

Guiding the Reader's Reception Pericope Titles in the New Testament

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Most modern editions of the Old and New Testament divide the chapters of the Biblical books into small sections (pericopes), providing them with headings. These section headings were introduced by editors and translators in order to structure the chapters and indicate the contents of the passage, facilitate reading or help readers find their way through the text. Section headings are paratexts which address the audience from a meta-level, guiding the readers' reception and shaping the sender-receiver relationship. The paper analyses a corpus of 1255 section headings collected from the Gospel of St. Matthew in seven German and two English translations with regard to their form and the role they play in the interpretation of the corresponding co-texts.

Introduction

In the New Testament (Lk 16, 1-8) we find the parable of the manager who depending on the translation of the New Testament one has grown up with - was regarded as unjust (KJV), unrighteous (NASB95), crooked (MSG02), dishonest (ESV01, HCSB03) or shrewd (NIV84) because he wasted his master's possessions in order to make friends for the time after he would have been fired, which indeed he was. We might ask ourselves whether these titles actually refer to the same story. After reading the parable again, we may also wonder about the coherence between title and co-text, since the manager's crookedness or dishonesty is characterized as a model for Christian behaviour. In the words of the King James Version, Jesus concludes the story saying: "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light". And in the words of the New International Version he goes on to say: "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings". (NIV84).

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Most modern editions of the Old and New Testament divide the chapters of the Biblical books into smaller segments (pericopes) and provide them with headings to indicate the content of the passage. These pericope headings are not in the original texts. They have been introduced by later editors and translators, who rarely tell us about their intentions, limiting their comments to the general information that the headings are intended to structure the chapters and indicate the contents of the passage (ZÜR87, 4), in order to make reading easier (RÖS38, 5) or to help the readers find their way through the text (SCO92, VI).

In the following paper, I would like to elaborate on the implications which the functional approach has for the theory and (professional) practice of translation, taking pericope headings and their role and function in Bible translation as a paradigmatic case in point. The analysis of the corpus follows the methodology used in a general analysis of book titles presented in Nord 1993 (for a brief summary in English cf. Nord 1995).

Before discussing the role and functions of pericope titles and the problems they may raise in the translation process, I will briefly describe the receiver-oriented concept of text-function on which this approach is based.

A Receiver-oriented Concept of Text Function

Functional approaches to translation, such as *Skopostheorie* (cf. Nord 1997), draw on a receiver-oriented concept of text function which holds the view that texts do not *have* a function but are *intended for* a function or set of functions by their sender. In the act of reception, receivers decide which function(s) the text may fulfil *for them.* In this decision, they are guided by

- a) the conditions of the situation in which they receive the text (e.g., time, place, medium)
- b) structural features of the text which may indicate the sender's intention(s),
- c) their own communicative necessities, and
- d) the expectations they have with regard to a text like the one they are receiving and which are based on previous reading experience and (culture-specific) presuppositions.

For a sender or text producer, this means that in order to make sure that their communicative intentions are achieved by the text they should

a) make conjectures with regard to the sociocultural and world knowledge of their addressees and the situation in which they may receive the text,

- b) provide the text with structural markers indicating the function(s) they want the text to fulfil for the addressed audience,
- c) consider the receivers' communicative necessities, and
- d) take account of their culture-specific expectations towards a text presented to them in such a situation.

For a pericope title, this means

- a) that the formal characteristics of the title, e.g. its length or the typeface used, should correspond to the standards of the Bible edition in which it will be published,
- b) that the author has to decide whether or not the syntactic characteristics of the title should be adjusted to the form conventions of pericope titles (if there are any) because unconventional forms require a greater effort in processing the information,
- c) that the author has to decide whether or not the wording of the titles should simply refer to the contents and/or establish intertextual coherence with previous translations and/or guide the audience's interpretation of the text,
- d) that the audience's expectations should be elicited by an analysis of the existing inventories of pericope titles because they show what readers are exposed to and what it is that shapes their expectations.

What has been stated here with regard to pericope titles, can be applied to the translation of any text-type. Therefore, we will briefly outline the methodology of pre-translational analysis used in the study.

Pericope Titles as a Text-type

Originally, the books of the Old and New Testament had no formal structure. The division into chapters dates from the early Middle Ages, the verse numbers were introduced in the 16th century. Pericope headings first appear after the invention of printing. It may be assumed that this is due to the extension of the audience. Pastors and theologians probably knew the texts (perhaps even by heart) and would not need a summary of their contents. In church, the liturgical passages chosen for the day were displayed on the lectern. However, for laypeople who wanted to read the Bible at home for their own private edification a short summary was printed at the beginning of each chapter. Over the centuries, these summaries, which may be compared with the so-called lead of a modern news text, developed into strings of short sentences, first, and enumerations of elliptic titles, later, until they were finally substituted by headings placed directly above the pericope in question. This is how they appear in most modern translations.

The following brief phenomenology is based on a corpus of 1255 pericope titles. They have been collected from various translations of the Gospel of St. Matthew:

- five German versions translated directly from the Greek original: the
 ecumenical Einheitsübersetzung (EIN80), the Gute Nachricht Bibel
 (GUN82), the 1984 revision of Luther's famous translation, normally used
 by the Protestant Church (LUT84), the Swiss Zürcher Bibel (ZÜR87), and
 Das Neue Testament translated by Klaus Berger and myself (DNT99);
- two German versions which appear to be strongly influenced by anglophone models: Hoffnung für alle (HOF90), which according to the editors follows the principles of the English Living New Testament, and Scofield-Bibel (SCO92) elaborated on the basis of the King James Version;
- two English translations: the King James Version (KJV, no year) and the New International Version (NIV84).

Literal English translations without capitalizations will be added in square brackets and italics where examples from the German-language translations are used to illustrate a certain point. Titles from KJV and NIV are reproduced according to the orthography used in the quoted editions.

Since the pericope division is not identical in all versions, the numbers of pericope titles vary slightly. This is what the corpus looks like with regard to quantities:

LUT84	GUN82	ZÜR87	EIN80	DNT99	HOF90	SCO92	KJV	NIV 84	total
138	164	137	161	174	145	155	29	152	1255

Applying the classification introduced in the previous study on titles and headings (Nord 1993) I distinguish between title types (according to macrostructure), title forms (according to syntactic structures) and title patterns (according to microstructure).

We find three title types: *simple titles* consisting of one single unit, *combined titles* consisting of a main title and a subtitle, and *title strings* consisting of two or more unconnected simple titles.

Some examples of combined titles and title strings:

Die Bergpredigt – Maßstäbe, die herausfordern (HOF90: Mt 5,1-2) [The sermon on the mount – Standards that challenge]

Die Bergpredigt: Die Rede von der wahren Gerechtigkeit (EIN80: Mt 5,1-2) [The sermon on the mount: The speech about true justice]

Warnung vor Habsucht. Gleichnis vom Auge (ZÜR87: Mt 6,19-24) [Warning of greed. Parable of the eye]

Table 1. Title types in the corpus

Туре	LUT84	GUN82	ZÜR87	EIN80	DNT99	HOF90	SCO92	KJV	NIV84
simple	100,0%	100,0%	93,3%	99,0%	100,0%	92,2%	91,6%	100,0%	100,0%
comb.	0,0 %	0,0%	3,0 %	1,0 %	0,0 %	7,8 %	8,4%	0,0 %	0,0%
strings	0,0 %	0,0%	3,7 %	0,0%	0,0 %	0,0%	0,0%	0,0 %	0,0%

Looking at the distribution of title types in the corpus, we find a clear divergence, especially with regard to the frequency of simple and combined titles, between the German translations, on the one hand, and the two 'anglicizing' translations, on the other, with the Swiss translation following the model of the latter. The two English translations only use simple titles.

In the corpus, we find six different title forms:

1) nominal titles consisting of a noun phrase that may have one or two complements

Examples: The Ancestors of Jesus Christ/The Killing of the Children/Salt and Light (NIV84)

2) adverbial titles introduced by a preposition

Examples: Vom Vergelten (LUT84: Mt 5,38-42) [Of revenge]/Über Ehescheidung und Ehelosigkeit (GUN82: Mt 19,3-12) [About divorce and not marrying]

3) adjective titles consisting of an adjective, usually with some complementary structure

Example: Zu fromm, um Gott zu gehorchen? (HOF90: Mt 15,1-20) [Too pious to obey God?]

- 4) verb titles consisting of a verb, in German in the form of an infinitive, in English in the form of a present participle, usually accompanied by a direct object, Examples: Einander ermahnen (HOF90: Mt 18,15-20) [To admonish each other]/Confessing and Rejecting Christ (NIV84: Mt 10,32)
- 5) clause titles in the form of a main and/or subordinate (often temporal or relative) clause

Examples: Jesus Calms a Storm (NIV84: Mt 8,23-27)/Whom to Fear (NIV84: Mt 10,26-31, cf. GUN82: Wen man fürchten muß)/Jesus erklärt, wie man fasten soll (DNT99: Mt 6,16-18) [Jesus explains how to fast]/Ask, Seek, Knock (NIV84: Mt 7, 7-12, cf. GUN82: Bittet, sucht, klopft an!)

6) passive titles consisting of a noun phrase and a past participle representing an elliptic form of a passive construction; since they are typical of English titles (e.g., *Brideshead Revisited*) they have not been included neither in the category of verb titles nor in that of the nominal titles.

Examples: Zwei Blinde und ein Besessener geheilt (SCO92: Mt 9,27-35) [*Two blind men and a possessed person healed*]/Ungerechtes Richten verboten (SCO92: Mt 7,1-6) [*Unjust judgment prohibited*]/Peter and Andrew called (KJV: Mt 418-20)

The sixth title form, which reminds us of news headlines or traffic signs, used to be rather frequent in the 1908 version of Luther's translation, where it can be found in 5,3% of the pericope titles of St. Matthew.

'The table shows the distribution of title forms in the corpus.

Table 2. Title forms in the corpus

Form	LUT84	GUN82	ZÜR87	EIN80	DNT99	HOF90	SCO92	KJV	NIV84
nominal	71,7 %	53,1%	76,7 %	79,0%	5.2%	49,0%	63,7%	65,5%	57,2%
adverbial	28,3 %	9,1%	8,3%	21,0%	0,0 %	2,6 %	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
adjective	0,0 %	0,0%	0,0 %	0,0%	0,0 %	1,3 %	0,0%	0,0 %	0,0%
verb	0.0%	1,8%	0,0 %	0,0%	0,0%	0,7 %	0,0%	0,0%	9,2%
clause	0.0%	36,0%	15,0 %	0,0%	94,8%	45,1%	31,5%	24,1 %	33,6%
passive	0.0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0 %	1,3 %	4,9%	10,4 %	0,0%

Except in DNT99, nominal titles are the most frequent form, and clause titles come second, except for LUT84 and EIN80, which do not use clause titles at all. It is interesting to note that the LUT08 edition had 22,1% clause titles, which were all replaced by nominal titles in the 1984 revision. Example: "Jesus tritt sein Lehramt an" [Jesus begins his teaching work] (Mt 4,12-17) was replaced by "Der Beginn des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa" [The beginning of Jesus' work in Galilee] (cf. NIV84: Jesus Begins his Work in Galilee).

Nominal titles allow a condensed presentation of the information, whereas clause titles are easier to understand and often stylistically more acceptable, at least in narrative texts. Moreover, they allow a linear topic-comment progression. Therefore, DNT99 uses sentence titles for all pericopes reporting words and activities first of St. John the Baptist and then of Jesus.

There are a number of *title patterns* to each title form. For reasons of space, I will only illustrate the distribution of title patterns by showing the percentages of the most frequent nominal title patterns found in the German-language corpus: NP (noun phrase, e.g. *Coming Persecutions*), NP+Gen (noun phrase with genitive object, e.g. *A Mother's Request*) and NP+Adverb (noun phrase with adverbial complement, e.g. *The Return from Egypt*).

Table 3. Nominal title patterns in the corpus

Patterns	LUT84	GUN82	ZÜR87	EIN80	DNT99	HOF90	SCO92
NP	11,1 %	23,0%	7,1 %	7,8 %	33,3%	23,7%	28,0%
NP+Gen	46,4%	24,0%	39,9%	38,8%	33,3%	9,2%	26,0%
NP+Adv	28,2%	38,9%	34,8%	43,0%	33,4%	42,1 %	29,0%
	85,7%	85,9%	81,8%	89,6%	100,0%	75,0%	85,0%

In most translations, the three patterns represent between 85 and 90 per cent of all the nominal titles. The exceptions are HOF90, where the percentage is much lower and allows for a greater variety of other nominal patterns, and DNT99, where the preference of 'conventional' patterns was part of the translators' strategy.

The Communicative Functions of Pericope Titles

The last step is the analysis of title functions. In our previous study we had found out that all titles aim at three essential functions (cf. Nord 1995, 266):

- a) the distinctive function, intended to distinguish the corresponding co-text from other texts;
- b) the metatextual function, pointing to the existence of the co-text and/or providing some metatextual information;
- c) the phatic function, intended to open the communicative channel and prepare the ground for a successful reception.

In the meantime, I have changed my mind with regard to the classification of the second function. Firstly, it should be called *metacommunicative* instead of *metatextual* because it can refer to other factors of the communicative situation apart from the text, and secondly, it should be regarded as a subcategory of the phatic function because metacommunication is precisely a way of making sure that the channel still works. This aspect becomes particularly relevant in the analysis of pericope titles, which also serve to lead the reader's attention from one text section to the next. Therefore, the two essential functions of each pericope title are the distinctive and the phatic, with the phatic function subdivided into contact-opening and contact-preserving functions.

In addition to these basic functions, most titles aim at one or more of the three following optional functions:

- a) the referential function, i.e. the reference to one or more informational aspects of the co-text;
- b) the expressive function, consisting in expressing the sender's attitude or emotions with regard to the object of communication;

- c) the appellative function, intended to directly or indirectly make the receiver react; e.g.
- d) to read or interpret the text in a particular way.

Let us now look at whether, and how, these functions are marked in pericope titles.

The Distinctive Function

The distinctive function may not be as relevant for pericope titles as for book titles, but the reader may be irritated if two or more pericopes have the same or almost the same title. Therefore, the editor or translator should avoid cases such as the following:

Jesus Heals Many People (NIV84: Mt8,14-16 and Mt 15,29-31)/Heilung vieler Kranker (ZÜR87: Mt 14,34-36 and 15,29-31).

Some titles are too general to be distinctive, such as "Jesus wirkt durch Wort und Tat" (HOF90: Mt 4,23-25) [Jesus Works through Words and Deeds]. Such a formulation could serve as title of a large number of pericopes and does not fulfil the identifying function.

The Phatic Function

In pericope titles, the phatic function is responsible for keeping the channel open between the end of one pericope and the beginning of the next. As was mentioned above, metacommunication is a useful means of controlling whether the channel is still working. Metacommunication means communicating about, or commenting on, the communication in process. It is therefore localized on a 'hyper-level' above the level of the co-text. All titles are metacommunicative in the sense that they point to the existence of somebody who wants to communicate and of a text which can be used for communication. Apart from this general metacommunicativity, some titles are explicitly marked as metacommunicative because they refer to the text itself and not to the object the text is about, indicating, for example, the genre (e.g. The *Parable* of..., The *Sermon* on the Mount) or function (e.g. *Teaching* about Prayer, NIV84: Mt 6,5-14) of the text. Metacommunication requires a higher text competence than object communication, both in the sender and in the receiver.

For readers who are not familiar with metacommunication, it may be difficult to distinguish between references to the text and references to the text object, like in the following examples: Teaching about Charity (NIV84: Mt 6,1-4)/Judging Others (NIV84: Mt 7,1-6). The first example is explicitly metacommunicative because it

refers to the function of Jesus' sermon, whereas the second example refers to the topic of what Jesus says. Both titles follow each other rather closely.

In pericope titles, we even find a third kind of metacommunication. Some titles directly or indirectly quote somebody's words, as in "Come to Me and Rest" (NIV 84: Mt 11,25-30).

The importance of metacommunication markers can be illustrated by comparing parable titles. Some of them look like object references, e.g. "Das Senfkorn" [*The mustard seed*], "Der Sauerteig" [*The yeast*] (SCO92: Mt 13,31-32.33-35), or "Der versteckte Schatz und die Perle" [*The hidden treasure and the pearl*] (GUN82: Mt 13,44-46, referring even to two different parables). Therefore, they may easily be misunderstood as referring to a narration, like "The Return of the Evil Spirit" (NIV84: Mt 12,43-45) or "Der letzte Besuch in Nazareth" [*The last visit to Nazareth*] (SCO92, Mt 13,53-58). An explicit indication of the genre, like in *The parable of the mustard seed* would make clear that the text is "a story told in the story".

It might be criticized that explicitly metacommunicative titles may be rather monotonous. But since the phatic function relies mainly on the conventionality of forms, this can also be an advantage. If there are no general conventions for pericope titles, as we have seen above, an individual translation may form its own convention, using as little formal variation as possible. This makes reception easier because it saves text-processing efforts.

The Referential Function

One of the general functions of pericope titles is to inform about the contents of the passage in question. If we set out from the hypothesis that the gospels are a kind of biography (cf. Frickenschmidt 1997), Jesus' life and suffering can be regarded as the central object of reference. In this case, narrativity would be one of the main intended functions of the text. Consequently, one of the main functions of pericope titles would be the reference to the object of the narration, including descriptions of situations and relationships between characters and the like.

A more traditional approach holds the view that the gospels represent the theological principles of Christianism. This approach becomes evident in titles summarizing the theological interpretation of the narration and which therefore cannot be regarded as purely referential. The following examples illustrate the contrast between interpretative and narrative titles.

Mt 1,1-17: Jesus, das Ziel der Geschichte Israels [Jesus, the aim of Israel's history] (GUN82) vs. The Ancestors of Jesus Christ (NIV84)

Mt 10,26b-33: Menschenfurcht und Gottesfurcht [Fear of men and fear of God] (LUT84) vs. Whom to Fear (NIV84)

Mt 5,21-26: Die neue Gerechtigkeit [*The new justice*] (HOF90) vs. Teaching about Anger (NIV84)

Mt 5,27-30: Kampf gegen die Sünde [Fighting against sin] (HOF90) vs. Teaching about Adultery (NIV82)

Another important aspect of the referential function is coherence. Changing the implicit subject or sender of the title may put coherence at a risk, as in the following successive titles from HOF90, Mt 2,16ff.:

Jesus soll getötet werden [Jesus is to be killed] – implicit subject: Herod;

Die Rückkehr aus Ägypten [*The return from Egypt*] – implicit subject: Joseph and his family;

Ändert euch, Gottes Herrschaft kommt! [*Turn from your sins, God's kingdom is near*!] – implicit speaker: John the Baptist;

Gott bekennt sich zu seinem Sohn [God stands by his son] – implicit speaker: some outside "observer" of Jesus' baptism;

Wenn du Gottes Sohn bist, beweise es! [If you are God's son, prove it!] – implicit speakers: the Pharisees.

The Expressive Function

Since the pericope titles do not belong to the original text but have been added by later editors and translators, an expressive function cannot relate to the sender's attitude or emotions but only to those of the translator or editor. Translators are not supposed to express their own opinions in their translation. However, there are quite a number of pericope titles marked as expressive, and in this case we may assume that their true intention is to suggest a certain evaluation to the reader, thus guiding the receiver's interpretation, as in the following example: "Herodes ermordet unschuldige Kinder" [Herod murders innocent children] (SCO92: Mt 2,16-18), as opposed to the more neutral title NIV84 uses for the same passage: "The Killing of the Children".

The same principle applies to the titles of Lk 16,1-8, quoted above. German translations offer the following titles for this pericope:

- 1) Vom unehrlichen Verwalter [Of the dishonest manager] (LUT84)
- 2) Der untreue Verwalter [The unfaithful manager] (GUN82)

- 3) Der durchtriebene Verwalter [The sly manager] (HOF90)
- 4) Gleichnis vom ungerechten Verwalter [*The parable of the unjust manager*] (ALL57, ELB85, RÖS38)
- 5) Gleichnis vom ungerechten Haushalter [*The parable of the unjust housekeeper*] (LUT08, ZÜR87)
- 6) Das Gleichnis vom klugen Verwalter [The parable of the wise manager] (EIN80)
- 7) Jesus erzählt das Gleichnis vom lebenstüchtigen Verwalter [Jesus tells the parable of the manager who was fit for life] (DNT99)

A title like "The parable of the housekeeper" would be purely referential. However, a characterization of the housekeeper or manager as *dishonest*, *unfaithful*, *sly* or *unjust* suggests a negative evaluation, whereas *wise* or *fit for life* refers to positive values. The combination of the negative evaluation with a positive commentary ("The Lord commended his behaviour", which means that he considered it "worthy of praise") seems rather surprising or even incoherent, whereas the positive evaluation in the title makes the reader reflect, from the start, on the meaning of the parable.

The Appellative Function

If pericope titles are intended to "guide" the reader's reception, as we read in the preface of SCO92, this intention can be regarded as indirectly appellative in the sense of suggesting a particular interpretation, as we have shown in the previous section.

Another (indirectly) appellative aspect is intertextuality, which, in the case of biblical texts, can also support comprehension. For a reader who is familiar with the respective canonical bible translation used in Church, certain formulations almost automatically evoke a particular text. Looking at our corpus, we find that all German translations present a number of allusions to LUT84, which is the version normally used in Protestant services today. It is also well known in Catholic circles. The following table shows the percentage of allusions to Luther's translation in the Gospel of Matthew. As we might have expected, the translations influenced by anglophone models show fewer intertextual relations than the others. Obviously, GUN82 also follows the anglophone model, although there is no explicit indication of it anywhere in the book, except for the title (*Gute Nachricht Bibel – Good News Bible*)

Table 4. Intertextual relations with Luther's translation

LUT84	GUN82	ZÜR87	EIN80	DNT99	HOF90	SCO92
Intertextuality	4,3%	22,6%	18,0%	14,9%	2,1%	4,0%

Apart from indirect appellativity, we also find traces of direct appellativity, which, in this case, might be called persuasive or "missionary". Some titles are so persuasive (and, at the same time, so little related to the pericope in question) that they sound like advertising slogans. They are particularly frequent in HOF90 and SCO92. Again, the appellative examples are contrasted with referential ones.

- Mt 16,5-12: Schlimmer als Hunger [Worse than hunger] (HOF90) vs. The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees (NIV84)
- Mt 20,1-16: Die Arbeiter im Weinberg: Gott rechnet anders [The workers in the vineyard: God's calculation is different] (HOF90) vs. The Workers in the Vineyard (NIV84)
- Mt 5,27-32: Lust, Ehebruch und Ehescheidung [Lust, Adultery and Divorce] (SCO92) vs. Teaching about Adultery (NIV84)
- Mt 5,33-37: Wahrheit auch in kleinen Dingen [Truth also in small things] (HOF90); Meineid und Rache verboten [False vows and revenge prohibited] (SCO92) vs. Teaching about Vows/Teaching about Revenge (NIV84)
- Mt 9,35-38: Hilflose Menschen Gottes Ernte [Helpless people God's harvest] (HOF90) vs. Jesus has pity for the people (NIV84)

Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to give priority to a descriptive approach. Nevertheless, my own attitude with regard to the functions of pericope titles may have shown through from time to time. Personally, I think that the main function of pericope titles (unlike that of book titles, for example, where the publisher may have a legitimate interest in selling the book!) should be to help the audience, not to manipulate them. Since pericope titles are not part of the original text but additions of later editors and translators, their aim is to make the reception of texts produced in a rather distant culture easier by structuring them. Pericope titles are signposts guiding the reader through the texts, cautiously leading laypeople to an adequate interpretation which would otherwise require the expertise of a theologian. But they should not try to take centre stage or to outdo the texts.

This is the theory, a theory of unpretentious, narrative-referential, consistent and coherent pericope titles which take account of the different levels of communication and create their own conventions. As always, practice does not follow theory in all respects. Readers of HOF90 and SCO92 tell me that they like reading these translations and feel they understand them much better than the more old-fashioned ones. Readers of DNT99 tell us similar things – and since DNT99 follows almost the opposite strategy, one cannot really trust the judgment of the naïve reader.

Anyway, to be honest: After studying pericope titles according to a descriptive and, at the same time, functional perspective, I had to correct some of the headings "intuitively" formulated for DNT99, which then was still in the proof-reading stage, to make them consistent with the theory and strategy presented in this paper.

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