Translations represent a specific type of language contact. A text is translated from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) by a bilingual individual, and the product of this process can exhibit an impact of features of the SL on the TT – a phenomenon known as interference. If the same type of interference occurs repeatedly in translations from a SL, the new feature might not remain limited to translated texts. Under favourable circumstances, it might spread to monolingual text production, introducing innovations into non-translated texts produced in the TL.

The process – innovation under contact conditions, followed by spread into the receptor language – is thus parallel to what is observed in other types of language contact. Few contact linguistic studies have taken language contact through translation into account, however, focusing on face-to-face interaction instead. Translation studies do not provide generalisations about language change through translation either, since their focus is more on the translation process and its product and their typical perspective is a synchronic one. The aim of the present contribution is to take a step towards closing this gap in contact linguistic research by studying translation as a site of language contact. Ten hypotheses about typical properties of language contact through translations will be formulated and tested on the basis of a broad sample of studies of translations of a variety of language pairs. The contribution will end with general conclusions about the likelihood of the ten hypotheses, and present fruitful avenues for future research.

6.1 Introduction

Translations represent a specific type of language contact. As in other types of language contact, the locus of language contact as such is the
individual, in this case the translator. While translating a text from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL), the bilingual individual must activate his/her competence in both these languages. The product of this process can exhibit an impact of features of the SL on the target text (TT). This impact has been discussed under the label ‘interference’ (Toury 1995) as well as under the name of ‘shining-through’ (Teich 2003) in translation studies. If the same type of shining-through phenomenon occurs repeatedly in translations, it might spread to monolingual text production, that is to non-translated texts produced by TL authors. The process as well as its potential results are thus comparable to other types of language contact. However, up-to-date general studies of language contact have failed to investigate this type of contact in detail. The major studies of language contact only discuss language contact through translation (LCTT) very briefly (e.g. Heine and Kuteva 2005), or even merely mention it in passing (Thomason and Kaufman 1988).

Translation studies do not provide in-depth studies of translations as site of language contact either, as their focus is typically synchronic rather than diachronic. Furthermore, one very productive stream of translation studies focuses on finding universal features that are unique to translations (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1986; Baker 1993; Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998). Such a perspective neglects the view of translations as a type of language contact, since it focuses on features that do not arise out of the fact that two particular languages are in contact in a translation situation. Consequently, there has been no attempt at a unifying account, a typological overview or a general model of contact through the written medium.

In the following two sections, I will present insights from contact linguistics (Section 6.2) and from translation studies (Section 6.3) that allow us to formulate hypotheses concerning LCTT. This will lead to the elaboration of a model for the study of LCTT, in which I outline which different factors need to be taken into account in order to test the different hypotheses (Section 6.4).¹ In Section 6.5, I present an analysis of various LCTT situations reported on in the literature using this framework. Based on this analysis, Section 6.6 provides insights concerning the importance of the different factors and the likelihood of the different hypotheses holding up. Finally, I will offer some cautious conclusions about the nature of LCTT and present an outlook into avenues for future research.

### 6.2 Translation in current models of language contact

The major frameworks for the study of language contact offer little information on LCTT. Using Thomason and Kaufman’s (1988) seminal