

## **A Study of Translation Errors Made by Third Year German Specialization Students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages**

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### **Abstract**

The module “Translation and Interpretation Skills- I” is one of the core courses for third year German specialization students (B 1.1) at YUFL in their first semester. The ability to translate is a language skill that has to be mastered. Here, the students should know that the mother language is very important for translation. German specialization students make errors when they translate German texts into Myanmar. Therefore, an analysis of translation errors is needed to find solutions to these problems. The type of this research was descriptive and quantitative research which used error analysis procedures to classify and analyze the students’ error. The aims of this study were to observe types of translation errors in translating texts from German into Myanmar, to determine the types of translation errors that are most common, to find out the causes of errors and to appreciate their mother language. The results of this study will help languages teachers and learners to improve translation teaching and learning. The participants were 80 third year German specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. The data were collected from the students' translated texts. Translation problems and causes of errors were solved by using survey. The data were analyzed by considering by percentage and content analysis. The result shows that the most frequent translation errors are morphology errors. The causes of errors found in this study included carelessness, lack of vocabulary, and anxiety. This Study can be provided in student's translation skills.

**Keywords:** error analysis, translation errors and morphology errors, translation assessment

### **I. Introduction**

The students as foreign language learners should learn translation skill for their future job opportunities. A translator is essential in facilitating readership to get a satisfying translation service.

The module “Translation and Interpretations Skills - I” is a new course that was offered to third year German specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages (YUFL). German specialization students are practiced to translate a text from German into Myanmar or vice versa. Wikipedia states that in some geographical settings, the source language is the translator's first language because not enough people speak the source language as a second language. Therefore, third year German specialization students are firstly trained to translate short news from Internet Web site DW (German Wave) into Myanmar. This site DW offers about German and European news and background information about Germany and German language courses. Thus, the news from DW is a good material for students. German is still a second foreign language for the third-year students, which until now the learning process is still ongoing and continuous. Therefore, the students should focus on the content texts in translating which have equivalence in the both source and target texts.

The study falls into the area of journalism translation or more specifically, the area of the translation errors in news. By training to translate, it is found that students make mistakes or errors. Therefore, a study on translation errors should be beneficial as it not only pinpoints

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problems students have in translating texts from German into Myanmar, but also indicates the weaknesses students have in both German and Myanmar.

The categories of translation errors are based on Translator's references (1995: V4. 16). These errors are categorized as syntactic error, morphological error. As a result, the course can be improved by using the right methods to address those problems. To achieve this, the current study tries to investigate the types of translation errors in translation of texts from German into Myanmar, to determine the most common types of translation errors, and to find possible explanations for the causes of errors. The students come to know how important their mother language is by learning and translating a text in a foreign language and then they come to appreciate their mother language.

## II. Literature Review

The researchers define translation in different ways. In the books Translator's reference, Vol (1), (2), (3) & (4) the meaning of translation, translation strategies, translation procedure, translation method and translation errors are described with explanation and to practice exercises from Myanmar to English and vice versa. According to Translator's reference by Saya Zawgyi (1993, Vol (2): 8);

1. A word, indeed in one language is seldom the exact equivalent of a word in a different language.
2. The translators can hardly hope to convey in the mother language every shade of meaning that attaches to the word in the original.

The most important point is that a translator must be perfect in both his mother language and target language. The purpose of translation studies is to convey an intended meaning of a material in the source Language (SL) into target Language (TL). A duty of the translator is to find a suitable paraphrase for expressions that are untranslatable. Every language has its conception peculiar to itself which cannot be rendered exactly into any foreign language and in such cases the translator must abandon the words but yet convey the thought.

According to Translator's reference (1995, Vol (4), P.16), the translation errors can be classified into four types: phonological system, morphological system, syntactic system, and semantic system. Among them, the semantic system type always links with the other three types. It follows with the others. The data were analyzed by identification, classification and explanation. In this research, the qualitative method was used and the collecting data were descriptively analyzed by two types of translation errors by using the markings in the writing assignments of students. According to Translator's reference (1995) the morphological errors are divided into two group: content words and structure words. Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Structure words are articles, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns. Also, syntactic errors can be classified into two groups: simple sentence and complex sentence. Therefore, the most common translation errors are analyzed by these four groups. The data are analyzed by frequency and percentage.

## III. Research Questions

1. What types of translation errors do the students make?
2. Which errors are the most common in their translated texts?
3. Why do these errors occur in their translation task?

### IV. Methodology

The participants in this study are 80 third year German specialization students (B1.1) in the academic year 2019-2020 at Yangon University of Foreign languages. The students were trained to translate sentences from German into Myanmar and Myanmar into German. Then they were given translation practice in the classroom and they had to translate 5 short news articles from Website DW (German wave). The researchers sent 25 news articles from Deutsche Welle to the students so that they could practise to translate these German news articles into Myanmar. There were many translation assignments, and only two assignments which were taken from their translated news were used for this study.

Firstly, students are told about morphological, syntactic, and semantic systems to avoid errors in translation of news. After that, they were given assignments to be translated. Finally, the data were collected in order to analyze the translation errors.

To compare the data, the students were also surveyed for difficulties in translating to obtain insightful information on the causes of errors. Surveys were conducted for their preparation before translating the texts, their problems during translating, and their opinion of the course. This method checks the real information on the causes of errors and stimulated recall was also described in this research.

### V. Analysis of Data

According to Translator’s reference (1995), the translation errors are classified into four types: phonological error, morphological error, syntactic error, and semantic error. But, the two types such as morphological error and syntactic error were mainly found in the translation errors followed by semantic error type.

#### 5.1 Syntactic Errors

There are tense errors and sentence structure error are mostly found in the translated texts by students. The following are examples for syntactic errors:

<Table 1> Example for syntactic errors

1.	Source text	In den USA ist erstmal ein Fall der neuartigen Lungenkrankheit nachgewiesen worden, an der in China bereits Hunderte Menschen erkrankt sind.
	Student translation	အမေရိကန်ပြည်ထောင်စုမှာလည်း ဝူဟန်-ကော်ရိုနာ ဗိုင်းရပ်စ်အသစ် အဆုတ်ရောဂါကဲ့သို့ ကူးစက်ရောဂါအသစ်ကို ပထမဆုံးအကြိမ်တွေ့ရှိခဲ့ပါတယ်။ အဲဒီကူးစက်ရောဂါဟာ ဆိုရင် တရုတ်နိုင်ငံမှာ လူတစ်ရာလောက်ထိ ကူးစက်ခြင်းခံရပြီးသွားပါပြီ။ (sentence structure error)
	Correct translation	တရုတ်နိုင်ငံတွင် လူပေါင်းရာနှင့်ချီ၍ ကူးစက်ခံစားနေရသော အဆုတ်ရောင်ရောဂါအသစ်ကို အမေရိကန်တွင် ပထမဆုံးတွေ့ရှိ နေပြီဖြစ်သည်။
2	Source text	Washington und andere westliche Regierungen werfen Moskau vor.
	Student translation	ဝါရှင်တန်နှင့် အခြားအနောက်နိုင်ငံအစိုးရများက မော်စကိုကို ပြစ်တင်ရှုံ့ချခဲ့ပါသည်။ (tense error, number error)

	Correct translation	ဝါရှင်တန်နှင့် အခြားအနောက်နိုင်ငံများက မော်စကိုကို ပြစ်တင် ရှုံ့ချလျက်ရှိကြသည်။
3	Source text	Die Weltgesundheits- organisation <u>will an diesem Donnerstag</u> erneut darüber <u>beraten</u> , ob sie eine " gesundheitsliche Notlage von internationaler Tragweite" ausruft.
	Student translation	ကမ္ဘာ့ကျန်းမာရေးအဖွဲ့ ဒီကနေ့ ကြာသပတေးနေ့တွင် “နိုင်ငံတကာ နယ်ပယ် ၏ ကျန်းမာရေးကိစ္စ”ဟု ကြေညာခြင်း ရှိမရှိ ထပ်မံပြောကြားပါသည်။ (tense error, object error)
	Correct translation	ကမ္ဘာ့ကျန်းမာရေးအဖွဲ့အစည်းက နိုင်ငံတကာသို့ ပြန်နံ့နိုင်သည့် ကျန်းမာရေးဆိုင်ရာ အရေး ပေါ်အခြေအနေတစ်ရပ်ကို ကြေညာမည့်ကိစ္စကို လာမည့် ကြာသပတေးနေ့တွင် ထပ်မံ ဆွေးနွေးလိမ့်မည်။

<Table 1> shows the syntactic errors in tense and sentence structure errors made by students in their translation texts. The first example is sentence structure error. This sentence in German is formed with relative clause, but it is one sentence. The students wrote two sentences for one. For example, sentences 2 occurred in present continuous tense. In Myanmar, tense is indicated by particles သည်၊ ၏၊ suffixed to the verb or by a time phrase အရင်၊ နောင် which precedes the verb. Verb for this sentence with suffix “လျက်ရှိကြသည်။” Most students translated this sentence in past tense with suffix “ပြစ်တင်ရှုံ့ချခဲ့ပါသည်”. The example 3 shows tense errors for future tense. In this sentence, particles indicate မည်၊ လိမ့်မည် suffixed to the verb, but they do not add these particles.

The students found these to be the difficult grammatical aspects of Myanmar or German. It is possible that they do not understand both Myanmar grammar and German grammar thoroughly. The errors are not serious because they generally do not affect the meaning. However, many students made such kinds of errors, and they were careless in grammatical differences and rules in both languages.

**5.2 Morphological Errors**

The morphological errors were both content words and structure words and also errors which included misspelling, under-translation. Some examples of morphological errors are presented in the following table.

<Table 2> Examples of morphological errors

	Source text	Student translation	Correct translation
1.	die Lungenkrankheit	အဆုတ်ရောဂါ (meaning error)	အဆုတ်ရောင်ရောဂါ
2.	Abrüstungsverein- barungen zu <u>verletzen</u>	လက်နက် လျော့ချရေး သဘော တူညီမှုကို ထိပါးစေသော (meaning error)	လက်နက်လျော့ချရေး သဘော တူညီမှုကို ချိုးဖောက်စေသော

3.	vorwerfen	ပြစ်တင်ရှုတ်ချသည်/ ပြစ်တင်ချို့ချသည် (meaning error, misspelling)	ပြစ်တင်ရှုတ်ချသည်
4.	die <u>Präsidenten</u> Barack Obama und Dmitri Medwedew	သမ္မတ ဘာရက်အိုဘားမား နှင့် ဒီမီထရီ မတ်(ဒ်)ဝီဒျူ (under-translate)	သမ္မတ ဘာရက်အိုဘားမား နှင့် သမ္မတ ဒီမီထရီ မတ်(ဒ်)ဝီဒျူ
5.	das <u>sogenannte</u> New-Start-Abkommen	ယခင်ကချုပ်ဆိုခဲ့သောစာချုပ်၊ စာချုပ်အသစ်ချုပ်ဆိုခြင်း (meaning error, left out)	နယူးစတုတ်အမည်ရှိ စာချုပ်/ New-Start စာချုပ်
6.	Bei einem Reisenden	ခရီးသည် တစ်ဦးထံမှာ/တွင် (preposition error, number error)	ခရီးသွားတစ်ဦးကနေ/ခရီးသွားများကြောင့်
7	im Zusammenhang mit <u>einem</u> anderen Abkommen	တခြားစာချုပ်နှင့်ပတ်သက်၍ (noun with number suffix error)	တခြားစာချုပ်တစ်စောင်နှင့်ပတ်သက်၍
8	<u>eine</u> "gesundheitliche Notlage von internationaler Tragweite"	နိုင်ငံတကာ၏ကျန်းမာရေးဆိုင်ရာအရေးပေါ်အခြေအနေ (noun with number suffix error)	နိုင်ငံတကာသို့ပြန့်နှံ့နိုင်သော ကျန်းမာရေးဆိုင်ရာအရေးပေါ်အခြေအနေတစ်ရပ်

In the first example, students directly translated “Lungenkrankheit” as “အဆုတ်ရောဂါ”. The word “Lungenkrankheit” is word combination of nouns “Lungen” and noun “Krankheit”. “Lungen” means “အဆုတ်” and “Krankheit” means “ရောဂါ”. Most students translated it as “word to word” into “အဆုတ်ရောဂါ”. They should be used as “အဆုတ်ရောင်ရောဂါ”. They could not be able to use words correctly and they are lack of general knowledge. The second example shows structure word error. The verb “verletzen” means in Myanmar “ထိခိုက်သည်၊ ချိုးဖောက်သည်၊ ဖောက်ဖျက်သည်” in Myanmar. But students should choose “ချိုးဖောက်သည်” word that matches with the meaning of the noun “Abrüstungsvereinbarungen” “လက်နက်လျော့ချရေး သဘောတူညီမှု”. The word “ထိပါး” in Myanmar was used with something that hurts a person’s reputation. Therefore, the students' translation gave a totally different meaning in the second example. The third is also an example of misspelling. The fourth example shows an under-translation error where students did not translate important words for president title in the target text. In Myanmar news, title should come before the name. Students translate only one president title before Barack Obama but they did not write president title before Dmitri Medwedew. In the fifth example, students left out a word and they translated as appropriate without knowing the meaning of the word. It was often found in their written news.

In the sixth example, two errors found; preposition usage and number. The word “ein Reisende” forms singular noun with article in text. This word means “ခရီးသည်တစ်ဦး”. Students used it as plural noun and translated “ခရီးသွားများ”. Furthermore, a preposition “bei” here means

“ထံမှာ/တွင်” in Myanmar, but many students translate “ကနေ/ကြောင့်”. These prepositions or suffixes change the meaning of preposition “bei”. The example 7 and 8 mean that Myanmar nouns are indicated by supplying an appropriate suffix. The noun comes first, followed by the number and then the suffix. The suffix is a numerical classifier which varies according to the class of the noun. The most students translate “ein Abkommen” in German to Myanmar “စာချုပ်တစ်စောင်”. But they rewrite only “စာချုပ်” without suffix and “eine Notlage” in German to Myanmar “အရေးပေါ်အခြေအနေတစ်ရပ်”. But they rewrite only “အရေးပေါ်အခြေအနေ” without suffix, as an effect, an error can occur even if they are familiar with their mother tongue.

## VI. Findings

Each type of translation errors is summarized in Table 3. Translation errors fall into the syntactic or morphological error.

<Table 3> Type of translation errors

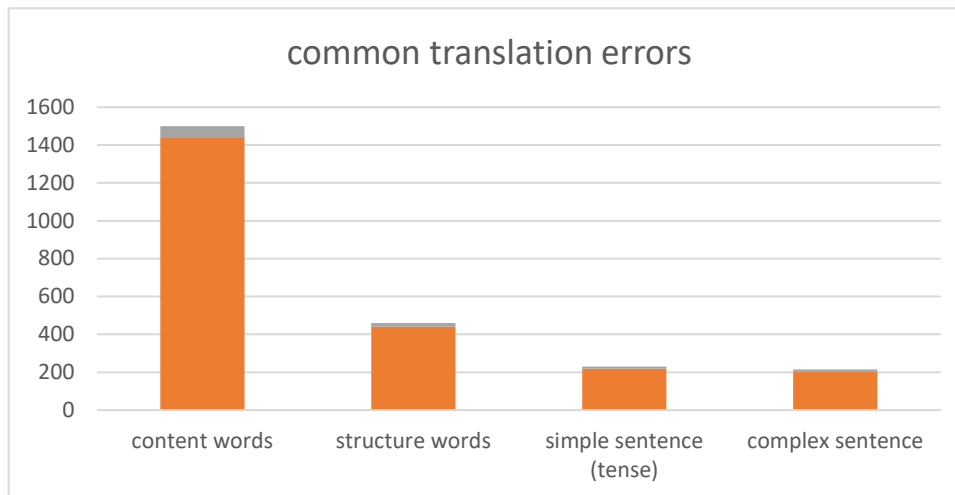
Type of Error		Frequency of errors		Percentage
Morphology	Text 1	1165	1878.00	81.55
	Text 2	713		
Syntactic	Text 1	219	425.00	18.45
	Text 2	206		
Total		2303	2303.00	100

According to <Table 3>, morphological errors are found to be the highest (81.55%) followed by syntactic errors (18.45%).

The most common of morphological and syntactic errors are following:

<Table 4> Type of translation errors

Type of error		Text 1	Text 2	Total frequency	percentage
Morphology	content words	948	489	1437	62.40
	structure words	217	224	441	19.15
Syntactic	simple sentence (tense)	109	111	220	9.55
	complex sentence	110	95	205	8.90
Total		1384	919	2303	100



**<Figure 1> Percentage of common translation errors**

According to <Figure 1>, it can be seen that the most mistakes are in content words (62.4%) and following structure words (19.15%). Their errors can also be found in tense (9.55%), and sentence structures (8.9%) which are found least in students translated texts.

In the survey, the researchers mainly used the survey about their preparation before translation, their translation procedures, and their opinions on the translation errors. According to Google survey form, 55 percent of students had vocabulary problems and 45 percent of students had grammar problems in translating from German to Myanmar. In order to determine the causes of errors, their reasons behind the translation were asked in the survey. This is described in discussion below.

## VII. Discussion

Students' translation errors were analyzed by considering the frequency and the content analysis. The results showed that morphological errors are most prominent with 81.55 percent. Syntactic errors made up only 18.45 percent of the total. This indicates that the students in Myanmar have more vocabulary problems than grammar problems.

The most common errors in the students translated texts were content words (62.4%) and structure words (19.15%). This implies that the students had more difficulties for morphology but the most error for participants is structure words. It is words group with article or preposition or number. The participants are weakness in German grammar article, preposition and number and usage of these article, preposition or number in Myanmar.

According to Karin Kleppin (1997), after correction they had feedback and they found their mistake and also compare their version with the teacher's version. Later, they can avoid their mistakes. This way can be improved in their acquiring a foreign language. Furthermore, students are asked to self-evaluate, but only 66 students responded by Google survey.

There were three causes of errors: carelessness, lack of vocabulary and anxiety. The students were unaware of the situation in their second language. They were afraid of vocabulary and usage. Carelessness is another cause of errors. This study identifies two types of careless mistakes; spelling error and their reluctance to use dictionary. Another cause of translation error is anxiety. Because the students as beginners for translation skills felt that the tasks were difficult, and they had limited time to do them, their anxiety level improved. Although they need the mastery of their language Myanmar, German as a second foreign

language is more difficult for them to understand and to translate not only the words but also the sentences. Therefore, it is recommended that more class time should be spent to address their problematic points.

### VIII. Conclusion

Student's errors can be seen as an important part of language teaching and learning. In this Study, German (source text) is a foreign language for translators (students). Myanmar (target text) is their first language (mother tongue). According to the researcher's experience in the classroom, one of the problems in translation is that sometimes a translator cannot transfer messages well because of their lack of knowledge in translation skills and they are also weak in learning a foreign language. Students' works of translation may not have the same message as the original writer's one.

Students lack German vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Thus, they could not believe in their translation skills well, and then did not make enough effort into the tasks. They tried to complete the tasks instead of the quality of translation. Students are fluent in their language, but they made mistake or errors in translating into their mother language because they do not understand German language in source texts thoroughly. "The author needs the mastery of one language only; the translator needs command of two (Translator's reference, 1993)." They are admitted their low proficiency and limited vocabulary in German. Therefore, they left out unknown words and grammar and they interpreted sentences as they liked. And then, they made careless mistake in Myanmar that noun-related particles include measure words or numerical classifiers and plural maker. They had already learnt that Myanmar noun with suffix.

As a result of Google survey, participants should learn more their mother tongue and also foreign language because they lack of German vocabulary. When they translated texts, they would read carefully to understand grammar rules in texts, because German grammar in source text is more difficult for them. Therefore, the translation errors in German can be analyzed and translation version, procedure or strategies in student's translated texts can be also studied.

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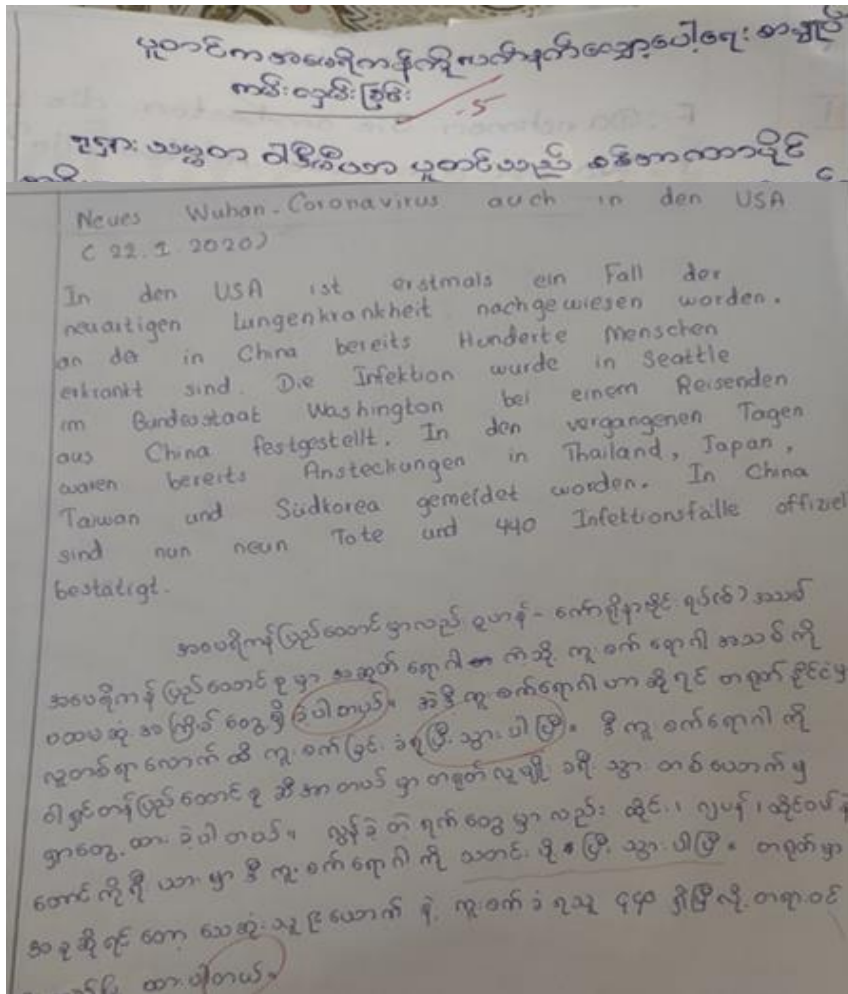
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Appendix



**Text 1**

<b>Conten Words</b>			
	<b>Noun</b>	number of students 80	Errors frequency
1	der Abrüstungsschritte	80	41
2	Vorbedingungen	80	50
3	Militärs	80	37
4	New-Start- Abkommen	80	27
5	Die US-Regierung	80	38
6	wenig Interesse	80	33
7	den Vertrag	80	25
8	Abrüstungsvereinbarungen	80	53
9	den Präsidenten Barack Obama und Dmitri Medwedew	80	75
10	Sprengköpfe	80	42
11	Trägersysteme	80	40
12	Mosko		7
			<b>468</b>
<b>Verb</b>			
1	anbieten	80	35
2	Es gebe	80	37
3	begrenzen	80	42
4	etwas als etwas gelten	80	9
5	zeigen	80	46
6	verlängern	80	40
7	vorwerfen	80	47
8	verletzen	80	66
9	abgeschlossen		5
			<b>327</b>
<b>Adjective</b>			
1	hochrangig	80	31
2	sogenannt	80	50
3	nuklearen	80	26

4	russisch	80	5
5	westlich	80	5
6	öffentlich	80	19
			136
	<b>adverb</b>		
1	bislang	80	9
2	dafuer	80	8
			<b>17</b>
	<b>Structure Word</b>		
1	Bei einem Treffen mit hochrangigen Militärs	80	20
2	der russische Präsident Wladimir Putin	80	5
3	dafür	80	22
4	das sogenannte New-Start-Abkommen	80	37
5	die Zahl der nuklearen Sprengköpfe	80	28
6	die Anzahl der Trägersysteme	80	27
7	im Zusammenhang mit einem anderen Abkommen	80	56
8	Washington und andere westliche Regierungen	80	21
	conj		1
			<b>217</b>

**Text 2**

	<b>Conten Words</b>	number of students 80	frequency
	<b>Noun</b>		
1	<b>Wuhan-Ciribavurs</b>	80	12
2	<b>ein Fall</b>	80	12
3	die Lungenkrankheit	80	48
4	die Infektion	80	12
5	Ansteckungen	80	18
6	Thailand	80	48
7	Japan	80	48
8	Taiwan	80	48
9	Südkorea	80	25
10	440 Infektionsfälle	80	20
11	Tote	80	6
12	die Weltgesundheitsorganisation	80	0
			297
	<b>Verb</b>		
1	nachgewiesen worden sein	80	20
2	an etwas erkrankt sein	80	18
3	wurde festgestellt	80	20
4	gemeldet worden waren	80	30
5	bestätigt sind.	80	18
	will beraten	80	16
	ausrufen	80	13
			<b>135</b>
	<b>Adj? Adv</b>		
1	erstmals	80	12
2	neuartige	80	12
3	bereits	80	15
4	Hundert	80	0
5	nun	80	6
6	erneut	80	6
7	offiziell	80	6

			57
	<b>Structure Word</b>		frequency
		80	
1	in die USA	80	38
2	die Hunderte Menschen	80	15
3	in Seattle im Bundesstaat Washington	80	22
4	bei einem Reisenden aus China	80	35
5	in China	80	18
6	In den vergangenen Tagen	80	25
7	neun Tote und 440 Infektionsfälle	80	20
8	eine gesundheitliche Notlage von internationaler Tragweite	80	45
9	an diesem Donnerstag	80	6
			<b>224</b>