Topic-focus word order in Biblical Hebrew and its translations into Hungarian

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ORSZÁGOS RABBIKÉPZŐ
ZSIDÓ EGYETEM

בית־מדרש לרבנים

האוניברסיטה ללימודי היהדות בהונגריה

1877 תרל"ח

E·L·T·E
BTK

Gen 1,1

Egyesített Bibliaolvasó

Fronting of the adjunct before the verb:

Codex Leningradensis (B19A, MT): בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

Septuagint (LXX): Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

Vulgata: *In principio* creavit Deus caelum et terram

King James Bible (1611): *In the beginning* God created the heaven and the earth.

Lutherbibel (1545): *Am anfang* ſchuff Gott Himel vnd Erden.

Károli (rev. 1908): *Kezdetben* teremté Isten az eget és a földet.

Szent István Társ. (1973): *Kezdetkor* teremtette Isten az eget és a földet.

IMIT (1898): *Kezdetben* teremtette Isten az eget és a földet

An Optimality Theoretical account of the translation process

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of culturally significant, canonized texts
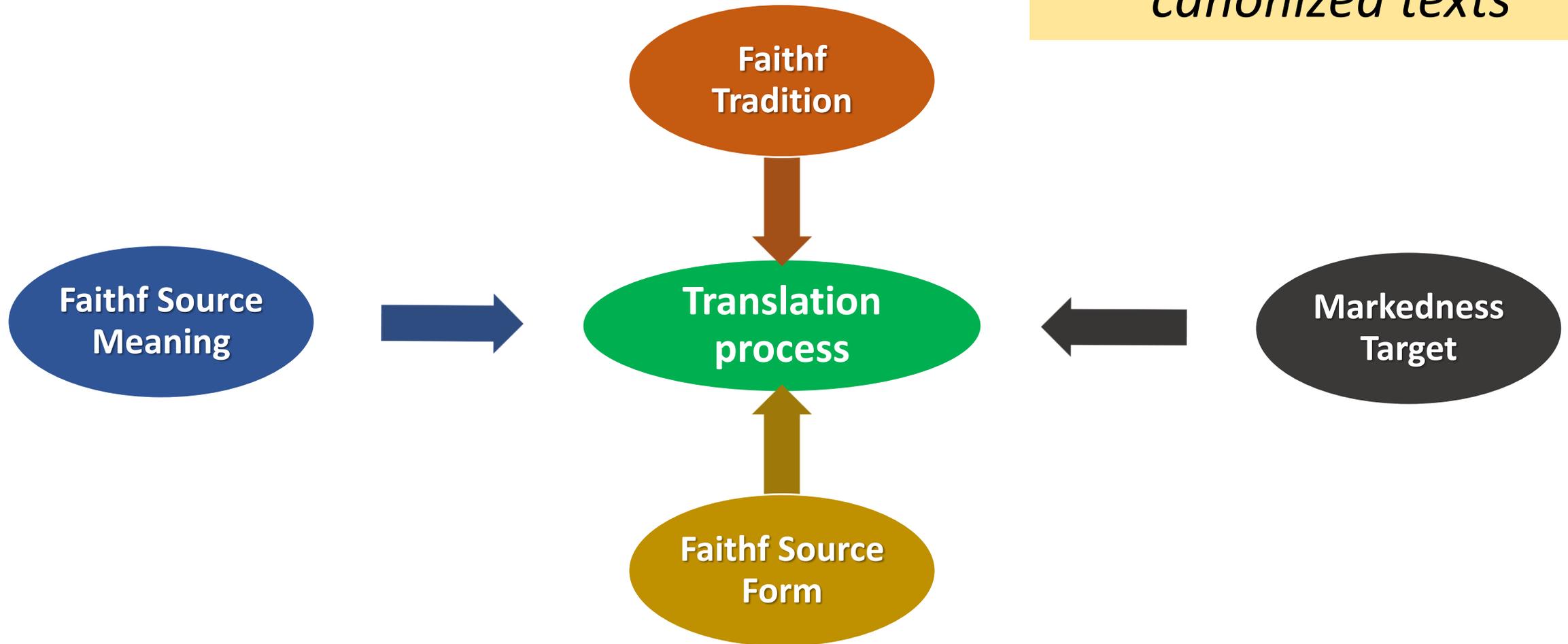
Constraint *families* for Bible translations

FSM — Faithfulness to Source Meaning
GTF — Grammaticality of the Target Form
FSF — Faithfulness to the Source Form
FTRD — Faithfulness to existing Traditions
MTF — Markedness of the Target Form

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ: / in.beginning created God ACC def.heaven and.Acc def.earth	FSM	GTF	FSF	FTRD	MTF	...
☞ *In the beginning* G. created the heaven and the earth.	✓	✓	*	✓	*	...
G. created the heaven and the earth *in the beginning*.	✓	✓	*!*	*	✓	...

Constraint *families* for Bible translations

FSM   –   Faithfulness to Source Meaning

GTF   –   Grammaticality of the Target

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FT_{RD} –   Faithfulness to existing Tradit

MTF   –   Markedness of the Target For

Prediction:

- Traditional Bible translations: tendency to promote FSF and FT_{RD}.

- Recent Bible translations: tendency to promote MTF.

/ בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃ / in.beginning created God ACC def.heaven and.Acc def.earth	FSM	GTF	FSF	FT_{RD}	MTF	...
☞ ***In the beginning*** *G. created the heaven and the earth.*	✓	✓	*	✓	*	...
G. created the heaven and the earth ***in the beginning***.	✓	✓	*!*	*	✓	...

Highly ranked FSF

- Ferrara Bible, a 1553

- Word-for-word translation of the Tanakh from Hebrew to Ladino (Judeo-Spanish).

- Follows Hebrew syntax, and not everyday Judeo-Spanish.
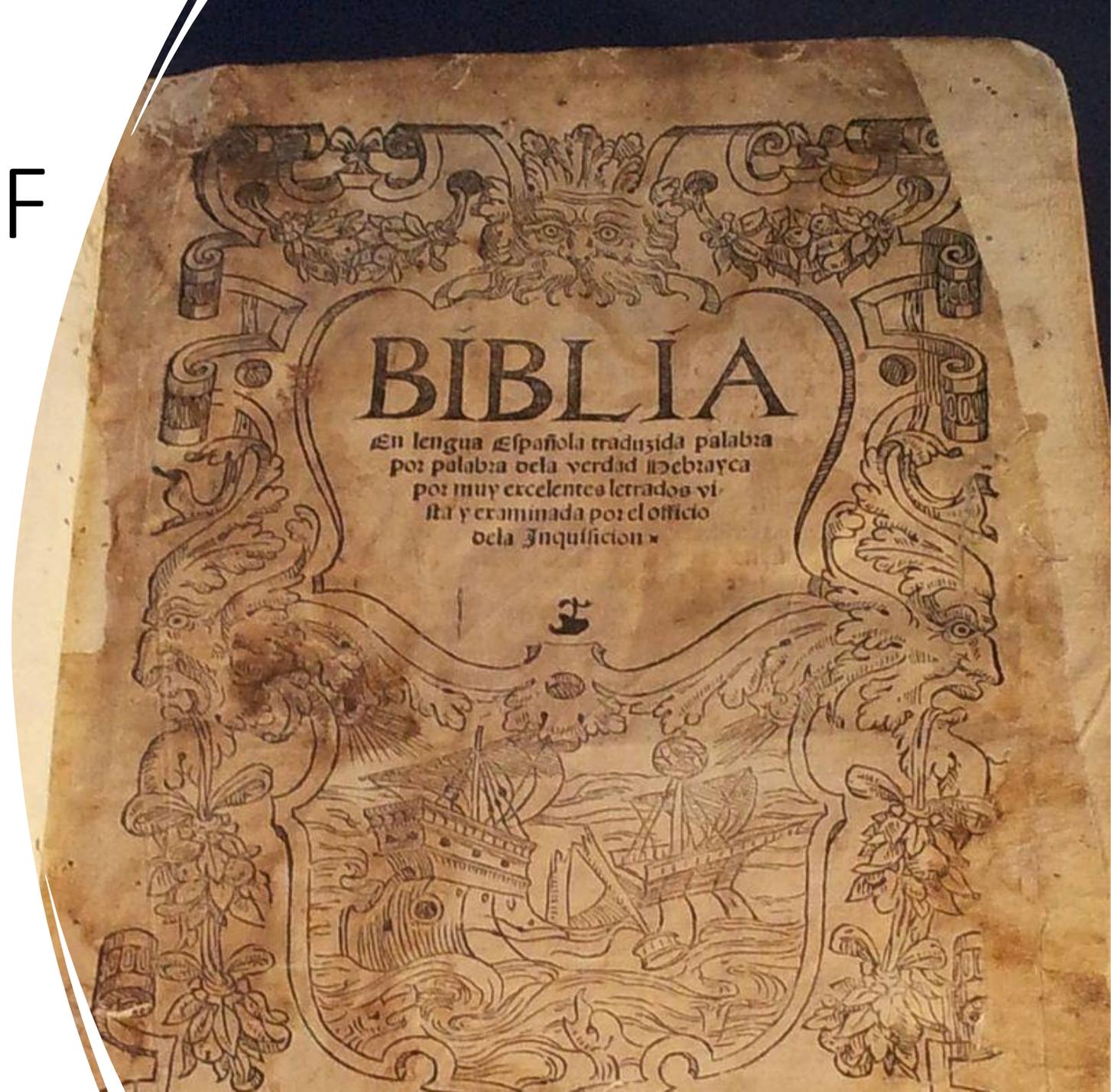
Why information structure?

- Part-and-parcel of the syntax of anyone's L1.

- Yet, not appearing in traditional grammars. Not conceptualized until recently. Speakers not conscious thereof. No explicit prescriptive rules.

- Information structure translated usually only "with gut feeling". Hence, FSM *Faithful. to Source Meaning* uninfluenced by conscious decisions.

- FSF *Faithfulness to Source Form* ↔
  GTF, MTF *Grammaticality* and *Markedness of Target Form*.

- My working hypothesis: Biblical Hebrew is a *topic-focus language* comparable to Hungarian, and unlike English.

Word-order in Biblical Hebrew

- Basic word-order VSO postulated.
  (Similarly, to many ancient Semitic languages. Modern Hebrew is V2.)

- Fronting: anything before the verb. E.g., topic and focus.

For instance, default VSO word order, followed by indirect object fronting:

- Gen 1, 10a: וַיִּקְרָ֨א אֱלֹהִ֤ים ׀ לַיַּבָּשָׁה֙ אֶ֔רֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵ֥ה הַמַּ֖יִם קָרָ֣א יַמִּ֑ים

  "And God called [lit. *called God*] *the dry.land Earth; and the.gathering.together of.the.waters called.he Seas"* (KJV-1611, modified).

Word-order in BH → English

FSM – Faithfulness to Source Meaning
GTF – Grammaticality of the Target Form
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- <u>Gen 1, 10a</u>   GTF ≫ FSF   KJV-1611:   FSM, FSF ≫ MTF

  JPS-2006:   MTF ≫ FSM, FSF

/ וַיִּקְרָ֨א אֱלֹהִ֤ים ׀ לַיַּבָּשָׁה֙ אֶ֔רֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵ֥ה הַמַּ֖יִם קָרָ֣א יַמִּ֑ים / and.called God to.dryland earth; and.to.gathering waters called sea	GTF	FSM	FSF	FTRD	MTF	…
KJV-1611 *And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas*	✓	✓	*	✓	*	…
Chouraqui *Elohîms crie au sec: « Terre. » À l'alignement des eaux, il avait crié: « Mers. »*	✓	✓	*	*	✓	…
JPS-2006 *God called the dry land Earth and called the gathering of waters Seas.*	✓	*	**	*	✓	…

Word-order in BH → English

- <u>Gen 1, 10a</u>　　　GTF ≫ FSF　　　KJV-1611:　FSM, FSF ≫ MTF

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　JPS-2006:　MTF ≫ FSM, FSF

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KJV-1611　*And God called the d...* *gather...*	✓	✓	*	✓	*	...
Chouraq... *l'alig...*		✓	*	*	✓	...
JPS-2006 *the g...*	✓	*	**	*	✓	...

Prediction:
- Traditional Bible translations:
  tendency to promote FSF and FTRD.
- Recent Bible translations:
  tendency to promote MTF.

Double fronting: topic, followed by focus

(1)   Num 18:14

כָּל־חֵרֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְךָ יִהְיֶה:

kol	ḥērem	bə=yiśrā'ēl	lə-kā	yihyeh
all	devoted	in=Israel	to-SG.2.M	be.IPFV.SG.3.M

'Everything devoted in Israel shall be thine.' (KJV)

Minden	örök szentség	Izraélben	a	tied	legyen. (IMIT)
all	eternal holiness	in=Israel	ART.DEF	yours	be.IMP.SG.3

'Everything that has been proscribed in Israel shall be yours.' (JPS 2006)

Double fronting: topic, followed by focus

'everything devoted in Israel thine shall be'   כָּל־חֵרֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְךָ יִהְיֶה׃

<u>Earlier translations</u>: FSF ranked high, i. e. original word order reproduced.

KG-1908:   *Minden, a mi teljesen Istennek szenteltetik Izráelben, tiéd legyen.*

KNV-1997:   *Mindaz, amit fogadalomból adnak Izrael fiai, a tiéd legyen.*

IMIT-1898:   *Minden örök szentség Izraélben a tied legyen.*

Bernstein Béla: *Minden átok alá vetett Izraelben a tied legyen.*

<u>Recent translations</u>: MTF promoted, FSF (and possibly also FSM) demoted. FTRD weak.

ÚRK-2011: *Minden a tied legyen, amit fogadalomból teljesen Istennek szentelnek Izráelben.*

SZIT-1973:   *A tiéd minden, amit Izraelben felajánlanak átok alatt.*

ÚF-1990 and RÚF-2014:   *Tied legyen mindaz, amit esküvel szenteltek oda Izráelben.*

Left-dislocation with resumptive pronoun as contrastive (identificational) focus

(2) Isaiah 8:13a

אֶת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֹתוֹ תַקְדִּישׁו

ʾeṯ-ʾăḏōnāi	ṣǝḇāʾôṯ ʾ	ōṯô	ṯaqdîšû
ACC-LORD	host.PL	PRO.ACC.SG.3.M	account=holly.IPVF.PL.2.M

'None but GOD of Hosts shall you account holy' (Revised JPS)

Az	Örökkévalót,	a	seregek	urát,	őt
mondjátok	szentnek. (IMIT)				
ART.DEF	Eternal.ACC	ART.DEF	host.PL	Lord.POSS.ACC	PRO.SG.3.ACC
say.IMP.PL.2	holly.DAT				

'But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy' (NRSVUE)

Left-dislocation with resumptive pronoun as contrastive (identificational) focus

<u>Earlier translations</u>: FSF ranked high, i. e. original word order reproduced.

KJV-1611: *Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself*

KG-1908: *A seregek Urát: Őt szenteljétek meg*

IMIT-1898/1907: *Az Örökkévalót, a seregek urát, őt mondjátok szentnek*

SZIT-1973: *A Seregek Urát – őt valljátok Szentnek*

<u>Recent translations</u>: MTF promoted, FSF (and possibly also FSM) demoted. FTRD weak.

ÚF-1990: *A Seregek URát tartsátok szentnek*

KNV-1997: *A Seregek Urát tartsátok szentnek*

RÚF-2014: *A Seregek Urát tartsátok szentnek*

Double fronting:

<u>Lev 19,3a</u>:　　　　　　　　אִישׁ אִמּ֤וֹ וְאָבִיו֙ תִּירָ֔אוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַ֖י תִּשְׁמֹ֑רוּ

　　　　man his.father and.his.mother fear.impf; and.ACC sabbath.pl.my keep.impf

KJV-1611:　　*Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths;*

IMIT-1898:　*Mindenki anyját és atyját félje, és szombatjaimat tartsátok meg;*　　[scope!]

Bernstein B. rev.:　*Kiki az ő anyját és atyját félve tisztelje, és szombataimat őrizzétek meg;*

KG-1908:　　*Az ő anyját és atyját minden ember tisztelje, és az én szombatjaimat megtartsátok*

SZIT-1973:　*Mindenki tisztelje anyját és apját. Tartsátok meg szombatomat.*　　[Sing: sic!]

RÚF-2014:　*Anyját és apját mindenki tisztelje. Tartsátok meg szombatjaimat.*

IMIT-1898: FSF ≫ MTF ≫ FSM　　　　KG-1908: FSM ≫ MTF ≫ FSF

RÚF-2014, SZIT-1973: MTF ≫ FSM ≫ FSF

Exod 33, verse 3 vs. verse 5.

	Ex 33:3 *Predicate in focus*	Ex 33:5 *Subject as topic*
MT (Codex Leningr.)	כִּי עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹ֫רֶף֙ אַ֫תָּה because people stiff.necked you.sg	אַתֶּם עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹ֫רֶף you.pl people stiff.necked
KJV-1611	*for thou art a stiffnecked people*	*Ye are a stiffnecked people*
IMIT-1898	*mivel keménynyakú nép vagy*	*keménynyakú nép vagytok*
☞ Bernstein 1922	*mivel kemény nyakú nép vagy te*	*Ti keménynyakú nép vagytok*
KG-1908	*mert te keménynyakú nép vagy*	*Keménynyakú nép vagy te*
RÚF-2014	*mert keménynyakú nép vagy*	*mivel keménynyakú nép* [sing.3!]

Conclusions

- Changing translation strategies can be modelled with OT.

- Constraint families FSF and FT$_{RD}$ demoted, MTF promoted.

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- Possible alternative hypothesis:
  - Modern translators more aware of information structure.
  - Inf. structure viewed as a feature of the source to be translated,
  - … which is easily achieved in Hungarian, a lg with similar syntax.
  - Therefore, FSM *Faithfulness to Source Meaning* promoted.
- Rejected!

Conclusions

- Changing translation strategies can be modelled with OT.

- Constraint families FSF and FTRD demoted, MTF promoted.

- Question: what role does OT play in this train-of-thought?

- Details: constraints in constraint families to be worked out.

- OT? HG? MaxEnt OT? Statistical versions thereof?

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- OT? HG? MaxEnt OT? Statistical versions thereof?

- United Bible Reader https://ebo.kre.hu/ has been a great help! Thanks!

Thank you for your attention

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