Contrastive linguistics

The practice of comparing languages has a long tradition in linguistic scholarship and stretches back into antiquity. It reached its zenith in the development of Indo-European studies in the nineteenth century when languages were compared with a view to determining their exact genetic relationships and to reconstructing the proto-language from which the attested languages of a family derived. This branch of linguistics is called comparative philology or often simply Indo-European studies because of the concern with the languages of this major family.

In the twentieth century, with the emphasis of structuralism on the synchronic aspects of language, those linguists interested in comparing languages evolved a new kind of discipline in which the structures of two present-day languages were compared. Here the goals were quite different. It was not the reconstruction of a proto-language which was the concern but usually a more immediate aim like improving instruction in one of the languages examined. This was the birth of the discipline which is now termed contrastive linguistics.

The main differences between this direction in linguistics and that of Indo-European studies can be shown by listing the features of contrastive linguistics in the form of a table.

Contrastive linguistics is

1) synchronically oriented
2) not concerned with genetic similarities between languages
3) usually involved in the comparison of only two languages
4) normally bound to a particular linguistic theory
5) divided into applied and theoretical sections

The last characteristic listed above has meant that contrastive studies either have no immediate practical goal - in which case they are termed theoretical studies - or they do have such a direct aim in which case one speaks of applied contrastive linguistics. The applied section could for example be concerned with second language learning where attempts are made at predicting difficulties (interference) which speakers of a foreign language may have. The theoretical section could for instance be involved with comparing the structures of two languages which are geographically in contact with each other and consider the likelihood of borrowing between the two.

The concern of the remainder of this paper will be with the applied area of contrastive linguistics with the specific intention of illuminating the differences and similarities between English and German in order to heighten German students’ awareness of the mistakes they are likely to make, given their background language. With this awareness it is hoped that the number and frequency of errors in the foreign language can be reduced.
Types of interference

At the centre of applied contrastive linguistics is the notion of transfer. This refers to the fact that speakers of a language A are likely to transfer structural features of their native language when learning a second language B. In principle this transfer can be positive or negative. For instance both English and German have phonemic distinctions in vowel length (English *bit* : *beat*; German *bitten* : *bieten*) so that when a German, but not a Greek or Pole for instance, speaks English he/she has no difficulty with maintaining the distinctions in vowel length. Here the linguist speaks of positive transfer. Normally this type goes unnoticed as the result is always acceptable in the foreign language.

Negative transfer is the type which presents difficulties for the learner. It is more commonly known as interference. By this is meant the transfer of some structure or structural element from one language to another where it is ungrammatical. The languages in question are usually the source and target languages in a second language learning situation but could also be two languages which were in contact in some historical period or indeed are still so at the present time.

In second language acquisition, negative transfer cannot be made responsible for all types of errors in a target language. Furthermore the danger of interference is greatest where the two languages in question are most similar in structure. In such instances the transfer of structures is easiest, i.e. a one-to-one correspondence can be quickly established between the source and the target. Contrariwise if some category does not exist in the target language then it is unlikely to be transferred as this would be tantamount to creating it in the target. An essential feature of interference is that the incorrect structure in the second language be understood by speakers of the target even though it be wrong.

There are four main types of interference discussed below. This division can be used by students to classify the many practical examples given in the remainder of this chapter. Note that these phenomena apply to both first and second language acquisition. In the case of the former one does not however refer to them as interference as children do not acquire their first language against the background of some other language.

1) **Substitution** At any stage in language acquisition a learner may use an already acquired element for one which he does not yet possess. The clearest examples of this are to be found in phonology. For example in first language acquisition sounds which have been acquired are used for those not yet acquired: [w] for [r] in English as in *wein* (*rain*). In second language acquisition similar cases can be observed, e.g. the use of [k] by English speakers of German initially instead of [x] as in *Buch* [bu:k] for [bu:x].

2) **Over- and under-differentiation** In early language acquisition clause types are under-differentiated. Thus parataxis is used instead of hypotaxis, i.e. before the latter establishes itself formally.

Over-differentiation is unlikely with natural language acquisition but is common with controlled second language acquisition. For example the use of several different verbs by English speakers of German where the latter would have *machen*, or the use of a formal future where the present tense is more common, e.g. *Morgen werde ich nach Hamburg fahren*. In the reverse case one has the overdistinction of *drive* and *go* in English by German speakers on the basis of the distinction between *fahren* and *gehen* in German. Another instance of this phenomenon would be where Germans use *calendar* in English for both *Kalender* in the sense of a print-out of the months of the year and a *planer* for a year in the form of a small book which is *diary* in English (this is also the word for German *Tagebuch*).
3) **Over-indulgence and under-representation**

a) OVER-INDULGENCE This can only be ascertained with certainty by statistical studies. But typical areas for it in L1 would be ‘yes’ for affirmation where adults would have many variants, ‘sure’, ‘certainly’, ‘of course’, ‘definitely’, ‘by all means’. Over-indulgence is very common with children as they have a restricted range of synonyms. Examples from second language acquisition abound. Just think of the structures which learners use repeatedly in the foreign language because they do not have a wide-enough range of alternatives.

b) UNDER-REPRESENTATION This is of course the reverse of over-indulgence so that each example is by implication one of over-indulgence as well. Under-representation in first language acquisition does not imply lack of cognitive development. Thus if a child cannot or does not use temporal adverbs (particularly relational ones) it does not mean that he/she has no notion of time but that he/she has not the linguistic category ‘temporal adverb’ at his/her disposal. To that extent his/her grammar is simpler. Note also that he will not use the present perfect either and may, when he adds adverbs to his/her grammar, retain the simple present for some time. Thus one has a case of asynchronisation in the addition/expansion of certain categories.

4) OVER-GENERALISATION This is very common with children as they acquire irregular morphological and syntactical forms at a later stage. A classic example is the use of weak verb endings with strong verbs: *Mamma comed home*, or the lack of suppletive forms: *Daddy goed away*. Overgeneralisation of this kind is untypical of adult L2 speech. But the phenomenon is nonetheless known in this area as well. Consider such instances as the use of *gehen* by English speakers to refer not just to walking as in cases like *Gestern bin ich nach Hamburg gegangen.* (intended: *gefahren*).

**INTERFERENCE AND PRODUCTIVE PROCESSES** It is important to stress that interference is not the source of all mistakes which learners make in a foreign language. A frequent further source is the misapplication of a productive process as in the sentence *Maurice is a good cooker*. Here the mistake results from an overgeneralisation of the productive morpheme *-er*. Transfer should be positive in this case, producing *cook* from *Koch*.

**Contrastive morphology**

1) **COMPARATIVE FORMS OF ADJECTIVES** In English *-er* is only possible with disyllabic words and then only with the more common Germanic words of the lexicon, e.g. *perfect*, but not *perfecter*.

2) **CASE SYSTEM IN ENGLISH** This consists of two types, an unmarked and a marked one, which is traditionally termed the ‘genitive’, and formed by adding /s, z, iz/ to a noun base. For the pronominal system the same two-way distinction exists which is semantically distinguished by the functions of direct and indirect object. Note that the terms ‘accusative’ and ‘dative’ are unsuitable as these inflectional categories do not exist in English.

Note that English compensates for the loss of former cases by the more rigid use of word order which is freer in German with its fourway case system.
3) TENSE SYSTEM In both English and German there exists a two-way distinction among verb forms which is inherited from Germanic: the present and the past. Further tenses are formed in both languages by analytical means, i.e. by using an auxiliary verb like will/shall in English or werden in German.

   Note that in both languages a form of the present can be used for future reference. However, in German the present is the unmarked future and the compound form with werden is only used for indefinite or distant future. In English the future with an appended /l/ (deriving from will or shall) is the unmarked and the form with the present continuous is employed to indicate a definite near future.

   Morgen fahre ich nach Hause.
   Sie wird ihr Examen sicherlich demnächst machen.
   Mary is driving to Munich tomorrow.
   Mary will do her exams next year.

3a) USE OF SUBJUNCTIVE In English this is analytical and in German frequently synthetic. Germans may thus tend to use the simple past as an equivalent to the subjunctive as this is synthetic like that in their own language, e.g. If he came instead of If he were to come.

4) ADVERBS These are marked in English and for the most part unmarked in German. The only marked ones in the latter language are those with a special semantic component, such as -weise or -mässig, or those with a monosyllabic stem which ends in -e.

   Er ist möglicherweise nach Hause gefahren.
   Sie ist kleidermässig gut ausgestattet.
   Sie ist gerne in Norddeutschland.

An example of the use of -weise and -mässig is given above. The first of these two endings are very productive in present-day German. Equivalents in English are formed using the ending -wise which is equally common.

   Flatwise Munich is a terrible place.
   The job is interesting moneywise.

   Note. Many adverbs in English have several meanings as in He came round 1) ‘Er kam vorbei’, 2) ‘Er wurde wieder bewusst’. In addition the adverb beside ‘neben’ has an additional form besides with the separate meaning of ‘ausserdem’: The bicycle was beside the house. Besides, he is interested in linguistics.

5) VERB PREFIXES IN GERMAN AND THEIR ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS As a general rule of thumb one can say that the equivalents of German prefixed verbs in English are phrasal verbs, i.e. a lexical verb with a preposition which together have a meaning which is not derivable from the elements which it consists of. For instance the sentence Er vertrug sich mit seiner früheren Freundin would be He made up with his former girlfriend where ‘make up’ is a phrasal verb with an indivisible meaning.

   A danger for the German learner of English lies in prefixes like be- where the prepositional object is shifted to a direct object and the original direct object appears as an instrumental.

Note that many of the verbal prefixes of German have an aspectual value which is not expressed by the standard equivalents in English, to take the example of be- again: in German this implies completeness as in *Sie beklebten die Wand mit Plakaten*.

**Language type and morphology**

There is an aphorism which goes like this: ‘English has a simple grammar and a complex vocabulary and German has a complex grammar and a simple vocabulary’. Like all such adages there is a grain of truth in it and in the present section an attempt is made to determine the size of the grain, so to speak.

But there is one generalisation which does hold for English: because of the slight morphology, congruence between nouns and verbs or between nouns and pronouns tends to be determined semantically rather than formally as in German. Here is an instance where in German the singular would have to be used: *The bank - they don't want to pay : Die Bank - sie will nicht zahlen*. The point here is that the English speaker thinks of the people who work in the bank, whereas the German is guided by the fact that *die Bank* is singular (and feminine).

**AFFIXATION VERSUS LEXICALISATION IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH**

German has a considerably greater number of (native) affixes than English which are used in word-formation. Take the example of ver- which is frequently used as a prefix indicating a reversal of meaning with a verb stem; the English equivalents are different words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mieten - vermieten</td>
<td>rent - let</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaufen - verkaufen</td>
<td>buy - sell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In keeping with its more complex morphology, German frequently has distinctions on this level which are not present in English. Consider the following instances of reflexive verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>move</td>
<td>sich bewegen / etwas bewegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cool</td>
<td>sich abkühlen / etwas kühlen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRANSPARENT COMPOUNDING IN GERMAN**

One finds that by and large the compounds formed in German are transparent in their structure. In English classical loan-words are often found, e.g. *Kehlkopf* vs. larynx; *Magersucht* vs. *anorexia nervosa*; *Fresssucht* vs. *bulimia*. This phenomenon has been labelled *dissociation* as the technical section of English vocabulary is dissociated from the everyday words which are not used in compounding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>snow - sleet</td>
<td>Schnee - Schneeregen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cup - saucer</td>
<td>Tasse - Untertasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the height of the season</td>
<td>in der Hochsaison</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in German official forms of the language (such as that of the administration and bureaucrats) tends to have native compounds for classical loans, e.g. *Lichtpause* vs. *Photokopie*; *Fernsprechapparat* vs. *Telefon*; *fernmündlich* vs. *per/am Telefon*.

This corresponds to the structure of German which favours compounding. The latter means that there are many formations in German which have lexicalised equivalents in English or which must be arrived at by paraphrase.
Students should resist the temptation to translate compounds piece by piece, it rarely works, for instance a German Wassergraben is not a *water ditch* but a *moat*, that is the term is lexicalised in English and transparently compounded in German.

**SEMANTIC EXPLOITATION OF MORPHOLOGY** There are many word pairs which show a difference in meaning which is determined by an inflection attached to the stem. This option is of course only possible in German which shows a variety of endings. *Kotletten* ‘side-burns’ vs. *Kotletts* ‘chops’ is just such a pair. *Graben* and *Grab* is another; the English equivalents are *ditch* and *grave*. Some of these instances rest on the contrast between an older and a newer form, the former being quite restricted in its range, e.g. *Mannen* ‘troop’ vs. *Männer* ‘men’; *Lande* (really just in the phrase *aus deutschen Landen* ‘from the German regions’) vs. *Länder* ‘countries, states’. Equivalent cases in English simply have homophony as in *glasses* ‘Gläser’ and ‘Brille’.

**Differences in the nominal area**

**USE OF GENDER** English only has natural gender with the exception of technical objects which may take the feminine to indicate a particular emotional attachment. A source of interference would be the use of gender by Germans where this is not possible in English.

*She (die Bundesbank) is not going to reduce interest rates*

**FORMATION OF PLURALS** Alternation of voiceless and voiced fricatives exist in English but not in German.

*leaf* - *leaves; thief* - *thieves; knife* - *knives*

In a small number of cases the different historical plural types contrast as in the following: *cloth, cloths* ‘Stofftypen’, *clothes* ‘Kleider’; *brother, brothers* ‘Brüder’, *brethren* ‘geistliche Brüder’.

**NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN SINGULAR AND PLURAL** This is true of only a handful of nouns in English, all of which are animal names: *sheep, deer*. Furthermore a distinction is often made between a singular usage and a plural usage, where the singular is used in a generic sense and the plural refers to several individuals animals: *They shot a lot of duck during their hunting holiday versus Six ducks were swimming in the pond.*
FORMAL PLURALS WITH SINGULAR MEANING This is not something unknown to German but the specific instances may not match in both languages e.g. contents ‘der Inhalt’, means ‘das/die Mittel’.

COUNTABLE NOUNS Once more this is a phenomenon which is common to both languages but the instances are frequently different. The following is a common source of error.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informationen</th>
<th>information</th>
<th>Verwirrungen</th>
<th>confusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

SINGULAR VS PLURAL Occasionally there is a semantic difference between the use of a noun in the singular and that in the plural. An instance of this is scale versus scales. The singular noun means ‘Ausmass’ while the plural means ‘Waage’. These words are quite distinct in meaning. More common are cases where nouns are countable and non-countable in different circumstances (compare this to animal names above): hair means the growth on a human’s head while hairs refers to single strands of this as in He had thick hair in his youth but now has only a few hairs at the back.

DIFFERENCES IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL REQUIREMENTS As might be expected the requirements for number are often different in English and German and it is in these cases that the student must exercise care. Here are some typical examples to illustrate this. The last one shows an idiom in which number differs in between the two languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waage</th>
<th>scales</th>
<th>Pyjama</th>
<th>pyjamas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hose</td>
<td>trousers</td>
<td>Schere</td>
<td>scissors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die Möbel</td>
<td>furniture</td>
<td>Fortschritte machen</td>
<td>make progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USE OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE The essential point for the German student to notice is that the definite article is not used with abstract terms.

She is interested in philosophy
Sie interessiert sich für die Philosophie

However it is found in English if a qualifying clause or element follows.

The philosophy of Kant
The philosophy of late 19th century Germany

USE OF THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE There is less divergence between English and German in the use of the indefinite article. The main area where Germans should take care is with numerals as here there are differences, e.g. hundred is always preceded by an indefinite article and always followed by and.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hundertfünfzig</th>
<th>A hundred and fifty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunderteins</td>
<td>A hundred and one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neunzehnhundertvierundfünfzig</td>
<td>Nineteen hundred and fifty four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PREPOSITIONAL USAGE Unfortunately there is no hard and fast rule for the differences in prepositional in English and German. These can concern nouns which are employed in set phrases like the following

on foot zu Fuss by train mit dem Zug
or they can refer to verbs with prepositions, usually so-called phrasal verbs in English which are lexical units which consist of a base verb and a preposition with a meaning which is not immediately derivable by linking both these elements. The equivalents are nearly always prefixed verbs in German.

- to fill in → ausfüllen
- to stand down → zurücktreten
- to stand out → auffallen
- to stand up → widerstehen
- to put up with → ertragen
- to sleep in → ausschlafen

DON’T FORGET THE CONJUNCTION It is obvious that there are more compounds in German than English and the temptation to produce them in the foreign language is always present for the learner. There are of course cases where this works but there may still be a danger, as in the following case where the conjunction and is necessary between the two colours which qualify the noun.

**Schwarz-Weiss-Film**  **Black and white picture**

### Contrastive lexicology and word-formation

A curious feature of second language acquisition is that the recollection of words - technically termed *lexical retrieval* - varies in quality according to many external factors - such as concentration, nervousness, tiredness, etc. - which do not have such an influence on the same process with one’s native language. For instance an English speaker of German once produced *Magensprecher* for *Bauchredner*. Now the word in English is *ventriloquist* - an opaque word for the non-linguist - so that one can assume that the attempted German word was arrived at by combining one of the words for ‘stomach’ with one of the words for ‘speaker’.

This instance shows that second language learners decompose words; connected with this is the habit of translating compounds piece by piece, which can also be observed in a foreign language. Again an instance from second language German can serve to illustrate the phenomenon. The word *Gesichtstuch* for *Waschlappen* was noted with an English speaker. Now the English word is *face cloth* so that the incorrect word just given can be interpreted as an item-for-item translation, unfortunately with the wrong result in German.

### WORD-FORMATION ERRORS

Give the different typologies of German and English it is not surprising that they diverge in the methods of word-formation which they use. In general one can say that German employs compounds, which are usually realised with two nouns, whereas English uses sequences of an adjective and a noun to express the same content. The point to be careful about here is not to use double noun compounds in English if an adjective plus noun is possible.

- Hafenverwaltung  **harbour authority**  (no adjective from ‘harbour’)
- Medizinstudent  **medical student**  (adjective plus noun)

### ROMANCE ELEMENTS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN

Both languages have borrowed copiously from French and other Romance languages in the course of their histories. The borrowings in English are older, stemming mostly from the Middle English period. Those in German are generally recognisable as a largely French pronunciation is retained; furthermore special verb endings are used for Romance and Classical borrowings. An
interesting feature in German is that there are many cases of contrast between English and Romance loan-words which have become semantically differentiated.

\[ \text{schocken : schockieren; Promotion : promotion; relaxieren : relaxen; Model : Modell; Bilanz : Balance.} \]

In English the distinction between Romance words and native Germanic stock is a stylistic one as can be gleaned from the following examples.

\[ \text{freedom : liberty; work : labour; unemployed : jobless.} \]

*Note.* This distinction may be one between different levels within the Romance component of English lexis:

\[ \text{recalcitrant vs. disobedient; retractable vs. difficult.} \]

In some cases the less tangible Romance words may be seen as euphemisms.

\[ \text{steal : expropriate (cf. stehlen/klauen vs. entwenden)} \]

The stylistic device of deliberately choosing a Romance word in English has its equivalent in the nominalisation of verbs in German.

\[ \text{in Erfahrung bringen (erfahren) zur Kenntnis nehmen (sich merken)} \]
\[ \text{zu Ohren kommen (hören) in Erinnerung rufen (erinnern)} \]

Here a supportive verb is used with the nominalised lexical verb. There are however, a few cases where a simple verb is not always possible: *Abbitte tun* but not *abbitten*.

**WORD CLASS INCONGRUENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND GERMAN** Just as speakers search for equivalents to the elements of a compound they also try to find a corresponding word in the foreign language which belongs to the same word class as the one they first think of in their own language. There are unhappily many instances in which this does not work between German and English. The following examples show differences in participial and adjectival usage.

\[ \text{Herr Schneider ist immer sehr konzentriert.} \]
\[ \text{Mr Schneider always concentrates (on his work) very well.} \]
\[ \text{Er starb neunundsiebzigjährig in Berlin} \]
\[ \text{He died in Berlin at the age of seventy nine.} \]
\[ \text{Er hat die Sache eigenhändig durchgezogen.} \]
\[ \text{He completed the matter on his own.} \]

**COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS** Semantic components are elements of meaning which can be recognised in words. These may be relevant for linguistic analysis and differences here can be a cause of interference between English and German. An example of what is meant would be the components [action] and [goal] which plays a role in the contrastive use of the word pair *finden/find* and *suchen/seek* in both languages. The first pair emphasises the goal reached and the second the action typical of a verb. Now in German in requests the [action] component is stressed whereas in English the [goal] component is placed in the foreground.
Lexical gaps and compounding

LEXICAL GAPS IN MODERN ENGLISH These have been largely filled by classical loans in the early modern English period. Because of the compounding morphology of German such adjectival qualifiers are not necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aquatic sport</td>
<td>Wassersport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marine biology</td>
<td>Meeresbiologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equestrian sport</td>
<td>Reitsport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedestrian zone</td>
<td>Fussgängerzone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPOUNDING IN ENGLISH Criteria Compounds are indicated prosodically in English by having stress on the first item of the supposed compound. Level stress usually denotes a syntactic group (though primary stress may be used for topicalisation purposes).

a /dark /room vs. /dark\-\room; a /glass \case vs. a /glass\-\case.

Note that the spelling is irrelevant; compounds usually occur with a hyphen or are written as one word.

a /black\bird vs. /black\bird; /green\house vs. /green\house;
/lhot\house vs. /hot\house

In German a syntactic group consists of an inflected adjective and a noun; compounds are formed by single words.

Eine dunkle Kammer vs. Dunkelkammer

Level-stress is characteristic of copulative compounds in English /learner\-\driver (‘anfänglicher Autofahrer’) and of adjective determinative compounds: /hard\-\boiled; /hand\-\picked. Contrast this with German which shows primary stress.

Productive processes

CONVERSION This is the use of a word from one word class in another without any alteration in form. It is not possible in German as endings are always added to altered word class forms, cf. (Copy)Shop : shoppen. English has some instances of phrasal verbs as nouns, e.g. the ubiquitous takeaway.

package : (to) package anger : (to) anger
shelf : (to) shelf

BACK-FORMATION This is where a verb is derived from a noun. Normally nouns are created from verbs which already exist.

vivisector : (to) vivisect burgler : (to) burgle
brainwashing : (to) brainwash baby-sitter : (to) baby-sit
SUFFIXATION Most suffixes in English are unstressed with the exception of a few such as -ese: Chinese, Japanese, etc. or -ette: kitchen vs. kitchenette; statue vs. statuette.

German uses the ending -isch, the vowel before which is stressed. If the stem ends in a vowel then this may be used, otherwise a stressed /e/ is found: italienisch, chinesisch, but kenjanisch.

Note that adjectives from city names are quite irregular in English: London (no change), Viennese, Glaswegian, Liverpudlian, Mancunian (E Manchester).

LEXICALISED BRANDNAMES IN GERMAN Note that there are two main types. The first refers to a phenomenon which already exists but which by force of habit is always associated with a brandname. The second is where the object is new and derives its name from its inventor or main distributor.

1) einwecken = einmachen (Glasfirma Weck in Bonn)
2) Tesaband = Sellotape (selbstklebender Band)

Note. xerokopieren is probably a loan from English which is not recognised as coming from the American firm Rank Xerox which pioneered the photocopying machine.

BRANDNAMES IN ENGLISH These occur quite frequently, e.g. Hoover the floor (staubsaugen) from the firm Hoover which was once leading in the production of vacuum cleaners.

BLENDING This process is very common in English (typical of an analytic type of language). In German the strict morphology does not allow for this.

work + alcoholic F workaholic
chocoholic, sportaholic, shopaholic

guess + estimate F guestimate

gigantic + enormous F ginormous

chunnel E channel + tunnel; motel E motor + hotel

EXPRESSIVE WORDS These form a curious group in English because they are of no apparent origin: pizazz ‘energy, verve’, gunge ‘sticky, mud-like substance’, zany ‘idiotic, ridiculous’ (possibly from Venetian Italian).

COINAGES These are completely new words, usually names for commercial products. A famous example is Kodak which was invented with the express intention of being pronounceable in the main European languages in more or less the same way.

SEMI-PHONETIC SPELLINGS Deliberate semi-phonetic spellings in names of shops and products are increasingly common in the English-speaking world, above all in America: nitebite (takeaway open late at night), kwik kleen (prompt dry cleaners), xpress (rapid parcel service). These have been termed ‘sensational spellings’ and are becoming increasingly common in situations where little space is available for long words, e.g. on computer displays, signs or on credit cards. Examples are thru (for through), xing (for crossing), hi (for high).
HEADLINESE Headlines in newspapers result in much reduced sentences. Such ellipsis may become a general characteristic but also lead to phrases which are not immediately comprehensible as in the following instance: *Judas kiss killer gang given life*, i.e. ‘the killer gang which gave a Judas kiss to its victim was sentenced to life imprisonment’.

REDUCTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS *Soap* from *soap opera*, *disco* from *discothèque*; older one are *pants* from *pantaloons*; *ad* from *advertisement*, *mag* from *magazine*. *Soccer* from *association football*, *bobby* from *Robert Peel*, the founder of the modern police force in England in the 19th century, *mob* from *mobile vulgus*. This is quite a productive process and can be seen in very recent instances such as the following.

\[
\begin{align*}
decaf & \quad \text{decaffeinated coffee} \\
deli & \quad \text{delicatessen} \\
eco & \quad \text{ecological(ly)} \\
eco-friendly & \quad \text{ecologically friendly} \\
eco-disaster & \quad \text{ecological disaster}
\end{align*}
\]

PRODUCTIVE MORPHEMES 1) -*burger* as in *hamburger*, *beefburger*, *cheeseburger*. 2) -*aholic* as in *alcoholic* (the origin of the use), *workaholic*, *sportaholic* (see blending above). 3) -*ery* as in *upholstery*, *buttery*, *knishery* ‘shop selling baked or fried pastries’ (Yiddish).

BUZZ-WORDS Fashionable words, frequently from certain areas of occupation or interest. Computer terms provide many examples, *RAM*, *ROM*, *floppy*, *hard disk*, *cache*, *internet*.

Ablaut-motivated compounds involve two words which are phonetically identical but for a change in the stem vowel, a common alternation between /i/ and a low or low back vowel /a/ or /ɑ/. *shilly-shally*, *wissy-washy*, *zig-zag*, *flip-flop*.

ACRONYMS Here the letters of the abbreviation are pronounced phonetically, i.e. as if they were a real word, e.g. *NATO* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), *WHO* (World Health Organization), *WASP* (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), *AIDS* (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), *BSE* (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), *MCP* (Male Chauvinist Pig).

INITIALISMS In the case of ‘letter pronunciations’ the name consists of each letter pronounced individually as in *BBC* [/biːbɪːsiː:] (British Broadcasting Company), *BA* [/biːei] (British Airways). There are differences between German and English here: the former has *VIP* as [vip] (an acronym) and the latter has *VIP* as [/viːaipiː] (an initialism); the same applies to *UNO* (United Nations) which is [ˈʊnɔ:] in German (an acronym) and [/juːˈəʊniəntz] in English (an initialism). Bear in mind that initialisms always have level stress.
Contrastive syntax

The greatest source of interference in syntax is the verbal area. German and English show considerable differences here and hence there are many pitfalls for the student when creating English sentences. Complement types Complements are parts of a sentence which follow on a verb and which fulfil the same function as objects. There are different types of complement in both languages and even where types are shared the requirements for individual verbs may vary. For instance, the English verb want takes an infinitive complement whereas its German equivalent wollen demands a clausal complement.

*He wants her to sing a song.*
*Er will, dass sie ein Lied singt.*

Many verbs in German take an infinitive complement with accusative object and the equivalent in English can be a participle construction. Or the English verb may require an infinitive complement but the German one may demand a sentential complement.

*Er sah ihn weglaufen. He saw him running away.*
*He told him to leave. Er sagte, er soll weggehen.*

Sentential complements tend to be rather long so that in some case the equivalent English sentence is rather short.

*Er überlegte sich, ob er nicht weggehen sollte*  
*He considered leaving*
*Sie überlegte sich, ob sie nicht heiraten sollte*  
*She considered marriage*

The above instances can all be put into the broad framework of verb valency. By this is meant the elements which are required to accompany a verb form and the necessary syntactic form which they take. The latter, for example, concerns the type of object of a verb. German very often governs a direct case where English with its relatively weak case system uses prepositions to express grammatical relations. However, if in German there is no case government for a verb, then prepositions are also used, cf. *warten* which is used with *auf* (cf. English *wait for*).

*Kann ich Sie kurz sprechen? Can I speak to you for a moment?*
*Sie beziehen bald das Haus They are moving into the house shortly*
*Sie belegte einen Spanischkurs She took part in a Spanish course*
*Er wurde letzte Woche operiert He was operated on last week*

VERBAL FALSE FRIENDS The verbal area is just as much a source of false friends as is the nominal area. Most of the instances which one can cite are verbs which share a Germanic root or which have a common Romance source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Verb</th>
<th>English Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bekommen</td>
<td><em>‘obtain’</em></td>
<td><em>become</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irritieren</td>
<td><em>‘confuse’</em></td>
<td><em>irritate</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensibilieren</td>
<td>*‘sensitise’</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GERMAN PREFIXES A major difference in verbal morphology between English and German is the large number of verb prefixes in the latter language. Certain prefixes have no equivalents in English, e.g. *bewundern* ‘admire’, *beneiden* ‘envy’.

These prefixes allow the option of contrast with a non-prefixed verb, e.g. *beschimpfen* : *schimpfen* ‘insult’, *beantworten* : *antworten* ‘answer’. In such cases English may have an optional complement: *answer* : *answer s.o.* Another example would be *filmen* and *verfilmen* which in English is rendered as *to film* and *to make a film of*.

Many prefixes in German have more or less fixed meanings which are rendered in English by separate lexemes or paraphrases, e.g. *ver-* which means ‘to end, die, decay’; *verhungern* ‘starve’, *verdurstten* ‘die of thirst’, *verbluten* ‘bleed to death’, *vergehen* ‘decay’, *verwesen* ‘decomposed’ (now only past participle); *er-* meaning ‘to attain something, reach an endpoint’: *erwirken* ‘realise’, *erstreiten* ‘attain by legal means’, *erlangen* ‘obtain’; *ersticken* ‘choke to death’.

ZERO SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS IN GERMAN Empty subjects are ones which only fulfil a syntactic requirement but which have no semantic justification. In English these are almost confined to verbs referring to the weather: *It’s raining heavily*. German has such subjects in a much wider range of situations and students should be careful not to overgeneralise this phenomenon in English.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Es wartet ein Mann auf Sie.} & \quad \text{Ein Mann wartet auf Sie.} \\
\text{A man is waiting for you.} & \quad \text{There is a man waiting for you.} \\
\text{Es besteht kein Zweifel.} & \quad ?\text{There exists no doubt.}
\end{align*}
\]

A semantically empty *es* (dummy subject) can be deleted if an adverbial introduces the sentence. The agreement with the real subject is seen in instances with plural nouns.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Es besteht noch Hoffnung.} & \quad \text{No doubt exists.} \\
\text{Es kommen später drei Männer bei Ihnen vorbei.} & \quad \text{Es waren heute morgen zwei junge Damen hier.}
\end{align*}
\]

Dummy objects (*es*) are also found in German, together with the verb *haben*. This is also found in English on occasions, though again not to the same extent as in German.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Er hat es mit der Arbeit eilig.} & \quad \text{He has it easy in his new job.} \\
\text{Er hat es sicherlich in seiner Position schwierig.} & \quad \text{He has it easy in his new job.} \\
\text{Sie hat es mit den Kindern nicht leicht.} & \quad \text{He has it easy in his new job.} \\
\text{Er hat es einfach in der neuen Stelle.}
\end{align*}
\]

DATIVE SHIFT IN ENGLISH This is a process in English whereby the indirect object of a sentence is positioned before the direct one so that its relative position is the indicator of its sentence function. This does not work with all verbs, however.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{She showed the book to him.} & \quad \text{She showed him the book.} \\
\text{She served the guests the evening meal.} & \quad \text{She served him the evening meal.} \\
\text{She demonstrated the programme to him.} & \quad \text{*She demonstrated him the programme.}
\end{align*}
\]
Furthermore there are verb constructions which only show ‘dative position’, i.e. which do not have the alternative of postposing the indirect object and indicating it with a preposition to.

*They helped a lot to him.
*John made a good husband to her.
?They made a present of it to him.

The permissibility of both types of word order may depend on the kind of verbal complement which occurs. For instance tell only has postposition with a direct object.

She told him the whole story.
She told him to behave himself.
She taught him a new language.

The last sentence corresponds to a double accusative in German. Such sentence types may cause difficulty for English learners of German because they do not conform to the structure of German which usually has two objects in different cases.

Sie lehrte ihn eine neue Sprache. Das kostete ihn ein Vermögen.

ENGLISH PASSIVE AND GERMAN EQUIVALENTS There is of course a passive in German with the auxiliary werden. What is equally frequent is to use the indefinite man and an active voice verb. Note that somebody is not the semantic equivalent of man.

Man ist ihm misträuisch begegnet. Man beschuldigte ihn der Unaufmerksamkeit.
He was treated suspiciously. He was accused of inattentiveness.

Man war ihm am Flughafen begegnet.
He was met at the airport (by the embassy official).

In many passive sentences English allows the original direct object of the sentence to remain in its slot and only shifts the indirect object to subject position. In German this is strictly forbidden.

*Er wurde das Buch gegeben.
*Sie wurde das Geld bezahlt.

Without the direct object some of these passives are acceptable in German, e.g. Sie wurde bezahlt.

PERSONIFICATION OF INANIMATE OBJECTS IN ENGLISH One is dealing here with a phenomenon here which is in tune with the backgrounded morphology of English. It allows non-animate subjects which in German are forbidden on formal grounds.

The letter demands that you respond.
The law demands that you comply.
The door opens easily. Die Tür lässt sich leicht öffnen.
The wind broke the window. ?Der Wind hat das Fenster gebrochen.
The storm uprooted many trees. Der Sturm entwurzelte viele Bäume.

SUBJECTIVISATION OF INSTRUMENTAL AND LOCATIVE OBJECTS Again this is a feature of English syntax which can be traced back to the flexible morphology which
allows the shifting of indirect objects into subject position, usually for topicalisation purposes.

Money can’t buy you happiness.
Mit Geld kann man sich kein Glück kaufen.
The key opened the door.
Mit dem Schlüssel liess sich die Tür öffnen.
The Midlands report bad snow this morning.
Aus den Midlands wird heftiger Schneefall gemeldet.
The hotel accommodates 200 guests.
Das Hotel fasst 200 Gäste. (?)

PREPOSITION VS. NO PREPOSITION Cases where no preposition is used are tricky as the tendency is for the speaker to transfer this null state to the foreign language where it is not permissible. This applies particularly to phrases involving time in German.

Vielen Dank, dass Sie Lufthansa geflogen sind
*Thank you that you flew Lufthansa
Thank you for flying with Lufthansa
He moved to Munich in 1980. He departed on Friday.

PREPOSITIONAL DISTINCTIONS Finally one should mention that English may make distinctions by employing different prepositions with one and the same noun. A case in point is the noun time as seen in the following examples.

in time rechtzeitig on time zur rechten Zeit
Contrastive semantics

ENGLISH VS. LATINATE TERMS For the advanced learner of English the chief stumbling block which remains is deciding on when to use Latinate and when native words in English. The guidelines which exist are only approximate. It is true that Latinate words are more common in technical or stylistically elevated discourse, however, determining when the discourse is right for their use is a matter which can only be mastered by constant exposure to English usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>fat</th>
<th>obese</th>
<th>drunk</th>
<th>inebriated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dead</td>
<td>deceased</td>
<td>very thin</td>
<td>emaciated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are various occasions when the items in the right-hand column above would be used. For instance to describe a patient as ‘fat’ might well be regarded as too personal; to talk of a near relative of one’s interlocutor as ‘dead’ rather than ‘deceased’ might be deemed disrespectful or insensitive. Here, as in so many areas, practice makes perfect.

UNUSUALNESS OF ENGLISH WORDS The difficulties in English are compounded by the fact that, although a word may exist as an equivalent for a German word, it still may not be common in everyday usage. A typical example of this is the term sibling which is an exact translation of German Geschwister. However, it is really only common in the phrase sibling rivalry ‘competition between brothers and sisters’. Otherwise in English one speaks of ‘brothers and sisters’ and in a sentence like She has four brothers and sisters the context usually decides whether this means ‘four brothers and four sisters’ or ‘four in all’.

DIFFERENCES ON AN ARCHAIC - MODERN AXIS Not all equivalents which the student may hit on are appropriate in the foreign language because some may be archaic. For instance the word verdammt as an augmentative in German is common but it is somewhat antiquated in English. Sie haben verdammt gut gespielt vs. They played damned well.

It is important for students to grasp how terms are located on this axis. For instance in German the word Bach is commonly used. English has the word stream. This is rather small and although the term brook does exist it is antiquated and should be used with caution.

Furthermore formal equivalents to German words may exist in set phrases in English but no longer be common words. For instance the root behind German wachsen can be seen in the English expressions wax and wane, to wax lyrical but the normal word is to grow.

DIFFERENCES ON A COLLOQUIAL - VULGAR AXIS There are occasions where a formal equivalent is more forceful in the target language and caution should be exercised here. For example the German verb stinken is frequent in colloquial language whereas English stink is definitely vulgar.

Hier stinkt’s nach Knoblauch. It’s smells (*stinks) of garlic here.

WORDS WITH DIFFERING RANGE Semantic range is something which is determined by language use and so it is not surprising to find that the range of similar words in two languages is not the same. In the case of words which are common Romance borrowings there is a temptation to treat them as if the range were the same. Take as an example the
word *perfect* which in English and German has the main meaning of ‘fully satisfactory, as good as possible’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A perfect coup</th>
<th>Ein perfekter Streich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The meal was perfect</td>
<td>Das Essen war perfekt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an additional meaning in German which derives from Latin, i.e. ‘complete’ which does not exist in English.

\[\text{Die Koalition ist jetzt perfekt.} \quad (= \text{‘abgeschlossen’})\]

\[\text{The coalition has been finalised.}\]

Native German words also show such differences in range, some of which can be tricky to deal with in the foreign language. For instance the word *girlfriend* in English has the meaning of sexual partner, whereas German *Freundin* has both this meaning and a general one of ‘female friend’ which is not covered by the English term.

The word *blond* has a different range in English and German. In the latter it refers to many shades which in English would be *brown*. What an Englishman calls *blond hair* would be referred to as *hellblondes Haar* in German; there is no augmentative for *blond* in English.

The area of food and its preparation reveals further differences between the two languages. In German *kochen* is used for solids and liquids; in English *cook* refers to solid materials and *boil* to liquids. The German *durchziehen* refers to the maturation of food. There is no single equivalent in English; instead one must choose from a variety of verbs *mature, settle, develop flavour*. For eating itself German has *fressen* and *essen* which refer to animals and humans respectively. English only has *eat*. Flouting in German is found occasionally for stylistic purposes: *Friss nicht so schnell*. In English a separate verb is used: *Don’t gulp your food so quickly*.

Animate vs. inanimate distinctions are found in English and not in German with the verbs *swim* vs. *float* on the one hand and *schwimmen* vs. *treiben* on the other. German can use either verb for objects whereas English must use *float* and *swim* for inanimate and animate objects respectively.

An artificial vs. natural distinction is seen in the word pair *canal* and *channel* in English. These correspond to one word in German *Kanal* so that care must be taken in English to observe the distinction.

The natural vs. artificial distinction is found in many other cases in both English and German, as with *pond, Tümpel* vs. *pool, Teich*. False friends Differences in range are not normally too serious in their consequences for the foreign language learner, but divergent meaning is a source of major mistakes, in particular where a word in the native language of the learner sounds similar to one in the foreign language. This type of case is traditionally termed *false friend*. Below a brief selection of such instances is offered to give an impression of the scope of the phenomenon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aktuell</th>
<th>‘topical’</th>
<th>actual</th>
<th>‘tatsächlich’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>‘one room flat’</td>
<td>apartment</td>
<td>‘Wohnung’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>‘circus artist’</td>
<td>artist</td>
<td>‘Künstler’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brieftasche</td>
<td>‘wallet’</td>
<td>briefcase</td>
<td>‘Koffer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dumm</td>
<td>‘stupid’</td>
<td>dumb</td>
<td>‘stumm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durchsegeln</td>
<td>‘fail an exam’</td>
<td>sail through</td>
<td>‘einfach bestehen’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feudal</td>
<td>‘luxurious’</td>
<td>feudal</td>
<td>‘mittelalt. Gesellschaft’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixieren</td>
<td>‘stare’</td>
<td>fix</td>
<td>‘reparieren’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift</td>
<td>‘poison’</td>
<td>gift</td>
<td>‘Geschenk’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among loan-words the phenomenon of false friends has an additional twist to it in German in that many words from English were borrowed with a shifted meaning.

There are also cases of meanings which evolved on words being adopted into German. The latter fact is important as it highlights a feature of German which is quite unique: the language has often been creative in its manipulation of loan material and formed words which simply do not exist in English. For instance the word dressman is an entirely German word as is smoking. The equivalent terms are (British English) dinner jacket and (American English) tuxedo for the latter and dandy for the former. The words Pullunder, Twens does not exist in English either but show productive word-formations based on real words: Pullover F Pullunder; Teens F Twens.

**ONE-TO-MANY EQUIVALENTS (GERMAN - ENGLISH)** Somewhat different from false friends are those instances where one word in German has more than one equivalent in English. In some of these cases one of the equivalents is formally similar to the German word as with Note which can mean (exam) mark or music note, ten-pound note, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German meaning</th>
<th>English original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glücklich</td>
<td>happy, lucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>bank, bench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontrolle</td>
<td>check, control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schatten</td>
<td>shade, shadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bemerken</td>
<td>notice, remark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paar</td>
<td>pair, couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himmel</td>
<td>sky, heaven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ONE-TO-MANY (ENGLISH - GERMAN)** The reverse situation where there are more equivalents in German also exists and can be seen from the following few examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English meaning</th>
<th>German equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dress</td>
<td>Kleidung, Kleid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>river</td>
<td>Strom, Fluss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Idioms and collocations**

LEXICALISED PHRASES Foreign speakers should take care not just to determine lexical equivalents in principle but also to bear in mind the collocations which words enter into, in both the native and target language. Here is a simple example of what is meant: krönend can be taken to mean crowning in English. However, the collocations in which these words occur, differ in both languages, particularly if the word occurs in a compound form in German.
BINOMIALS A common feature of German is a type of expression which consists of two nouns or adjectives which occur in a fixed order and which are mostly alliterating. This expression is termed a binomial (from two nouns) and usually has a figurative sense.

Über Stock und Stein
Von Luft und Liebe leben
klipp und klar
dick und dünn
nagelneu
Hand und Fuss haben

Mit Kind und Kegel
Ross und Reiter nennen
hü und hott
hoch und heilig
Wald und Wiese
Haken und Õsen

Such structures are not as common in English. Those which do occur may be alliterating or not, e.g. As different as chalk and cheese but Under lock and key.

IDIOMS WHICH ARE THE SAME There are a small number of idioms which are identical in English and German. A common origin can be postulated for some, like the first one below, where the image stems from the domestic sphere. In the case of the second this may be the result of transfer from German emigrants in the United States. The third instance may simply be the outcome of a parallel development.

Too many cooks spoil the broth
The devil is in the detail (American English, German influence?)
A hard nut Eine harte Nuss

IDIOMS WHICH ARE NOT QUITE THE SAME Far more common is the situation where idioms are similar in their content but slightly different in their form. For instance the notion of ‘2 for 1’ is present in both German and English but the imagery diverges somewhat. The divergence may be traceable to differences in gesture in English and German as with the second example below.

Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen
To kill two birds with one stone

Jemandem die Daumen drücken
To keep your fingers crossed (for someone)

Den Stein ins Rollen bringen
To get the ball rolling

Er sieht aus als könnte er kein Wässerchen trüben
Butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth
Wie ein Elefant im Porzellanladen
Like a bull in a china shop

Viele Hände schaffen schnell ein Ende
Many hands make light work
Greenhouse (People in greenhouses should not throw stones)  
Glashaus (Wer im Glashaus sitzt...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ups and downs</td>
<td>Höhen und Tiefen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be all ears</td>
<td>Ganz Ohr sein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pain in the neck</td>
<td>Eine Nervensäge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bag of nerves</td>
<td>Nervenbündel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the blue</td>
<td>Aus heiterem Himmel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grüne Hände</td>
<td>green fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schnee von gestern</td>
<td>Water under the bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eulen nach Athen tragen</td>
<td>to bring coals to Newcastle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COLLOCATIONS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN This causes a problem with those words which are the same in basic meaning in both languages but different in the collocations they occur in; two illustrations can be offered with the words ignorant and collaborate.

1a) He is ignorant of this book.  
He is an ignoramus.  
What ignorant behaviour!

1b) Er weiss nichts von diesem Buch.  
Er ist ein Ignorant.  
Was für ignorantes Verhalten!

2a) He collaborated with her on the new book.  
He collaborated with the enemy during the war.

2b) Er arbeitete mit ihr am neuen Buch zusammen.  
Er kollaborierte mit dem Feind während des Krieges.

The difficulty for the language learner with words such as those just discussed is that the dictionary does not always give enough information on usage. Take for instance the word pair deep vs. shallow in English. It would appear at first sight that German has two equivalents tief vs. seicht. It turns out though that German prefers untief as a neutral equivalent of tief: Das Wasser ist untief an der Stelle. Seicht is possible but it is more common in the figurative sense of ‘insipid’ as in seichte Unterhaltung ‘insipid entertainment’. Nor is it used as the equivalent to English shallow in a figurative sense. Here German prefers oberflächlich as in the following examples.

He is very shallow.  
Er ist sehr oberflächlich.

The distinction between literal and figurative meanings is one which students should be constantly aware of. Not simply because it is an essential aspect of language use but because there are many differences between English and German in this respect. For instance adjectives or prepositional complements often differ in the elements they use for figurative usage. In English the word heavy is the equivalent to German stark in a figurative sense as can be seen in the following examples.

ein starker Raucher  
a heavy smoker  
starker Regen heavy rain

ein Mann von Gewicht  
a man of substance

RHYME-MOTIVATED COMPOUNDS These are very common in present-day English.
Examples are flower-power, brain-drain, culture-vulture, legal eagle, nitty-gritty, pelvic politics, dream team, lunch bunch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cardboard city</td>
<td>Obdachlosensiedlung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal eagle</td>
<td>Staranwalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pelvic politics</td>
<td>Politik, die sich mit Sexualangelenheiten beschäftigt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>castle Catholic</td>
<td>Katholiken, die sich in Irland wie Protestanten benehmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>road rage</td>
<td>Ungehobeltes Verhalten im Strassenverkehr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>axe tax</td>
<td>Nieder mit der Einkommensteuer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop till you drop</td>
<td>Einkaufen, bis man nicht mehr kann!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publish or perish</td>
<td>Veröffentlichen oder untergehen!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

German tends to favour alliteration, which is found in many established phrases such as Ross und Reiter nennen, mit Kind und Kegel, über Stock und Stein.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS This is a curious phenomenon which has evolved in public life, particularly in the United States in the last decade or so. Basically it requires that, for any expression which is deemed politically or socially sensitive, a replacement must be found which is a kind of intangible paraphrase which is less direct, less straightforward and ultimately exonerates the user of the phrase from any responsibility which might otherwise be attached to its use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal phrase</th>
<th>‘PC’ phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>old age pensioners</td>
<td>senior citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prison</td>
<td>correctional facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>visually impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubbish collector</td>
<td>sanitary engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caught lying</td>
<td>factually challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lie</td>
<td>credibility gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air bombing</td>
<td>air support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shot down by own forces</td>
<td>victim of friendly fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contrastive pragmatics

USE OF DISCOURSE PARTICLES These are small grammatical elements which are used in specific situations in conversations and which are intended to attain a certain pragmatic effect. Here are a few examples to illustrate what is meant.

1)     Wir können heute abend hinfahren, oder?
       We could go there this evening, couldn’t we?

2)     Du willst nicht etwa hinfahren, oder?
       You’re not going to drive there, are you?

3)     Meinetwegen könnte er den Wagen saubermachen.
       Zum Beispiel!
       He could clean the car so he could.
       You bet he could! / Sure he could!

THIRD PERSON REFERENCE Referring to a third person in a conversation who is present by means of a pronoun, he/she, is regarded as very impolite in English but is quite acceptable in German. In English one must refer to the person in question by his/her name when present.

EXCLAMATIONS Such a linguistically peripheral area as this nonetheless shows systematic differences between German and English. For instance two exclamations, which express pain and surprise, occur frequently in both languages and are formally different.

   Aua!        Ouch! /aut$/
   Hoppla!    Whoops(-a-daisy)! /wups (q deizi)/

CONVERSATION Last but not least one should mention that the manner in which Germans and English speakers carry out conversation differs not insignificantly. Two things should be remembered by Germans when interacting with English speakers: (i) remember to always say ‘please’ when making a request and to say ‘thankyou’ when you have received what you requested, (ii) when you are talking to someone make sure that you do not only talk about yourself, ask to the other person how he/she is doing, what’s news, what have he/she has done recently, etc. (it is quite inacceptable in English to only talk about yourself). These matters depend, of course, on individuals but in general Germans tend not to observe (i) and (ii) to the same extent. If you do not, then your English friends may think you are somewhat ‘impolite’ or ‘unfriendly’ or lack social skills (without necessarily being able to put their finger on what it is that makes them think so).