts follow patterned forms of communication and language use, which makes up a genre, and this is also what makes certain utterances intelligible as speech acts. Because the people on-stage have acquired this know-how, they are able to handle both the formal and the informal aspects of the corporate annual general meeting, that is, they know perfectly well how to navigate the compulsory moves, both within and outside of the genre.

While it may seem obvious that the people on stage at these meetings are meeting-professionals, this is less clear when it comes to the persons in the audience. Are they, too, meeting-professionals? Or are they primarily passive recipients of what is being communicated and said at the meeting? To a large degree, the audience embodies the position it is expected to take: as passive listeners. Small shareholders are not expected to make noise and occupy much space at these meetings. This position is for the majority shareholders, that is, those who own the company and may influence its future direction. These owners, who have a large influence because of the number of shares they own, are in possession of other communication channels for getting in touch with the CEO and the board anytime during the financial year.

In this respect, the presence of the small shareholders primarily confirms and re-establishes that the CEO, the Chairman of the Board, the Chairman of the Meeting and so on, are there in their capacity as meeting-professionals. Of course, there are exceptions. In a couple of the annual general meetings that we attended, smaller shareholders raised political issues, e. g. connected to the corporate conduct in another country. In one case, a representative for a NGO wanted to shed some light on the widespread occurrence of low wages amongst subcontractors in a certain country in Asia. As these occurrences were unusual, the CEO replied that the corporation did what it could to make sure that the employees working for the subcontractors received a fair wage compared to the situation in that country. The CEO thereby confirmed the rule that he, as a meeting-professional, had learned to master the genre by performing speech acts in such a way that the meeting could smoothly continue without any severe interruption.

6 Conclusion

In this article, the aim has been to explore how corporate annual general meetings are constructed with oral texts and underlying written texts such as the *Swedish Companies Act* and the *Swedish Code of Corporate Governance* by analyzing the connections between speech acts, speaker positionings and the specific genre of corporate annual general meetings. We have achieved this by observing the communication at 30 annual general meetings at major listed companies in Sweden during three years.

Even though we build on earlier studies, we also have moved beyond the standard question of why certain speech acts fail or succeed (e. g. Ewald/Stine 1983, John et al. 2019). Instead, we have explored how speech acts coordinate professional relations and, subsequently,

how corporate annual general meetings are performed. Of course, the legal requirement of an annual general meeting as stipulated in the *Swedish Companies Act* shapes the professional relations to a certain degree. Our observations of the speech acts and the performance of the actors connect to the observations made by Catasús/Johed (2007) as well as to Nyqvist (2015) as the AGMs we have observed are strictly organized and ritualized gatherings.

Our contribution to the understanding of AGMs is the perspective of speech acts and the importance of the genre as such but also that explicit and tacit genre expectations structure the corporate annual meetings. The genre is constructed in several ways – the legal requirements of the mandatory items as listed in the *Swedish Companies Act*, the recommendations (in practice compulsory) in the *Swedish Code of Corporate Governance* and the expectations of the genre community. Even though neither Q&A nor the speech of the CEO were listed on the agendas of the annual general meetings we observed, it was self-evident that both items would be part of the content because of the genre tradition. Thus, we see the Q&A and the speech of the CEO as compulsory genre moves. Examples of various items at the meetings are prize ceremonies, presentations of innovations and presentations of company products. These items are optional genre moves. Thus, it is important to connect ethnographic data from field observations to the requirements, recommendations and expectations of the genre. In this way we connect to the thick genre description according to Critical Genre Analysis (Bhatia 2017), considering the professional practice and the professional relations of AGMs and applying the adjective *critical* in the sense of an unprejudiced interpretation and understanding of the AGM.

The corporate elites populating the stages at these meetings are meeting-professionals as they have acquired knowledge of how to conduct a formal meeting by learning the *genre*, identifying which *positions* are available during a meeting and, based on these two pieces of knowledge, utter *speech acts* connecting to different *footings*. As such, an annual general meeting is to a large extent predictable in its form and also in its language-use. This is so because the meeting operates by drawing upon the established genre of corporate annual general meetings, which is well-known to the participants attending the meeting: the board, the top-management team, the institutional shareholders and the individual shareholders. Last but not least, everything at the meeting must follow protocol and be legally correct. Otherwise, decisions will not be decisions in the formal conceptualization of the term. All this, we argue, is linked to the *genre*, the *positions* and the *speech acts*, which together make the meeting into a performative event, reproducing the corporate elite as meeting-professionals. A conclusion is that the corporate annual general meeting operates as a ritual and at the same time offers an open ideal speech situation, not least as all shareholders attending the meeting are allowed to raise questions and make the company accountable (for further analyses of rituals, culture, norms and language at corporate annual general meetings in Sweden, cf. Paulsson et al. 2023).

According to our interpretation, the meeting-professionals constitute an important category of corporate elites. The meeting-professionals usually have other professional roles, functions or tasks in the higher levels of corporations, but one of their main characteristics is their know-how and competence in arranging and managing formal meetings such as annual general meetings. Part of this professionalism is the ability to move between the formal and informal components, to change positionings and linguistic style as well as an ability to handle critical questions from the floor. Our study is only the beginning of a proposal to investigate corporate elites as meeting-professionals. Hopefully, this study will inspire future studies exploring the linkages between speech acts, positionings and genres, and possibly also future studies of corporate elites as meeting-professionals.

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