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## “We have been able to increase our export quota again” False friends and other semantic interlinguistic pitfalls in business English and French

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Set at the crossroads of contrastive and cognitive linguistics, the study of false friends and other types of pitfalls has equally strong links to the structures of the two or more languages involved and the cognitive processes taking place in the minds of learners, where the languages meet. This type of research is all about generating a positive feedback loop between the learning experience of a specific learner group and the structure and lexicon of their target and source languages<sup>1</sup>, i.e. between an applied didactic emphasis and a more theoretical analysis of learning situation and content. This combined approach seems particularly promising in the acquisition of the lexicon in general language courses, but even more so in LSP teaching and learning, where terminology plays a key role.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, its virtues have hardly ever been applied to LSP-studies.<sup>3</sup>

This article is meant as a contribution to the study of false friends and other pitfalls in advanced business English and French courses for learners with German as source language. Our primary emphasis is on business English, on the basis of which the categories of our classification scheme will be exemplified. We additionally include a number of French examples to show that the phenomena in question occur in other languages as well and do not represent a special feature of the interlanguage of learners of English. There are, however, a few categories that seem to be specific to the interlanguage of learners of French (e.g. false friends and other problems triggered by similarities with English expressions, see sections 1. and 2.1.2.).

We focus mainly on terminology, taking into account both language production and comprehension, with the latter emphasis representing a new approach: existing studies in this field investigate mainly problems that occur in text production. But this focus on technical terminology is not exclusive. Our analysis also pays attention to another – by now generally accepted – feature of LSPs, viz. the body of non-technical vocabulary characteristic of a given LSP style, which includes for example expressions denoting cause and effect or quantitative notions, but also metalinguistic means of expression such as *see above* etc. (see also below, part 3).<sup>4</sup>

The items included for analysis are the result of decades of correcting student papers at the University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna. However, this is not a classic error analysis study, as we are not primarily interested in errors as such but in the inter- and intralinguistic contrasting structures that have proved to be sources of recurrent problems in generation after generation of learners.<sup>5</sup>

A few years ago, one of the authors of this paper wrote an article entitled “Heureusement que les apprenants font et refont toujours les mêmes fautes!” (“What luck that learners keep making the same mistakes!”) (Lavric 2002). She selected the title because the fact that the same mistakes are made again and again by different learners in the same way is not only a curse – although some long-serving language teachers might think so – but also a piece of luck, once because it makes mistakes predictable, foreseeable, and to a certain extent avoidable, and, in particular, because the analysis of recurrent mistakes provides insights into the cognitive processes in language learning.

The interest in recurrent errors is reflected in the theory of interlanguage. Interlanguages are rule-governed and dynamic systems which evolve from a source towards a target language (see e.g. Vogel 1990 and James 1990). This process comprises an interlingual and an intralingual component, each of which generates certain types of errors:

- a) interlingual interferences attributable to the mother tongue of the learner or other foreign languages he/she may know; and
- b) intralingual interferences caused by the structure of the target language, based on what has been called *hypercorrection* (Ger. *Hyperkorrektur*) or *overgeneralisation* (*Übergeneralisierung*) (see Kielhöfer 1975: 87 and Lochner 2003: 15).

The theory of interlanguage is rooted in the tradition of error analysis,<sup>6</sup> which it develops and expands by emphasising the dynamic and evolutionary aspect of learning and by modifying the error perspective to include overall language production in the learning process.<sup>7</sup>

To come back to our recurrent errors, these are errors that reveal a regular pattern, a kind of internal logic, which can and should be investigated and described. This means that interlanguage represents a rule-based system, not only at the level of the individual learner but also at the level of learner population, a fact that is also corroborated by our long experience as language teachers, in which we have found that interlanguage has few, if any, idiosyncratic features.

This experience of ours is, by the way, one of the reasons why we retain the didactically motivated habit of not including the erroneous items that form the basis of our analysis. Instead, we solve the presentational problem by contrasting the lexico-semantic microstructures of the languages involved in a series of schematic frames, leaving it to the audience to infer the errors typically arising from the structures presented. This method of presentation is supplemented by a judicious selection of authentic or semi-authentic contexts, meant to highlight the semantic points we want to make.

The schemata designed by us are intended to pinpoint the similarities and differences in the morphological and semantic structures of the languages involved, with morphological similarities being highlighted in bold print and semantic ones by means of suitably arranged subboxes and full or cancelled correspondence lines. The idea is to make it possible to compare and classify the different types of structures that can cause difficulties in the learning process.

There is a logical progression from simple collections of errors, through the calculation of frequencies and the identification of error areas – their interpretation being based on comparisons of the linguistic structures of the source and target languages – to the integration of these contrastive findings into the design of language courses.<sup>8</sup> This progression, the process by which error analysis is harnessed to serve contrastive linguistics and contrastive linguistics language teaching methodology, follows – at least as far as lexis and semantics are concerned – a well-established tradition, viz. what has traditionally been called *false friends research*.

With regard to the categories mentioned in the title, we are well aware that the ubiquitous term *false friend*<sup>9</sup> is used in two different, but metonymically related senses in specialised literature.<sup>10</sup> *False friend* in the narrower sense of the term – like English *to staple* = German *zusammenheften* vs. German *stapeln* = English *to stack* – is a target language expression that is morphologically similar to a source language item, but has a different meaning.<sup>11</sup> This is the sense in which we use the term in our contribution. However, there exist many didactically-oriented collections of contrastive problems of a completely different nature, which are nevertheless entitled “false friends of language pair x-y”, following a long established tradition.<sup>12</sup>

These include, for example, what we call *diverging structures*, i.e. points where polysemous patterns of the source language are erroneously transferred to the target language, such as the German term *Wirtschaft*, which does not always correspond to *economy*, but has sometimes to be rendered as *business*, sometimes as *industry*, and sometimes as *management*. Here *false friend* is obviously used in its wider and vaguer sense, for which we regard the term *pitfall* more appropriate. In our view, false friends represent only one, albeit very prominent, subcategory of this wider concept. Pitfalls, as we define them, are interlinguistic (occasionally intralinguistic) problem areas in language learning which lead to recurrent deviations in the interlanguage of specific learner groups.

The diverse nature of these pitfalls requires a classificatory approach, which should be both didactically useful and theoretically rigorous. The present contribution aims at providing such a classification scheme for advanced business English and French terminology (for German learners), with possibilities of transfer to other areas and contexts of language learning, especially where lexical problems are involved.

Apart from false friends in the narrower sense of the term (part 1 of the present study), we shall investigate diverging structures (part 2), refining previous classifications<sup>13</sup> by distinguishing between text production (2.1.) and text comprehension (2.2.), and between diverging structures induced and those not induced by morphological similarities (2.1.2. versus 2.1.1., and 2.2.2. versus 2.2.1.). Furthermore, we have identified two additional subgroups, viz. negation prefixes in text production (2.1.3.) and treacherous loanwords in text comprehension (2.2.3. and 2.2.4.). To these we shall add two completely new types of pitfalls, which will be illustrated with a number of examples: in part 3, we describe the problem of "broken word families", a type of pitfall that combines an inter- and intralinguistic aspect involving, as it does, erroneous transfers of verb-noun relationships from the source language. And finally, in part 4 we analyse "cross-cultural diverging perspectives", which reflect the fact that each language views the world differently. To take a simple example, the equivalence between Ger. *Schublade* versus Engl. *drawer* (Fr.  *tiroir*) shows that the designations for one and the same semantic notion are often outright antonyms in different languages. For reasons of brevity, we limit this contribution to interlinguistic semantic pitfalls (as indicated in the title). In the last chapter (part 5) of this contribution, we try to answer the question of why and how all these problematic items should be taught. We advocate an explicit contrastive perspective, i.e. explicit comparisons between the source and the target language (and of other languages previously learned)<sup>14</sup>, together with an awareness-raising approach<sup>15</sup> addressing the cognitive abilities and specific knowledge of the learners of languages for specific purposes.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1. Genuine false friends

##### (erroneous transfers of meaning induced by similarities in morphology)

As mentioned in the introduction, the term *false friend* (originally French *faux ami*) can be used in a broader sense (in which case it refers to all and any kind of pitfalls) and in a narrower sense. *False friends* in the narrower sense of the term are lexemes with the same (or a very similar) interlingual form but with different meanings. This relationship can exist between the mother tongue and a foreign language, or between two foreign languages.

Here are three simple examples from business language – including the one used in the title of this paper – to illustrate this well-known type of pitfall: the erroneous relationships between Ger. *Exportquote* and Engl. *export quota*, Ger. *Prospekte* and Engl. *prospects*, and Fr. *la filiale* and Ger. *die Filiale*.

1)	<b>Exportquote</b> export ratio / share of exports in total sales	<b>Exportkontingent</b> export quota
2)	<b>Prospekte</b> leaflets, folders	<b>Aussichten</b> prospects
3)	<b>die Filiale</b> la succursale <sup>17</sup>	<b>die Tochtergesellschaft</b> la filiale

Examples of this simple type of pitfall and related errors are legion in the business interlanguages of both English and French learners. (The reader is referred to Weidacher 1990 and Lavric and Pichler 1998/2003 for comprehensive collections.)

A trickier example of this type is represented by the pair Engl. *buying option* / *buyer's option* and Ger. *Kaufoption*. A buyer's option is not really an option but a forward purchase (*Terminkauf*) with an option element relating to the time of performance. In view of the complicated nature of the economic background of this pitfall, it seems appropriate to provide a more detailed description of the transaction involved. A forward purchase represents an obligation to buy a specified amount

of a commodity or a specified number of financial instruments at a future time, while a call option (Ger. *Kaufoption*) is the right – and not an obligation – to do the same thing. Thus in the expression *buyer's option*, the word *option* does not refer to the underlying transaction, but to one of its features, viz. the fact that the forward buyer is entitled to perform the obligation involved at a point in time of his/her own choosing within a specified period of time, but not at a specified point in time, as would be the case in a standard forward purchase. By the way, all this applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the term *seller's option* as well. The relationship between the terms involved is illustrated in the following two schemata:

4a)	<b>Kaufoption</b> call option	<b>Terminkauf mit Laufzeitoption</b> buying option / buyer's option
4b)	<b>Verkaufsoption</b> put option	<b>Terminverkauf mit Laufzeitoption</b> selling option / seller's option

Even trickier are the problems connected with the terms *capital gains tax* and *Kapitalertragsteuer*, which look so similar but have completely different meanings. In fact, the morphological similarity in these triple compound terms is not as straightforward as e.g. in *Stapler* – *stapler*. What is similar is the first element and the structure of the whole term, with *Ertrag* and *gains* and *Steuer* and *tax* looking superficially like obvious equivalents. Now where is the pitfall? It is neither *Kapital* – *capital*, nor *Steuer* – *tax*, but the middle term: in fact, *Ertrag* and *gains* only seem to be equivalent – an impression supported by the overall structural similarity of the two compounds involved – but are far from being true equivalents. The German term *Ertrag* in this context refers to what in English is called *current (investment) income*, e.g. interest or dividends regularly derived from a capital investment retained by the investor. The English word *gains*, on the other hand, denotes a non-recurrent type of income earned when the asset invested in is finally sold – which in German, depending on the context, would be called *Veräußerungsgewinne* or *Spekulationsgewinne*. The following table shows the true equivalents of the two deceptively similar terms in either language:

5)	<b>Kapitalertragsteuer</b> (withholding) tax on current (investment) income	<b>Steuer auf Veräußerungs-/ Spekulationsgewinne</b> capital gains tax
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The error described above is not restricted to learners of business English. Quite a few general and technical dictionaries give a wrong German equivalent for the term *capital gains tax* (mostly *Kapitalertragsteuer*). A short list of perpetrators can be found in the footnote.<sup>18</sup> In this context, it is interesting to note that some dictionaries translate *capital gains* correctly, while giving the wrong term for *capital gains tax*, a fact that underlines the important role of the overall structure of the triple compound in triggering an error.

A French example of this type is *le concours*, which does not mean *der Konkurs* (a type of bankruptcy), but *die Ausleseprüfung* (a highly selective exam), while *der Konkurs* translates into French as *la faillite*. Another interesting example is *la souscription*. This term is often assumed by learners to correspond to *die Unterschrift* (Engl. *signature*), although it actually means *die Zeichnung* (von Aktien), i.e. Engl. *subscription*. The correct French equivalent of *die Unterschrift* is *la signature* (Engl. *signature*). And finally, the word *index* in French refers only to a finger, or a list at the end of a book (Ger. *Zeigefinger*, *Schlagwortverzeichnis/index*, Engl. *index finger/index*), while French native speakers that have economic core figures in mind would use the term *indice*.

An interesting subcategory of this type of pitfall is represented by English false friends in French and French false friends in English. The relations between the structures of English and French are significant insofar as learners rely on transfer possibilities from earlier learnt languages, especially when the languages involved are seen as related. Thus English, which is usually learnt earlier, often functions as "default supplier" to learners of French,<sup>19</sup> and is an important source of positive transfer and of negative interference.<sup>20</sup>

The English terms which most commonly act as "false-friend" suppliers for learners of business French include *to support*, paired with Fr. *souttenir*. While the latter means *to bear* (Ger. *aushalten*, *ertragen*), *to support* would have to be translated as *soutenir*. Another example is *to use*, which makes learners employ the French verb *user* instead of *utiliser* (in fact, Fr. *user* means *abnutzen*). An equally treacherous item is *to visit*, which in English is a fairly general expression, whereas its French counterpart *visiter* is restricted to touristic (*besichtigten*) and medical (*untersuchen*) contexts, the correct translation of *to visit someone* being *rendre visite à quelqu'un / aller voir quelqu'un*. A very prominent false friend is Fr. *attendre*, which simply means *to wait*, and can therefore not be used to render the expression *to attend a school/university*, whose correct equivalent is *fréquenter une école/une université*. Last, but not least, there is Fr. *la monnaie* (see the following table). This term means either "currency" (*une monnaie*) or "(small) change" (*la petite monnaie*), but does not denote "money" in its general sense, for which Fr. *l'argent* has to be used. For example: Money rules the world = *L'argent gouverne le monde*.

6)

<b>une monnaie</b>	<b>la (petite) monnaie</b>	<b>l'argent</b>
currency	(small) change	money
Währung	Kleingeld	Geld

However, occasionally the relationship is the other way round, and errors in business English may be caused by learners' previous knowledge of business French. When a student producing an English financial text uses the term *benefit* where he/she should use *profit* or *earnings*, this may be due to the fact that the French term *bénéfice* (which does mean *profit*) exhibits a superficial similarity with Engl. *benefit*, which has a much vaguer meaning. It denotes, among other things, *Nutzen* (*consumer benefit* = *Konsumnutzen*) or *Leistung* (*social security benefits* = *Sozialversicherungsleistungen*) and – in contrast to Fr. *bénéfice* – never refers to the surplus of revenues over expenditures in financial statements, for which such terms as *profit*, [*net*] *income* and *earnings* are used.

One important aspect of false friends is the fact that each of them functions (or rather disturbs) in both directions, the false equivalence triggering errors in text production as well as in text comprehension. By contrast, in the next type of pitfall to be analyzed the distinction between text production and comprehension is of great relevance.

## 2. Diverging structures (erroneous transfers of polysemic patterns)

It is a well-known fact that every language looks at the world differently. Put more academically, it divides, structures and punctuates it in a different way. The problem manifests itself most acutely in what are referred to as *divergent learning structures*<sup>21</sup>, i.e. lexemes and structures exhibiting a more finely grained semantic organization in either the target or the source language. Errors caused by this divergence occur usually when the additional semantic distinctions unknown to the learner can be found in the target language, which leads to errors in the production of target language texts. However, as we shall see, comparable difficulties can also arise in text comprehension when it is the source language that is more finely grained (see below, 2.2.).

Let us start with a few general language examples involving errors caused by the source language exhibiting the richer polysemic patterns.

6

## 2.1. Text production (interference of source language polysemic patterns)

Cf. Sonaiya 1991: 283:

[C]losely related words in the target language usually prove difficult for the adult learner to acquire, particularly in cases where the learner's native language does not make the same kinds of conceptual distinctions that exist in the target language.

One need only consider the complex rules governing the use of the Spanish verbs of being *ser* and *estar*, or to take an example from grammar, the use of past tense forms in the Romance languages and contrast it with what is required in German, to realise that learning foreign languages means grasping new conceptual differences and acquiring cognitive distinctions<sup>22</sup> – in other words, structuring the world anew.<sup>23</sup> See Sonaiya 1991:

The primary task in vocabulary acquisition is [...] a continuous refining of meaning and readjustment of boundaries between lexical items. (p. 274)

[A]s knowledge increases, changes occur in the structural organization of the vocabulary of the target language by the learner. (p. 279)

[W]hat happens in vocabulary acquisition, for the adult language learner as well as the child language learner, is a process of continuous lexical disambiguation. (p. 281)

It is this kind of challenge that all human beings are again and again confronted with in their language development, when for instance, as children, they at first call all dogs *bow-wow* and only later learn to distinguish between different breeds, or when history teaches them that there is no such people as the Yugoslavs, but that there are only Slovenes, Croatsians, Serbs, etc. Great as difficulties of this kind associated with acquiring one's mother tongue may be, anybody wanting to learn a foreign language will be faced with much tougher challenges. For example, learners will have to come to terms with the fact that the German conjunction *wenn* is actually a polyseme and has two equivalents in many languages: Engl. *if* and *when*, Fr. *si* and *quand*,<sup>24</sup> Ital. *se* and *quando*, Span. *si* and *cundo*.

Or take the German preposition *bis*, which may have to be rendered as *until* or as *by* in English, *I need the machine until Friday*. In the first case, the speaker or writer does not have the machine yet but must have it not later than Friday, while in the second s/he is in possession of the machine, yet does not need it after Friday.<sup>25</sup>

Considering these complex differences, it is not surprising that learners of these languages should denote both "up to" and "not later than". In error linguistics terms, the errors just described are the result of overgeneralization induced by both the Romance languages and English making a semantic distinction not found in German. They represent classic instances of divergent learning structures, which could be illustrated graphically in the following way:

7)

Ger.	wenn	temporal
Engl.	if	when
Fr.	si	quand
Ital.	se	quando
Span.	si	cundo

7

country (considered as a group of economic actors) (*business*, ex. 9b), to a branch of economic activity (*industry*, ex. 9c), and, finally, to a management function in an organisation (*management*, ex. 9d).

This example also illustrates the method we have developed for presenting our core items: we begin with a graphic scheme which is intended to visualise, on the basis of one typical example, the pattern of form-content similarities-dissimilarities that underlies a specific type of pitfall; we then give a number of (semi-)authentic contexts, to illustrate each of the different equivalences involved, with the first item being the positive transfer possibility that induces the subsequent interference pitfalls. This means that we highlight the sources of errors, without giving erroneous examples.

After presenting a few core examples to explain the nature of the category involved, we include a number of additional English items, usually in the context of complete sentences, but without further comments.

To round off the presentation of a specific category, we give a few French examples, typically without providing sentence contexts – but adding brief explanations – and finally, where appropriate, we comment upon interferences which might take place between French and English.

Here are some more English examples:

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Er hat sich um den Posten beworben. HE HAS APPLIED FOR THE JOB.*

INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:

*Die einzelnen Posten auf der Liste – THE INDIVIDUAL ITEMS ON THE LIST*

*Der letzte Posten Gerste fand keinen Abnehmer. THE LAST LOT OF BARLEY DID NOT FIND A BUYER.*

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Wir waren mit seiner Leistung nicht zufrieden. WE WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH HIS PERFORMANCE.*

INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:

*Die Leistungen aus der Sozialversicherung wurden gekürzt. SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WERE REDUCED.*

*Leistungslohn – PAYMENT BY RESULTS*

*Vorleistungen – INTERMEDIATE INPUTS*

*Die Leistungsbilanz weist ein Defizit auf. THE CURRENT ACCOUNT SHOWS A DEFICIT.*

To add a few French examples, the German verb *erleichtern* splits into no less than three equivalents in French:

- *alléger*, which belongs to the dichotomy *léger – lourd* (light – heavy),
- *faciliter*, related to the antonyms *facile – difficile* (easy – difficult), and
- *soulager*, corresponding to the pair *inquiet – soulagé* (worried – relieved).

As for the German preposition *bei*, although it is taken by learners to always correspond to *chez* (one of the first prepositions they learn in French, and hence a very dominant one), there are several (special language) contexts where it would have to be rendered as *auprès de* (in a temporal sense). The same is true of the conjunction *während*, which learners always translate as *pendant que*, while this equivalence is valid only in the temporal sense. *Während* in the adversative sense corresponds to Fr. *tandis que* (and sometimes *tout en* + part. pres.). All these examples belong to the “general special language” already referred to, a category not confined to a single discipline but with a high frequency in special language texts.

The following examples of diverging structures, however, belong to the field of core business terminology:

8)	Ger. bis	until (up to)
Engl. by (not later than)		

Divergent learning structures are a typical source of interference errors,<sup>26</sup> and probably much more frequent than the classic faux amis in the narrower sense.<sup>27</sup> They cast an interesting light on the role of the mother tongue in foreign language vocabulary acquisition, corroborating the assumption that different structures lead to errors due to negative interference, especially – but, as we shall see, not only – where the foreign language is more finely grained.<sup>28</sup>

Divergent learning structures comprise a variety of different constellations. Although they always reflect lexical or even semantic problems, they can arise either in the production or in the interpretation of target language texts. In the majority of cases, this type of interference is triggered by a dominant equivalence masking all the other equivalences of the term in question. However, quite often, the trigger releasing the interference involved is reinforced by a morphological similarity. Furthermore, we have identified an interesting subcategory of divergent structures, which we shall call *treacherous loanwords*. In connection with this, we furthermore investigate a category of errors that has come to be called *barbarisms*.

2.1.1. Erroneous transfers induced by dominant meanings (not supported by morphological similarities)

9)<sup>29</sup>

Wirtschaft		
business	economy	industry management

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

a) *Die Wirtschaft wird um 3,1 % wachsen. THE ECONOMY WILL EXPAND BY 3.1%.*

INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:

b1) *Die Wirtschaft ist für eine einheitliche Regelung. BUSINESS IS IN FAVOUR OF UNIFORM RULES.*

b2) *Die Grünen sind angeblich wirtschaftsfeindlich. THE GREENS ARE SAID TO BE ANTI-BUSINESS.*

c) *Die E-Wirtschaft ist liberalisiert worden. THE ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY HAS BEEN LIBERALISED.*

d) *Die Firma ist dabei, ihr Textilsortiment auf ihr neues Warenwirtschaftssystem umzustellen. THE COMPANY IS IN THE PROCESS OF SWITCHING ITS TEXTILE RANGE TO ITS NEW MERCHANDISE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.*

To explain the background to this example, we would like to refer to Kattenbusch 1993: 97, who notes that with regard to interferences due to divergent structures („durch Polysemie hervorgerufene Normverstöße“, “violations of the norms triggered by polysemy”) „das zuletzt gelernte bzw. das am besten eingetragene Wort Verwendung findet“ (“the word most recently learnt or the one best remembered is used”).

This is exactly what happens in our example (9): *economy* as the equivalent of *Wirtschaft* is certainly one of the first economic terms students learn. This makes them assume – in a kind of automatic, Pavlovian response – that the equivalence holds in all conceivable contexts,<sup>30</sup> because they fail to realise that the German term *Wirtschaft* is actually a polyseme: it refers not only to the economic system or performance of a country as a whole (*economy*, ex. 9a), but also to the business sector of a

- Ger. *Volkswirtschaft* splits into Fr. *économie politique* (economics as a social science) and *économie nationale* (the economy of one specific country);
- Ger. *das Lager* has to be translated either as Fr. *le dépôt*, *l'entrepôt* (the warehouse / the storeroom, *das Lagerhaus / der Lagerraum*) or as Fr. *les stocks* (stocks / inventory, *die Lagerbestände*);
- Ger. *Überschuss* is Fr. *surplus* when it refers to an excess of goods, but *excédent* when it denotes a feature of the current account of the balance of payments;
- Ger. *bar zahlen* – just like its English counterpart *to pay cash* – has two French equivalents, viz. *payer (au) comptant* (to pay promptly, i.e. either right away or within a few business days of delivery or performance) and *payer en espèces / en liquide* (to use notes and coins) (for details see Obenaus and Weidacher 2006: 109–110);
- Ger. *Jahr* has three French equivalents: the two general language words *an* and *année*, and the business term *exercice (fiscal year, Geschäftsjahr)*. *Un an* is a time-counting unit pure and simple, while *une année* is used when the speaker wants to focus on the emotional (or some other) quality of the time unit in question. This means, among other things, that *année* is often combined with such adjectives as *heureuse, profitable, terrible* etc, something that is not possible with *an*.

These French pitfalls all illustrate the type of divergent structures not supported by morphological similarities. In the following section we deal with morphologically supported diverging structure pitfalls, another category occurring between German and the two target languages studied.

### 2.1.2. Erroneous transfers induced by morphological similarities

In some cases of diverging structures, the interference is triggered not only by a dominant meaning, i.e. the most frequent one or the one uppermost in the learner's mind, but additionally by a morphological similarity between the source and the target language items involved.

(10)

	aktivieren
to activate	to capitalise

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

ein (Computer)Programm *aktivieren* – TO *ACTIVATE* A COMPUTER PROGRAM

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Aufwendungen* *aktivieren* – TO *CAPITALISE* EXPENSES

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Der Handel* wurde aufgrund starker *Kursfluktuationen* eingestellt. *TRADING WAS STOPPED BECAUSE OF HEAVY PRICE FLUCTUATIONS.*

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*In den Callcentern* ist die *Fluktuation* sehr hoch. (LABOUR) *TURNOVER IN CALL CENTRES IS VERY HIGH.*

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*HTTPS* ist ein *Computerprotokoll*, das eine gesicherte Verbindung zwischen Rechnern ermöglicht. *HTTPS IS A COMPUTER PROTOCOL WHICH ENABLES A SECURE LINK BETWEEN COMPUTERS.*

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Ich* brauche das *Protokoll* der letzten Sitzung. *I NEED THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.*

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Die Rechnung* ist nicht bezahlt worden. *The bill* has not been paid.

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Investitionsrechnung* für Techniker – *CAPITAL INVESTMENT ANALYSIS FOR ENGINEERS*

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Zahlungsbilanz* – *BALANCE OF PAYMENTS*

INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:

*Die Leistungsbilanz* weist ein Defizit auf. *THE CURRENT ACCOUNT SHOWS A DEFICIT.*

*Die Bilanz* der Tochtergesellschaft wurde von Coopers & Lybrand geprüft. *THE SUBSIDIARY'S BALANCE SHEET WAS AUDITED BY COOPERS & LYBRAND.*

*Die schlechte Streikbilanz* zeigt, dass die Gewerkschaften oft nicht die nötige gesellschaftliche Verantwortung an den Tag legen. *THE POOR STRIKE RECORD SHOWS THAT THE TRADE UNIONS OFTEN FAIL TO EXHIBIT AN APPROPRIATE SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.*

This leads us to our French examples, the first being similar to the last English one: Ger. *die Bilanz* has to be translated as *la balance* in national accounting (Engl. *balance, account*) and as *le bilan* in business accounting contexts (Engl. *balance sheet*).<sup>31</sup>

Ger. *hoch (high)* can be translated either as *haut* (for levels and physical objects) or as *élevé* (for numbers and values). Even more numerous are the equivalents of the corresponding German noun *die Höhe*, which has to be rendered as: 1) *la hauteur* – for physical objects (Engl. *height*), 2) *le montant* – for sums of money (Engl. *amount, sum*), 3) *l'altitude (die Seehöhe* – Engl. *altitude*), and 4) *le comble* (in the idiomatic expression: *Das ist doch die Höhe! C'est le comble!* – Engl. *That's the limit!*).

A special category is represented by instances where the similarity inducing the pitfall is not with German but with English: for instance, Ger. *Bildung* corresponds either to Fr. *éducation* (actually, as in English, only to *general education*) or to Fr. *formation* (which refers to specialized or professional education and corresponds to Ger. *Ausbildung*).

And, finally, one example where all three languages interact in a very complex way: German learners of French tend to regard the noun *date* either in singular – *la date* – as an equivalent of the English *date* (*a date* – correctly translated as *un rendez-vous*) or in plural – *les dates* – as an equivalent of the German *Daten* (*die Daten* – correctly rendered as *les données*, Engl. *data*), while it in fact only means *das Datum* – *the date*, i.e. a particular calendar day.

### 2.1.3. Special case: morphological diverging structures in negation prefixes

A special type of errors which can be found in the interlanguage of both general and business English is triggered by diverging morphological structures in negation prefixes. Here the interference is caused by the fact that in some cases the English equivalent of the main German negation prefix *un-* is the morphologically similar Engl. *un-*. It is this fact that makes learners assume that this is always so (interlingual overgeneralisation) and they forget that, as can be seen from the examples given below, English uses a much greater variety of prefixes to denote negation.

11)

Ger.	un-	
Engl.	in-	dis-

TRANSFER TRIGGERS:

*notwendig* – *unnotwendig*; *NECESSARY* – *UNNECESSARY*

*natürlich* – *unnatürlich*; *NATURAL* – *UNNATURAL*

**INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:**

- vollständig – unvollständig: COMPLETE – INCOMPLETE
- erfahren – unerfahren: EXPERIENCED – INEXPERIENCED
- gültig – ungültig: VALID – INVALID
- endlich – unendlich: FINITE – INFINITE
- passend – unpassend: APPROPRIATE – INAPPROPRIATE
- ähnlich – unähnlich: SIMILAR – DISSIMILAR
- Ordnung – Unordnung: ORDER – DISORDER
- zufrieden – unzufrieden: SATISFIED – DISSATISFIED
- verantwortlich – unverantwortlich: RESPONSIBLE – IRRESPONSIBLE
- leserlich – unleserlich: LEGIBLE – ILLEGIBLE

**2.2. Text comprehension (erroneous interpretation of target language terms due to ignorance of their polysemy in comparison with source language equivalents)**

As already indicated, interference pitfalls are not a one-way affair: they occur not only in the production, but also in the comprehension of target language texts. Polysemous patterns can also lead to errors in cases where it is the German language that is more finely grained. What happens is again, like in the case of divergence pitfalls in text production, that usually one of the multiple equivalences is most firmly anchored in the minds of the learners, thus masking the existing polysemic structure.

**2.2.1. Erroneous transfers induced by dominant meanings (not supported by morphological similarities)**

One meaning of a foreign language term can be so dominant that it prevails over all other context-dependent variants, even though there is no morphological similarity between the relevant source language equivalent and the target language item.

12)

<b>trade</b>		
Transaktion <i>(on the stock exchange)</i>	Handel	-cycle Konjunktur
		-figures Außenhandel

**TRANSFER TRIGGER:**

*trade in goods* – WARENHANDEL

**INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:**

six million trades on the New York Stock Exchange – SECHS MILLIONEN TRANSAKTIONEN  
(GESCHÄFTSFÄLLE) AN DER NEW YORKER BÖRSE  
*trade figures* – KONJUNKTURZYKLUS

**TRANSFER TRIGGER:**

*The band provided for good entertainment.* DIE BAND SORGT FÜR GUTE UNTERHALTUNG.

**INTERFERENCE PITFALL:**

*Business entertainment expenses were disallowed.* DIE (STUEBLICHE) ABZUGSFÄHIGKEIT VON AUFWENDUNGEN FÜR GESCHÄFTSFREUNDEBEWIRTUNG WURDE AUFGEHOBEN.

12

**TRANSFER TRIGGER:**

*He opened a new account.*<sup>32</sup> ER ERÖFFNETE EIN NEUES KONTO.

**INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:**

*The current account is in the red.* DIE LEISTUNGSBILANZ IST PASSIV.  
*Among other things, you will be required to visit key accounts.* EINE IHRER AUFGABEN WIRD ES SEIN, SCHLÜSSELKUNDEN ZU BESUCHEN.

To give some French examples:<sup>33</sup>

- *une entreprise* tends to be interpreted by learners as *Unternehmen/Firma (company/firm)*, while it can also mean *Unterfangen/Vorhaben (enterprise/endeavour/project)*;
- *le service* is usually understood by students as *die Dienstleistung (service)*, while in some contexts it means *die Abteilung (department, section)*;
- *assister à* tends to trigger the idea of *assistance/help*, while, combined with an impersonal subject (*on assiste à...*), it means literally *Zeuge(n) werden (to witness)*, and has to be rendered as *geschehen, sich ereignen* or to be omitted in translation (*on a assisté à une chute des cours: die Kurse sind gefallen*);
- *exercice* is very well-known to students as *Übung*, but its second and business language meaning, *Geschäftsjahr (business year/financial year)*, is often overlooked;
- *action* is universally interpreted as *Handlung* and students tend to miss its second meaning, viz. *Aktie (share)*. In this case, the morphologically related Ger. *Aktion* may be partly responsible for the interference. See below, 2.2.2.

**2.2.2. Erroneous transfers induced by morphological similarities**

In many cases, the dominance of a given source language equivalent over other equivalents is attributable to, or at least supported by, it being morphologically similar to a target language term. In other words, learners are familiar with a particular target language item because there is a similar item with the same meaning in the source language. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they tend to rely on this equivalence whenever they come across the item in question in target language texts, blissfully unaware of the fact that in quite a few cases and contexts the supposed equivalence does not hold.

13)

<b>to discount</b>		
abzinsen	(e.g. a bill of exchange) diskontieren	im vorhinein berücksichtigen Preisnachlass gewähren

**TRANSFER TRIGGER:**

*The bill was discounted.* DER WECHSEL WURDE DISKONTIERT.

**INTERFERENCE PITFALLS:**

*Each cash flow is discounted to give its net present value.* JEDER CASHFLOW WIRD AUF DEN HEUTIGEN ZEITPUNKT ABGEZINST.  
*The market has discounted the rate hike.* DIE BÖRSE HAT DIE ZINSERHÖHUNG BEREITS IM VORHINEIN BERÜCKSICHTIGT / EINGEPREIST.

*Clever retailers use discounting selectively.* KLUGE EINZELHÄNDLER SETZEN DAS INSTRUMENT DER PREISNACHLÄSSE GEZIHLT EIN.

To give some French examples:

- *commander (to order)* is familiar to most students in its general language sense *befehlen/kommandieren (to give orders)*, while they are usually oblivious of its technical meaning (*Waren bestellen (to order goods)*);

13

- *le tarif* is generally understood to mean *Tarif/Preis (tariff/price)*, its core meaning, but in some contexts it can also denote *Preisliste (tariff list/price list)*;
- *échange* is generally translated by students as *Austausch* (in analogy to Engl. *exchange*), while in the plural (*les échanges*) it is synonymous with *le commerce* and thus means *der Handel (trade)*;
- *carrière* has a core meaning, viz. *Karriere (career)*<sup>14</sup>, which most students are familiar with, but it also refers to *Steinbruch (quarry)*;
- *intérêt* is a further example of this type of divergent structure. The term is polysemous, denoting both *Interesse* (general language: *interest in something*) and *Zinsen* (special language: *interest on principal sums*). By the way, Engl. *interest* has an additional – technical – meaning, viz. *Beteiligung (an einer Firma) (stake/shareholding)*.

#### 2.2.3. Treacherous loanwords

In many cases where an English term is borrowed and introduced as a loanword into a foreign language, only one of its meanings is “exported”, while the others “stay at home”. This tends to make learners assume that the loanwords are also monosemes in the language of origin, which is bound to cause errors in the comprehension of texts in this language. For example, in spite of the fact that Ger. *Hit*, a loanword from English, always and only refers to something that is popular, *tax hit* in an English text does not denote a particularly popular tax, but a high tax liability that hits, i.e. hurts, a taxpayer. Below are a few more “classic” examples of interlanguage errors resulting from this special type of diverging structure.

[4]

Engl.	hit	
Ger.	Hit (Schlager)	Schlag (hartier Schlag)

#### TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*The studio had a new hit with Mortal Combat. MIT MORTAL KOMBAT HATTE DAS STUDIO EINEN NEUEN SCHLAGER.*

#### INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*In most poorly performing studios the CEO took a hit (i.e. they had to accept bonus cuts). IN DEN MEISTEN STUDIOS, DIE SCHLECHT ABSCHNITTEN, MUSSTE DER/DIE VORSTANDSVORSITZENDE EINEN HARTEN SCHLAG HINNEHMEN (D.H. ES GAB BONUSKÜRZUNGEN).*

#### TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*container ship – CONTAINERSCHIFF*

#### INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*a container for jam – EIN MARMELENADENBEHÄLTNER*

#### TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*There has been an incredible revolution in the design of glasses. ES GAB EINE UNGLAUBLICHE REVOLUTION IM BRILLENDESIGN.*

#### INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*computer simulations for the design of engines – COMPUTERSIMULATIONEN FÜR DIE KONSTRUKTION VON MOTOREN*

#### TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Commerce Agrees To Investigate Dumping of Furniture. DAS (US) HANDELSMINISTERIUM ERKLÄRT SICH BEREIT, DAS DUMPING VON MÖBELN ZU UNTERSUCHEN.*

#### INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*No dumping of furniture, mattresses and the like is permitted. DAS (ILLEGALE) DEPONIEREN VON MÖBELN, MATRATZEN UND ÄHNLICHEN DINGEN IST VERBOTEN.*

#### TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*the franchise partnership between the two firms – DIE FRANCHISE-PARTNERSCHAFT ZWISCHEN DEN BEIDEN FIRMEN*

#### INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Sigma already has a strong franchise in Scotland. SIGMA HAT BEREITS EINE STARKE KUNDENBASIS / AKZEPTANZ IN SCHOTTLAND.*

#### 2.2.4. Related category: barbarisms

The category of treacherous loanwords is related to another, even more treacherous, type of pitfall, which can be explained in the following way: a learner might know a term in his mother tongue (or sometimes in another foreign language) that looks as if it had been borrowed from the target language, although this supposed loan does not exist there. If that learner now trustingly decides to use this item in a target language utterance, s/he will tumble into a pitfall, producing a special type of error, which has come to be called *barbarism*. In other words, s/he will “invent” a word or form that actually does not exist in the target language. Such barbarisms tend to follow the morphological patterns of the target language. As this shows that the learner involved has assimilated the latter, these should not be frowned upon but interpreted as an expression of creativity in the learning process.

Before we provide some examples of barbarisms, we must admit that we placed this category at this point of our classification because it seemed to be an appropriate follow-on to the treacherous loanwords category, although, of course, we do know that it does not really represent a type of diverging structure. After all, in this case, the divergence exists at best only between an imagined but non-existing target language item and one that is the correct designation of the concept involved.

Triggers for this type of error abound for the unwary German learner of English, a situation that is probably attributable to the current prestige of anything that sounds vaguely English.

The German expression *Handy* (meaning mobile phone or cellphone) is probably the best-known instance of this pitfall category. Although *handy* does exist in English (where it is an adjective meaning *praktisch*), it is much more likely that its German counterpart was created by a German speaker who wished to sound fashionable (probably being inspired by the vague similarity between *handy* and the German term *Handgerät* and perhaps by the suffix *-y/ie* in such expressions as *walkie-talkie*) rather than being a misunderstood borrowing of an English language item.

Another, less obvious example is the pair Ger. *Sponsoring* – Engl. *sponsorship*. Although *sponsoring* does exist in English (being used in sentences like *The firm has been sponsoring this team for many years*) it is never used there to refer to the well-known type of PR-activity, which is correctly called *sponsorship* in English.

An even more complicated example of this category is the ubiquitous German management term *Controlling*. Although it is, of course, morphologically derived from Engl. *control*, it has a special meaning that cannot be found in the English-speaking community. For a detailed analysis of this technical term the reader is referred to Obenaus and Weidacher 2006: 166.

As for French examples, we can cite the German *Spediteur* (*forwarding agent, forwarder*), whose correct French equivalent is *transitaire*, and a number of deceptive internationalisms such as *Investition* or *finanziell*, which in French have to be rendered as *investissement* and *financier*.

When speaking of barbarisms, we should not forget the English words that learners of French have the irritating habit of transferring to their target language, where they unfortunately do not exist.



This prominent group, all too well-known to teachers of French, comprises such items as *to solve* > \**solver* (correct: *résoudre*), *to protect* > \**protector* (correct: *protéger*), *to express* > \**expresser* (correct: *exprimer*) and *to expect / expectations* > \**expecter / \*les expectations* (correct: *s attendre à, les attentes*).

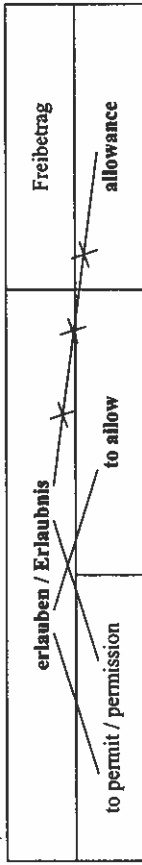
### 3. Broken word families (erroneous transfers of verb-noun relationships from source language)

Broken word families – we have coined this term to denote the language learning problems described in the following – seem at first sight to be an intralinguistic type of pitfall. For example, the common verb *to allow* does not correspond semantically to the noun *allowance* derived from it, but to *permission*, which belongs to another word family (where, by the way, it has its own corresponding verb *to permit*). *Allowance* is insofar a kind of false friend as it translates into German as *Zuschuss, Zulage, Beihilfe, (steuerlicher) Freibetrag*. What we have here is a general language verb (*to allow*) that is morphologically related exclusively to a special language noun (*allowance*), while the corresponding general language noun (*permission*) belongs to a different word family.<sup>35</sup>

The reason why this can also be interpreted as an interlinguistic problem is because, in German, the pair *erlauben / Erlaubnis* is a perfectly normal general language word family. If it were not for the expected analogy, German-speaking learners of English would perhaps not fall into the trap of rendering *Erlaubnis* as *allowance*.

The following is an attempt to visualise the complex relationships exhibited by effectively or seemingly broken word families, with morphological similarities being highlighted in bold print and semantic similarities and dissimilarities by means of suitably arranged subboxes as well as full and cancelled correspondence lines.

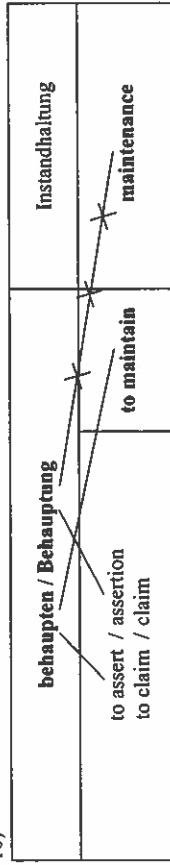
15)



By the way, we are dealing here with some typical elements of what has come to be called *allgemeine Fachsprache* or *Fachstil*, i.e. *general special language* or *LSP style*, see especially Forner 1998.

A frequent error belonging to the category discussed in this section is the use of the noun *mainten-*ance to erroneously render Ger. *Behauptung*, in analogy with the verb *to maintain*, which does mean *behaaupten*. But again, Engl. *maintenance* is a special language term which denotes what in German is called *Wartung, Instandhaltung*. The correct English equivalents of Ger. *Behauptung* are *assertion* or *claim*, which each have their own corresponding verb – *to assert, to claim*. This means that the three verbs are more or less synonymous, while their respective deverbal noun derivatives are not.

16)



And finally a few French examples: although the noun *les effets*, well-known to learners from the expression *les causes et les effets*, is the correct equivalent of Ger. *Wirkungen* (as in *Ursachen und Wirkungen*, or rather *Ursache und Wirkung*), the verb *effectuer*, in spite of learners' repeated transfer attempts, does not mean *bewirken* but *durchführen*. Obviously, this example differs from the English ones in that it is the correct equivalence between a source and a target language noun that triggers

an error in a verb, and not the other way round. Broken word families are not restricted to verb-noun relationships, adjectives can be involved as well, as the next example shows. The high-frequency adjective *élevé (high)* means *hoch* in a wide range of contexts (from levels to digits, see above, 2.1.2.) but the corresponding verb *élever* has a much narrower and only vaguely related meaning, as it does not correspond to Ger. *erhöhen* (e.g. *die Steuern erhöhen / to increase taxes*) but to Ger. *errichten, aufziehen* (e.g. *ein Denkmal errichten / to erect a monument*) or to the raising of children<sup>36</sup> or cattle (*erziehen, züchten*). There is, however, a reflexive variant of the same verb, *s'élever à*, which applies to numbers, values and digits – where it still does not mean *steigen, sich steigern (to increase)*, as might be expected from the meaning of the adjective, but *betragen*, being thus a synonym of *être de, se monter à (to amount to)*.

The question remains whether these difficulties are attributable more to the target or the source language. It seems plausible to assume that the weighting of the two factors will vary from case to case. One might argue that the semantic (and stylistic) similarity between verbs and corresponding noun derivatives is the general rule in most languages. But the perceived amount of dissimilarity in each case might depend on the source language of the learners. We think that this is demonstrated by the first French example of this category, where the semantic relationship between *Wirkung* and *bewirken* might not be that much closer than between *Wirkung* and *durchführen*.

### 4. Cross-cultural diverging perspectives (the *Schublade* – drawer category)

Expressions which show that each language and each culture has a different perspective on reality represent a particularly interesting source of pitfalls in business language. This means that the Humboldtian language-specific world view, or the Sapir-Whorf relativity principle, is also applicable to business language, with the lexicon representing a rich source for what has come to be called *cross-cultural studies*.<sup>37</sup>

To take two simple examples from everyday language: the German expression *Schublade*, which focuses on the aspect of pushing, corresponds to the English and French *drawer* and *tiroir*, respectively, which evoke the opposite movement, viz. pulling, or drawing. And of the two terms *vacuum cleaner* and *Staubsauger*, the first focuses on the method, and the second on the object of the same process. Each of these terms represents a partial – but complementary – truth.

Appropriate examples of this category can also be found in business English. The English equivalent of Ger. *Annahmerisiko* is *risk of non-acceptance* (which, on the face of it, seems to be the more logical way of looking at things). *Kauf auf Probe* has to be rendered as *sale on approval* and *Kaufvertrag* is *contract of sale* (i.e. actually \**Verkaufsvertrag*) in English. In all three cases, the German and English terms evoke a complementary perspective on a complex referent. Interestingly, the Italian *contratto di compravendita* goes to the – probably superfluous – length of specifying both perspectives.

The above examples show that the terms investigated in the languages in question often involve complementary antonyms. But however important antonymic relationships are, other aspects of the referent may come into play in name-giving processes. For instance, Ger. *Kundendienst* focuses on the group of persons for whom the service concerned is performed, while Fr. *service après-vente* and Engl. *after-sales service* highlight the time at which it is performed.

Two more French examples to illustrate this type of error: the German term *Leistungsbilanz* is often rendered in French as \**balance de performance*, while its correct equivalent is *balance des opérations courantes* (Engl. *current account on the balance of payments*).

It should not come as a surprise that students tend to translate the popular word *Arbeitsplatz* as \**place de travail*, while its correct French equivalents are – depending on the context – *poste (de travail) (workplace)* and, more frequently, *emploi (job)*.

An interesting German-English example is the pair Ger. *Betriebsniedrigungsgesellschaft* and Engl. *development corporation*. The first language is apparently interested in how such organisations achieve their goal of improving the economic situation in a given country or region, and the second in what this goal is. National psychology addicts may wish to speculate on the cultural aspects of the

different onomasiological perspectives. However, in most examples from business language the differences seem to be a matter of chance rather than the result of differences in cultural values and attitudes.

A final example to make two additional points: in some contexts, the English expression *debts* does not refer to debts in the usual sense of the word, i.e. financial obligations, but to their opposite, viz. receivables, while its German "equivalent" *Schulden* is uniquely associated with a debtor's perspective. Thus, export debts are amounts of money owed to the export company involved, and not amounts owed by it. In other words, the English expression looks at the situation from the perspective of the exporter as creditor. The fact that *debts* represents a diverging structure exhibiting an antonymic relationship (*obligations* vs. *claims*, or *receivables*) shows that the categories investigated in this paper often overlap.

The examples analysed above reveal that, in the case of complex referents, the terms involved often represent (pars-pro-toto) metonymies, although speakers are hardly ever aware of this when using them. There is a good reason for this: terms trying to highlight all relevant perspectives and thus dispensing with metonymy would be too complex and unwieldy to use. In many cases, such terms would come close to a complete definition – "customer- and product-related after-sales service" to paraphrase *Kundendienst* – and thus violate the principle of linguistic economy. In business terminology, as in many other fields, metonymy serves to keep communications simple and economic, with different languages – and this is the important point in connection with pitfalls – economizing in different ways. However, it should be noted that many technical terms are compound words, which means that linguistic economy often stops short of reducing the multiplicity of possible terms to a single element. In most cases, there is a category core word accompanied by a randomly selected modifier. It is in the selection of the latter that languages tend to differ.

#### 4.1. Special case: *antonymic pitfalls* (relational antonyms)

As mentioned above, cross-cultural divergent perspectives often involve complementary antonyms, so that it might be useful to establish them as a separate subcategory. The relationship between *Kaufvertrag* and *contract of sale*, analysed in the previous section, is probably the best-known example. But the pair *Lieferbindung* – *procurement tying*, although less common, exhibits the same relationship. *Lieferbindung*, the obligation of donee countries to use the funds from a donor country to purchase goods from the latter, verbalises the donor country perspective, while its English equivalent *procurement tying* regards the referent from the donee country's point of view. A French example that could be regarded as belonging to this category is the verb *être coté en Bourse*, which corresponds to *Get an der Börse notieren*. Thus, the same process is denoted in German by a verb in the active voice, and in French – and also in English: *to be quoted/listed* – by one in the passive voice. It is difficult to say which of the two is more logical.

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Kaufpreis* – PURCHASE PRICE

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Kauf auf Probe* – SALE ON APPROVAL

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*Zahlungsbilanz* – BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*Zahlungsrisiko* – RISK OF NON-PAYMENT

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*to repay debts* – SCHULDEN ZURÜCKZAHLEN

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*to assign export debts* – EXPORTFORDERUNGEN ABTRETEN

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*to represent both debtors and creditors* – SOWOHL SCHULDNER ALS AUCH GLÄUBIGER VER-TRETEN

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*trade debtors* – FORDERUNGEN AUS WAREN-LIEFERUNGEN UND LEISTUNGEN

TRANSFER TRIGGER:

*procurement management* – Beschaffungswesen

INTERFERENCE PITFALL:

*procurement tying* – LIEFERBINDUNG

### 5. Cognitive and methodological implications

The last part of this contribution is dedicated to the question of whether and how the pitfall structures described and analysed in this paper should be dealt with in LSP courses. We regard the first of the two questions as rhetorical, because – in the teaching of languages for specific purposes, which typically involves adult learners and limited time budgets (the foreign language in question being only one subject among many others) – paying special attention to error sources and language learning difficulties appears to be not only particularly useful, but an absolute must. This approach makes it possible to achieve cognitive economies by carefully allocating the limited time and memory resources available.

Second, and more seriously, there is the question of what this means for language teaching methodology. Or, to put it more simply: how can these types of structures be taught and learned? Surely not by banning the mother tongue from foreign language teaching,<sup>38</sup> anxiously relying on the target language alone, as was fashionable for some time.<sup>39</sup> Nor – although this is obviously important – by simply bombarding learners with relevant inputs, i.e. by confronting them with each type of pitfall in a great variety of contexts and hoping that they will draw the right conclusions themselves.<sup>40</sup> After all, even highly advanced learners – including those that have lived in a target language country for some time – are prone to fall into the traps described above. In our view, the right approach is to use explicit explanations, with comparisons with the learner's mother tongue being of particular importance.<sup>41</sup>

This emphasis on a contrastive approach is of course not meant to undermine the extensive use of the target language in language teaching. In most cases, learners have not enough opportunities to listen to and speak the target language anyway. So every opportunity that offers itself in class, and even in out-of-class contexts, should be taken. But this does not mean that a small portion (five per cent?) of the time available cannot be devoted to dealing with the problems caused by interference from the source language. We are confident that such a small modicum of contrastiveness will produce disproportionately large positive results, especially as far as language correctness is concerned.

Of course, the contrastive approach requires that the language teachers know the learners' mother tongue and is, therefore, only possible with homogeneous learner groups, i.e. groups having the same mother tongue. In linguistically heterogeneous groups, the direct method is the only alternative. The British language teaching industry catering primarily to such heterogeneous learner groups had no alternative but to use this method. English teachers simply cannot be expected to know a large number of – often exotic – foreign languages. This is one of the reasons why the direct method became so popular, a development supported by the exportation of language learning materials created in the UK to other countries.

As we see it, in the language learning and teaching contexts that form the background to this paper, the cognitive ability of learners, combined with explicit contrastive explanations by teachers, can lead to a level of interlingual language awareness in which comprehensive input and exercises can produce positive results. This point is strongly corroborated by the research on vocabulary acquisition in the foreign language classroom (see Ellis 1994a, b and c, De Florio-Hansen 1994, Böhrner 1997). Actually, the problems caused by false friends, diverging structures and other semantic interlinguistic

pitfalls belong to the semantic level, where explicit knowledge about language is of central importance – whereas on the formal level, morphological and syntactical aspects of lexical knowledge tend to remain implicit. This is the state of affairs, at least according to Ellis 1994b, while Börner 1997 argues that morphological and syntactical aspects of lexical items can be part of explicit knowledge, too.

As for semantic knowledge, Börner 1997 describes a number of its aspects that learners are able to verbalise,<sup>42</sup> and he shows that the learners' explicit semantic knowledge is based to some extent on the explicit explanations given by their teachers. An important segment of this explicit semantic knowledge is interlingual and thus contrastive in nature, i.e. explicitly related to the learners' mother tongue.

Börner 1997: 56 also makes a point concerning learners' behaviour that seems important in dealing with divergent and pseudo-divergent learning structures: he shows that learners tend to differentiate between foreign language near-synonyms by translating them back into their mother tongue, trying to find different equivalents for each of the synonyms in question. This is exactly the type of cue that we try to provide with the help of our structural-semantic schemata, which we, therefore, consider to be suitable tools for the teaching of divergent learning structures. Of course, in most cases, these schemata will not be sufficient in themselves, but will have to be supplemented with short comments and examples.

All this leads to the question of how pitfalls, such as the ones investigated in this paper, can be actually taught and learned in the foreign language classroom, i.e. what specific teaching methods should be used. Well, the first task of the language teacher will be to call the learners' attention to the points s/he knows from experience to be problematic and prone to errors. This can be done simply by making appropriate comments when reading foreign language texts, but perhaps more efficiently by developing and using types of exercises which elicit the errors in question, i.e. by deliberately engineering pitfall situations. Thus a "learning readiness" is created, because it is a well-known fact that "people will learn something most eagerly when they experience a need for that particular piece of knowledge or skill." (James and Garrett 1991a: 19–20, after Bravo Magaña 1986: 308)

What is required to eliminate or at least reduce the number of the – more problematic – production errors is appropriate exercises: in a first stage, the errors are deliberately triggered for language teaching purposes. But – and this is the crucial point – these errors must be corrected and commented upon immediately in class,<sup>43</sup> making explicit comparisons between the source and the target language – or sometimes between different foreign languages. These ad-hoc explanations must be followed up with systematic exercises designed to consolidate the new insights.

We argue that awareness-raising can contribute to improving foreign language competence, but that it is certainly not sufficient in itself. It can – and should – play a strictly subservient role in the overall language acquisition process. (For a critical view see James and Garrett 1991a: 17–20 as well as House 1997.)

The whole process typically involves three stages: a) elicitation of errors, b) explanations / awareness-raising, c) consolidation / automation.

An example of how to design and structure such a sequence of exercises can be found in Lavric and Fichler 1998/2003, a business French textbook. The book comprises three main parts:<sup>44</sup> a battery of introductory exercises designed to elicit the errors in question, a section focussing on explanations and translations (including the structural schemata and all necessary cues and illustrative examples) and finally, a consolidation and application section containing exercises in which the recently acquired lexical knowledge has to be applied in new but characteristic contexts.<sup>45</sup>

An – as yet unpublished – set of exercises appropriate for business English has been developed by Weidacher for seminars addressing business English teachers at Austrian high schools. The types of exercises used in this seminar material include fill-ins, translations into the target language, summaries of source language texts in the target language, exercises geared to finding antonyms, and matching exercises, all designed to prevent production or reception errors.

As for sensitising students to the existence of pitfalls, we have found the use of slapstick examples very helpful. Even students with a low degree of language awareness can be shocked into paying attention to potential pitfalls by treating them with word-for-word translations of everyday phrases. Rendering *Gleich geht es los!* as *Equally it goes loose!* is always good for an – awareness-raising – laugh in the classroom.

That said, it should be clear that the real touchstone comes later, when the students have long put their textbooks aside. It is the extent to which learners continue to spontaneously use the difficult items correctly in such non-specific tasks as role-plays, discussions and essays, and last but not least in real-life interaction, that should be seen as the true measure of the success or failure of the contrastive approach outlined here.

To avoid interferences characteristic of interlinguistic semantic pitfalls such as false friends, diverging structures, broken word families and cross-cultural diverging perspectives, the authors advocate the use of an explicitly contrastive, cognitive-structural, and language-awareness centred methodology in specialized vocabulary acquisition.

### Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel leistet einen Beitrag zur Erforschung von falschen Freunden und anderen interlingualen Sprachfällen, die in Wirtschaftsentgeltlich- und Wirtschaftsfranzösischkursen für fortgeschrittene Lerner mit Deutsch als Ausgangssprache auftreten. Unser Hauptaugenmerk gilt der Terminologie und semantischen Aspekten, wobei wir sowohl Sprachproduktion als auch -rezeption berücksichtigen. Wir sind allerdings nicht primär an Fehlern als solchen interessiert, sondern an den inter- und intralingualen kontrastiven Strukturen, die bei Generationen von Lernenden zu rekurrenten Fehlern geführt haben. Um nicht die Fehler selbst aufzuzählen zu müssen, stellen wir die lexiko-grammatischen Mikrostrukturen der involvierten Sprachen in einer Reihe von Schemata einander gegenüber und ergänzen diese Gegenüberstellungen durch eine gezielte Auswahl von authentischen oder semi-authentischen Kontexten, die die betreffenden semantischen Feinheiten illustrieren.

Wir behandeln einerseits falsche Freunde im engeren Wortsinn, d.h. Zielsprachenwörter oder -ausdrücke, die eine morphologische Ähnlichkeit mit einer Bezeichnung in der Ausgangssprache aufweisen, aber eine andere Bedeutung als diese haben. Andererseits gilt unsere Aufmerksamkeit auch Kategorien, die oft 'falsche Freunde im weiteren Sinn' genannt werden. Es handelt sich dabei um kontrastive Problemfälle verschiedenster Art, wie zum Beispiel um die von uns so genannten 'divergenten Strukturen', bei denen polyseme Verhältnisse der Ausgangssprache irrtümlicherweise auf die Zielsprache (oder umgekehrt) übertragen werden. Für diese weiter gefasste Kategorie halten wir die Bezeichnung 'Sprachfälle' (engl. *pitfalls*) für zutreffender. Unserer Meinung nach stellen die falschen Freunde nur eine – wenn auch sehr wichtige – Unterkategorie des weiter gefassten Begriffes dar. Sprachfallen sind nach unserer Definition interlinguale Problemzonen im Spracherwerb, die zu rekurrenten Fehlern in der Interimsprache bestimmter Lernerguppen führen.

Die unterschiedliche Natur dieser Sprachfallen erfordert einen klassifikatorischen Ansatz, der sowohl didaktisch nützlich als auch theoretisch stringenter sein sollte. Der vorliegende Beitrag legt ein solches Klassifikationschema für die fortgeschrittene englische und französische Wirtschaftsterminologie vor, ein Schema, das unserer Ansicht nach auch in anderen Bereichen des Sprachlernens Anwendung finden könnte, besonders dort, wo es um lexikalische Probleme geht.

### Summary

This article is meant as a contribution to the study of false friends and other pitfalls in advanced business English and French courses for learners with German as source language. We focus on terminology and semantics, taking into account both language production and comprehension. However, we are not primarily interested in errors as such but in the inter- and intralinguistic contrasting structures that have proved to be sources of recurrent problems in generation after generation of learners. In order not to include the erroneous items themselves, we contrast the lexico-semantic microstructures of the languages involved in a series of schematic frames, complemented by a judicious selection of authentic or semi-authentic contexts, meant to highlight the semantic points we want to make.

We focus, on the one hand, on false friends in the narrower sense of the term, i.e. target language words or expressions that are morphologically similar to a source language item but have a different meaning. On the other hand, we also deal with what are often referred to as *false friends in the wider sense of the term*, i.e. contrastive problem items of different nature, such as diverging structures, i.e. points where polysemous patterns of the source language are erroneously transferred to the target language (and vice versa). For this wider category we regard the term *pitfall* more appropriate. In our view, false friends represent only one, albeit very prominent, subcategory of this wider concept. Pitfalls, as we define them, are interlinguistic problem areas in language learning which lead to recurrent deviations in the interlanguage of specific learner groups.

The diverse nature of these pitfalls required a classificatory approach, meant to be both didactically useful and theoretically rigorous. The present contribution provides such a classification scheme for advanced business English and French terminology, with possibilities of transfer to other areas and contexts of language learning, especially where lexical problems are involved.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We deliberately use the term *source language* and not *mother tongue* since today's learner groups tend to show a certain degree of heterogeneity as to the linguistic origin of their participants.

<sup>2</sup> Terminology obviously constitutes the central core element of any LSP. See Hoffmann 1984: 21, 23, 76, Mbin and Pelka 1984: 1–2, 14, Fluck 1985: 12, and Lavric 1988: 479–480, 1994b: 86, 97 and 1998.

<sup>3</sup> See our own publications on (LSP) error analysis: Lavric 1988, 1993a and b, 1994a and b, 1998, 2000a and b, 2002b and in prep. a, Fischer, Lavric and Stegu 1994, Lavric and Pichler 1996 and 1998/2003, Fischer and Lavric 2002 and 2003, and Weidacher 1992.

<sup>4</sup> This body of means of expression has been called (might be called) *general LSP style* or, even more paradoxically, *general special language*, see Phal 1968. See also Fomer 1998, for a textbook completely dedicated to the teaching of "general LSP style" in French.

<sup>5</sup> Following Corder 1967, we distinguish between *mistakes*, which are caused by a lack of mindfulness on the part of the learner, and *errors*, which reveal a lack of competence. Obviously, we are only interested in the latter.

<sup>6</sup> Of the many studies on error analysis and learner language we would only like to mention the state-of-the-art article by James 1990 and refer the reader to the extensive bibliographies in Lavric 1994 and 1998. The best (and most original) classification of errors can be found in Knapp-Pothoff 1987: 207, which, moreover, provides an excellent definition of the central concept of error: "Deviations from the repertoire of utterances which a clearly specified group of (real or ideal) speakers of the target language having the same communicative intentions would produce in the same situation" ["Abweichungen von dem Repertoire von Äußerungen, das eine genau bestimmte Gruppe von (realen oder idealen) Sprechern der Zielsprache mit gleichen Mitteilungsinhalten in der gleichen Situation produzieren würde."] For a more recent, and very comprehensive, study on error analysis from a didactic perspective see Kleppin 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Error analysis can claim the credit of having replaced the traditionally negative prejudice towards errors occurring in the language learning process with a more positive perspective, which sees errors as an indispensable stage in the development of an interlanguage (see Nickel 1972: 9, Lavric 1998: 970, Lőrincz 2001: 18, Lochner 2003: 8). See Barros Diez 2006, who investigates not only the errors related to, but also the correct usages of, the Spanish prepositions *por* and *para* in the interlanguage of Germanophone learners.

<sup>8</sup> Error analysis can be used to predict problem areas and, consequently, to prevent errors through appropriate curricular design. This function of error analysis has been recognized very early. It is emphasized e.g. in Nickel 1972: 160, Kaufmann 1974: 4 and 10, Fehse, Nelles and Rattunde 1977: 39, Mayr 1982: 31, Tarantino 1984, Dorrity 1987, and Lavric 1988: 478, 1994: 81 and 1998.

<sup>9</sup> The term *false friend*, or rather its French equivalent *faux ami*, originates in Koessler and Derocquigny's state of research in the 1970s is, for example, reflected in the theoretical article by Maillot 1977. For a terminological and bibliographical overview of work done in the 1990s, which takes several language pairs into account and schematically contrasts the various classification schemes, see Heinle 1992: 309–315. A less comprehensive, but more recent and extremely interesting, overview is provided by Gabrovšek 1998: 166.

<sup>10</sup> This is explicitly stated in Nibbold 1993: 201 and Gabrovšek 1998: 166.

<sup>11</sup> In many definitions, including the original one by Koessler and Derocquigny 1928, etymological relations between the error-prone items are taken into account. Others, e.g. Maillot 1977: 67, emphasize the role of what have come to be called *internationalisms*. See Gabrovšek 1998: 165 for these two aspects.

<sup>12</sup> Although there is neither a uniform definition of the term *false friend* nor a generally accepted classification of the different types of this linguistic phenomenon in the relevant literature, all collections of false friends list categories other than false friends in the narrower sense of the term. These categories differ from author to author, although most authors agree on certain key types (a good overview can be found in Heinle 1991: 313–314). See Gabrovšek 1998: 166: "[M]ost linguists are likely to accept as false friends all those pairs that display an intralingual problem of meaning of whatever kind, always caused by actual or assumed surface similarity."

<sup>13</sup> Faux amis in the broader sense of the term also comprise what have come to be called "*barbarisms*" such as *Fr. \*expecter* (the correct equivalent being *s'attendre à*), divergent genders (*Ger. die Rolle – Fr. le rôle*), slight morphological or orthographic differences (*Fr. théorique* for *Ger. theoretisch*, *Fr. correspondance* for *Ger. Korrespondenz*) and many others.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Lavric 2000a as well as Fischer and Lavric 2002 and 2003.

<sup>15</sup> A number of contributions dealing with contrastive approaches in language teaching and learning can be found in Gnutzmann 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, the type of language awareness we are interested in here is the one related to foreign language teaching and learning, and not the one related to mother tongue education and literacy or to developing a critical awareness for language in everyday life. (For these distinctions, see e.g. James and Garrett 1991a and b, Edmondson and House 1997: 5 or Sharwood Smith 1997.)

<sup>17</sup> The importance of consciousness and cognition in foreign language teaching and learning is stressed from a psychological perspective by Schmidt 1990 and from a didactic perspective by Sironić-Bonetić 1990. See also Vogel 1990 and Berényi 1982: 95, the latter on the teaching of business French.

<sup>18</sup> *La succursale* is the general term, a specific expression in banking would be *l'agence*.

<sup>19</sup> See von Beseler and Jacobs-Wüstefeld 1976, Breitsprecher, Calderwood-Schnorr, Terrell and Morris 1997, Dudenredaktion and Oxford University Press 1998, Diel and Lorenz 2000, Hambrook and Wessels 2006.

<sup>20</sup> The concept of "default supplier" language originates with Williams and Hammarberg 1998, who were able to demonstrate that, in the language learning process, it is often not so much the mother tongue but a previously learnt foreign language that is activated along with the new interlanguage and, in case of doubt, employed as lexicon supplier for foreign language utterances.

<sup>21</sup> This is also true of different Romance languages learnt consecutively, see Barrera-Vidal 1995: 19–21 (about German, French and Spanish).

<sup>22</sup> The expression is taken from Fehse, Nelles and Rattunde 1977. *Divergenz* is already mentioned by Gnutzmann 1972. Gabrovšek 1998: 169 coined the term *diverging polysemy*.

<sup>23</sup> See Flament-Boistrancourt 1985.

<sup>24</sup> We cannot refrain from suggesting that good old semantic structuralism, which is often considered outdated, can still provide learners with a valuable help in vocabulary acquisition.

<sup>25</sup> *or lorque*.

<sup>26</sup> Although by meaning "up to" belongs to general English, it plays an important role in business communication because it indicates a deadline – and what would business life be without deadlines?

<sup>27</sup> On the dichotomy transfer / interference see Mayr 1982: 29–30 and Lavric 1988: 476–477 and 1994: 74, and above all the terminological clarification in Rattunde 1977: 12. *Transfer* is often used to denote both positive and negative transfers from the mother tongue (or another foreign language). Rattunde suggests restricting the expression to positive, successful instances of transfer, contrasting it with – negative – interferences, with *inference* functioning as a hyperonym for the two terms.

<sup>28</sup> As for linguistic literature, many, although not all, collections of false friends take this constellation into account. Labarre and Bossuyt 1988 on English-French do not include it. Vanderperren 1994/2001 on French-German, Wagner and Cheval 1997 on German-French and Caiazza 1999 on Italian-German provide numerous examples, as does Nibbold 1993 on technical language.

<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the theoretical contributions by Thiemer 1979 and Wojtak 1984 on German-Spanish / Spanish-German establish divergent structures as a category in their own right ("partial semantic congruence", Wojtak 1984: 124). Consequently, the collection by Wojtak and Herrmann 1993, which is based on the contributions mentioned above, takes systematic account of them. Gabrovšek 1998: 170 on Slovenian-English and Kattenbusch 1993 on German-Italian explicitly present them as a distinct class as well. Štešič-Jarbu 1998 investigates exactly the same phenomenon with reference to Arabic and French. Witness the title of her paper: "L'influence des polysemes de la langue maternelle sur l'apprentissage du vocabulaire en langue étrangère". Last, but not least, these difficulties are analysed in Lavric 1988, 1994 and 1998 (on German-French business language) under the heading of "Fehler durch falsche Übertragung muttersprachlicher Polysemieverhältnisse" ('errors caused by erroneous transfers of mother-tongue polysemic relations') – and already as "Divergente Lernstrukturen" ('divergent learning structures') in Lavric 2000a and Fischer and Lavric 2002 and 2003.

<sup>30</sup> MacWhinney 1992 is a psycholinguistic study on foreign language acquisition; see his conclusion (p. 385): "[T]here is fairly general transfer across particular well-worn paths, such as the path which allows the transfer of the meanings underlying L1 words to L2 words. In some cases simple transfer is blocked and the learner develops a set of strategies to get around this blockage by postulating more complex remappings from L1 to L2."

<sup>31</sup> Here (and in examples 12 and 16, see below) the use of bold print obviously does not indicate morphological similarity, but serves to highlight the dominant meaning.

<sup>32</sup> Sometimes the specialized meaning of a term can be overgeneralized at the expense of its everyday sense. An interesting illustration of this fact is that advanced students of business English often fail to realise that such technical terms as *issue* (*Emission*) and *equity* (*Eigenkapital*) are actually polysemes and have a second meaning in general English, viz. *Problem / Frage / Sache / Issue* and *Gerechtigkeit (equity)*. In these cases, the fact that it is the business meaning of the term that is most firmly anchored in the minds of the learners leads to errors in general English. Students (and teachers) apparently have overemphasised technical terminology at the expense of general English.

<sup>33</sup> See detailed explanations and a comparison with the corresponding Italian terms in Fischer and Lavric 2002: 107 and 2003: 68.

<sup>34</sup> For more details on the various meanings of *account* see Obenaus and Weidacher 2006: 11–14.

<sup>35</sup> Many thanks to Cécile Blaimschtein-Wolf and Gabriele Schwarz-Frömel for collecting these French examples as well as those in the next section.

<sup>36</sup> Engl. *career* means both *Karriere*, which has a positive connotation, and *beruflicher Werdegang*, which has a neutral one.

<sup>37</sup> Pitfalls based on interferences between general and specific terminology are also investigated by Nibbold 1993 (in science and technology contexts). See also Gabrovšek 1998: 169, who identifies an additional subcategory, which includes terms that have the same denotation but different connotations, are used at different stylistic levels or exhibit different collocation patterns. A German-English example belonging to this subcategory would be *Ger. Profit* and *Engl. Profit*.

<sup>38</sup> Heinle 1992 has the significant subtitle "Ein Beitrag zur Frage der innersprachlichen faux amis" ('A contribution to the question of intralingual faux amis'). The subcategory she identifies as potential faux-amis sources are specific terminologies, as well as regional and historical varieties of one and the same language. Her examples relating to German remain, however, anecdotal (this is, among other things, due to the fact that she only regards misunderstandings that have actually occurred as proven instances of faux amis).

<sup>39</sup> In this sense, the corresponding adjectives are *bien élevé / mal élevé – gut / schlecht erzogen*.

<sup>40</sup> One prominent example is the much-noted doctoral dissertation by Hummel 1993, entitled "Cadre, employé und Angestellter".

<sup>38</sup> This position was upheld (with special regard to false friends and divergent learning structures) as recently as 1991 by Sonaiya, who thinks that learners should link (and compare) target language words with other target language words, and give source language words a wide berth.

<sup>39</sup> In his 1995 article, Barrera-Vidal sketches a short history of the transfer-and-interference debate in language teaching research and contrastive linguistics: he regards as outdated theoretical positions on interlingual transfers that see the mother tongue (or other languages acquired earlier) primarily as an obstacle to language learning. In the early 1960s, in the first enthusiasm for the new audio-lingual and audio-visual methods, this approach led to the banning from foreign language teaching of any reference to the mother tongue. In a later phase, new approaches began to take into account not only – negative – interferences but also opportunities for positive transfers (from both the mother tongue and other foreign languages). Here the focus was not only on typical errors, but on interlanguage in its totality. In our view, the pendulum seems to have swung back to the other extreme: the concept of positive transfers is central to a new approach called *Mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktik*, under which learners are taught passive competences in a number of interrelated languages (e.g. Romance languages, Slavic languages), having formally (and formerly) studied only one of them, e.g. French/Russian. (See Meilbner and Reinfrid 1998 and 2001.)

<sup>40</sup> At any rate, this seems to be what Spéa-Jarube 1998 suggests. However, her examples comprise mainly verbs and adjectives, where the syntagmatic dimension, i.e. the combinability with special contexts, seems to be of particular importance. But in the case of nouns the paradigmatic dimension, i.e. the difference in meaning between related terms, plays an at least equally important role. However, Spéa-Jarube additionally suggests using annotated word lists to facilitate the learning of divergent structures. This implicitly confirms the importance of the cognitive dimension and of language awareness, especially when it comes to dealing with lexical-structural difficulties such as the ones analysed here.

<sup>41</sup> As for the role of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, see the diverging positions of Atkinson 1987 (the mother tongue as an additional pedagogical resource) and Harbord 1992 (the use of the mother tongue as a lost opportunity to speak the foreign language). Causa 1997 and 2002, Camilleri 1998 and Lavric 2002a and in prep. b provide empirical evidence on the actual use of the mother tongue in foreign language classrooms.

<sup>42</sup> See the title of De Florio-Hansen's 1994 book: „Vom Reden über Wörter“ (‘Talking about words’).

<sup>43</sup> James and Garrett 1991a: 19 insist on the importance of feedback and valid theoretical models in raising foreign language awareness.

<sup>44</sup> Plus some additional facilities such as an introductory overview, a multiple-choice final test, a German and French index, and, of course, a key to all exercises.

<sup>45</sup> Generally speaking, the exercises proposed in this context consist of translations into the target language. In our view, they represent the most demanding – and the most efficient – type of task intended to improve a group of learners' foreign language competence. Of course, a teacher using this textbook can easily transform the translation exercises into fill-ins and other tasks that s/he thinks to be less demanding or more appropriate for his/her group of learners.

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