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Real and pseudo-divergent learning structures: On some "pitfalls" in French and Italian business language for German learners

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Abstract

This article analyses two types of pitfalls in foreign language learning: (i) The well-known "divergent learning structures", which are lexemes and structures providing a more finely grained semantic organization in the foreign language than in the mother tongue; and (ii) a new category, namely "pseudo-divergent structures", which comprises cases where the two languages make exactly the same distinction, but where learners are unable to perceive this parallel, over-generalizing one of the two terms. These two types of difficulties are illustrated by means of examples from business language teaching, namely from French and Italian courses for German learners. From a cognitive point of view, the divergent learning structures confirm the danger of negative interferences from the mother tongue, but the pseudo-divergent ones show that positive transfers are not always as easy as they are supposed to be. Therefore, an explicitly contrastive, awareness-raising methodology is advocated.

Gli errori sono necessari, utili come il pane
e spesso anche belli: per esempio, la torre di Pisa
'Errors are necessary, useful like food,
and often also beautiful, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa'
(Rodari 1993: 7-8)

1. Introduction

1.1. *On the psycholinguistics of foreign language teaching*

While the processes involved in foreign language learning have been researched extensively, there is a surprising dearth of corresponding studies of the psycholinguistics of foreign language teaching. And this although it cannot be disputed that the years spent in teaching a foreign language will leave their mark on the teacher involved. The difference between an experienced and an inexperienced language teacher is an aspect that would definitely merit more research attention in cognitive linguistics.

One interesting cognitive phenomenon that is bound to occur in the course of teaching a foreign language over a number of years is a language teacher's ability to anticipate potential learning difficulties and to almost routinely forecast errors.

To perhaps slightly overstate the case, for the experienced language teacher each word in a language teaching task spontaneously conjures up its erroneous realization by the learners. It is anticipated almost automatically, and every text used by the experienced teacher in a language teaching context acquires willy-nilly, as it were, a potential error linguistics dimension.

The most trite example of such error anticipation is the teacher's ability to perfectly imitate the wrong accent of his/her students. But the teacher's implicit knowledge in this field is far more extensive. An experienced language teacher can predict morphological, syntactic and semantic sources of error with such a degree of certainty as to be able to use them in tests or in prophylactic exercises.

The relevant cognitive structures of the language teacher exhibit an isomorphic relationship with the cognitive difficulties of the students, as well as with the structural divergences between the target and source languages. They are part of his/her language awareness, and can or should ideally be passed on to his/her learners.¹

The collection of false friends and other pitfalls presented below can be interpreted from three different, although interrelated, points of view. It is first – from a contrastive linguistics perspective – a collection of structural divergences between the French, the Italian and the German language, which, from the perspective of error analysis,² manifest themselves in typical errors of German-speaking learners of French and Italian. Thirdly, the experience of the language teacher tells us that these errors are not random but typical and recurring phenomena; the implication, in the opinion of the authors, being that they deserve to be studied more closely within the framework of language teaching research.

In the present case, the teaching experience has been acquired through teaching French and Italian at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Thus, what follows is a description of two very common types of errors in business French and business Italian – as compared to German – combined with an analysis of their causes on the basis of a comparison of the languages for special purposes structures involved.³

The relations between the structures of the two Romance languages are significant insofar as learners rely on transfer possibilities between related languages. Thus, Italian and French can function as mutual "default suppliers" for multilingual learners.⁴ As a matter of fact, there are quite a few "romanophile" learners who study two Romance languages, the first one being very often French (learned as a second language at school) and the second one Italian or Spanish, studied later at university. Therefore any comparison between Ger-

man and Italian (or Spanish) should also include French, which might act as an important source of positive transfer as well as of negative interference.⁵

In the teaching of languages for special 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 particularly useful. This can help to achieve cognitive economies by carefully allocating the limited time and memory resources available.

All this calls for an explicit contrastive perspective, i.e., an explicit comparison of the source and the target language (and of other languages previously learned)⁶ as well as for an awareness-raising approach⁷ addressing the cognitive abilities and specific knowledge of the learners of languages for special purposes.⁸

There is a logical progression from simple collections of mistakes, through the calculation of frequencies and the identification of error areas, to their interpretation by comparing the linguistic structures of the source and target languages, and finally to the integration of these contrastive findings in the design of language courses.⁹ This progression, the process by which error linguistics 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, namely the so-called "faux amis" research.

1.2. *Faux amis*

The term "faux amis"¹⁰ has, by common consent, two meanings and is thus actually a polyseme, comprising faux amis in a narrower and those in a broader sense.¹¹ Lexemes with the same (or a very similar) interlingual form but with different meanings are referred to as faux amis in the more narrow sense.¹² This contrast can exist between the mother tongue and the foreign language, or between two foreign languages. An example (1) from business language would be the relationship between Fr. *la filiale* 'subsidiary company' for Ger. *die Tochtergesellschaft*, and Ger. *die Filiale* 'branch establishment', for Fr. *la succursale* or *l'agence*.¹³

(1)	die Filiale	die Tochtergesellschaft
	la succursale	la filiale

Faux amis in the broader sense are all kinds of target language items which pose difficulties due to mother tongue (or other foreign language) interferences.

Although there is no uniform definition, division or delimitation of different types of faux amis in the relevant literature, all collections of faux amis list categories other than faux amis in the narrow sense. These categories differ

from author to author, although most authors agree on certain key categories,¹⁴ cf. Gabrovšek (1998: 166): "[M]ost linguists are likely to accept as false friends all those pairs that display an interlingual problem of meaning of whatever kind, always caused by actual or assumed surface similarity."

Faux amis in the broader sense comprise the so-called "barbarismes" such as Fr. **expecter* (correct: *s'attendre à 'to expect'*), Ital. **gli esporti* (correct: *le esportazioni 'exports'*), **le investimenti* (correct: *gli investimenti 'investments'*), divergent genders (Ger. *die Rolle* – Fr. *le rôle 'role'*), slight morphological or orthographic differences (Fr. *théorique*, Ital. *teorico* for Ger. *theoretisch 'theoretical'*; Fr. *correspondance*, Ital. *corrispondenza* for Ger. *Korrespondenz 'correspondence'*) and many others.

Moreover, they include as a prominent category divergent learning structures, which will be dealt with in the first part of this article, and, as a less prominent but equally interesting type, pseudo-divergent structures, which are the subject of the second part. But first we will explain the terms "divergent" and "pseudo-divergent learning structures".

1.3. *Divergent and pseudo-divergent learning structures: Definition and first examples*

It is a well-known fact that every language looks at the world differently. Put more academically, it divides, structures and punctuates it differently. The problem manifests itself most acutely in the so-called "divergent learning structures",¹⁵ i.e., lexemes and structures exhibiting a more finely grained semantic organization in the foreign language than in the mother tongue: "[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." (Sonaiya 1991: 283)

Consider only the almost unfathomable opposition between the verbs of being in Spanish, *ser* and *estar*, or the past tense forms in the Romance languages as opposed to German. Here, learning foreign languages means learning new conceptual differences, acquiring cognitive distinctions,¹⁶ in other words, structuring the world anew.¹⁷ Sonaiya puts it thus:

The primary task in vocabulary acquisition is [...] a continuous refining of meaning and readjustment of boundaries between lexical items. (Sonaiya 1991: 274)

[A]s knowledge increases, changes occur in the structural organization of the vocabulary of the target language by the learner. (Sonaiya 1991: 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. (Sonaiya 1991: 281)

Actually, this is just the kind of challenge we are constantly confronted with in life, for instance when, as children, we at first call all dogs *bow-wow* and only later learn to distinguish between the different breeds, or when the history of the world teaches us that there is no such people as *the Yugoslavs* (not any longer, that is), but only *Slovenes, Croats, Serbs* etc. Whoever learns a foreign language, however, will be confronted with that challenge to a much higher degree: For example, he or she has to acknowledge the fact that the German conjunction *wenn* has two equivalents in many languages: Eng. *if* and *when*, Fr. *si* and *quand*,¹⁸ Ital. *se* and *quando*, Span. *si* and *cuando*. Learners of these languages face the same difficulties, tending to use *when*, *quand*, *quando* and *cuando* in both a temporal as well as a conditional sense, which, in error linguistics terminology, represents a case of overgeneralization.¹⁹ In short, the Romance languages and English – as compared to German – have an additional semantic distinction, which leads to interference errors through overgeneralization (using temporal *when*, *quand*, *quando* or *cuando* in the conditional sense as well). It is thus a classical instance of a divergent learning structure, which could be represented as in (2).

(2)

Ger.	wenn
Eng.	if when
Fr.	si quand
Ital.	se quando
Span.	si cuando

Divergent learning structures are a typical source of interference errors,²⁰ probably considerably more frequent than the classical faux amis in the narrow sense.

As for the linguistic literature, many, although not all, collections of faux amis take this constellation into account. Labarre and Bossuyt (1988) on English–French exclude it; Vanderperren (2001) on French–German, Wagner and Cheval (1997) on German–French as well as Caiazza (1999) on Italian–German provide numerous examples, as does Nübold (1993) on technical language.²¹

On the other hand, the theoretical contributions by Thiemer (1979) and Wotjak (1984), on German–Spanish and Spanish–German respectively, establish divergent structures as a category in its own right ("partial semantic congruence" [Wotjak 1984: 124]). Consequently, the collection by Wotjak 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. Sbėa-Jarbue (1998) investigates exactly the same phenomenon with reference to Arabic and French. Witness, the title of her paper: *L'influence*

des polysèmes de la langue maternelle sur l'apprentissage du vocabulaire en langue étrangère [The influence of mother tongue polysemes on foreign language vocabulary learning]. Last but not least, these difficulties are analysed in Lavric (1988, 1994, 1998) (on German–French business language) under the heading of *Fehler durch fälschliche Übertragung muttersprachlicher Polysemieverhältnisse* [Errors caused by wrong transfers of mother-tongue polysemic relations] and, already as *Divergente Lernstrukturen* [Divergent learning structures] in Lavric (2000).

However, there is another category of error sources which is much less prominent and has hardly ever been noted in linguistic literature, but which is certainly equally interesting from a cognitive and didactic perspective. These error sources will be called “pseudo-divergent learning structures”. To explain their nature, let us again use our example of Romance equivalents of Ger. *wenn* as a starting point. Actually, it is not 100% true that there is no such distinction at all in the German language. After all, there is the well-known conditional conjunction *falls* in German, the usages of which correspond to Eng. *if*, Fr. *si*, Ital. *se* and Span. *si*. The only difference is that in conditional usage, it always competes with *wenn*, making the opposition an inclusive one in German, while we have a privative opposition in English and the Romance languages: Eng. *if* and *when*, Fr. *si* and *quand*, Ital. *se* and *quando*, Span. *si* and *cuando* are mutually exclusive. Therefore, the correct pattern looks like (3).

(3)

Ger.	wenn	
	falls	
Eng.	if	when
Fr.	si	quand
Ital.	se	quando
Span.	si	cuando

Example (3) shows that by including the less frequent *falls* and clearly representing the equivalent meanings, German can indeed provide help in learning the Romance and English equivalents. This will be the subject of the second part of this contribution, in which we shall deal with what seem at first sight to be divergent learning structures, which may lead to interference errors in the form of overgeneralizations, but where a corresponding distinction exists in the mother tongue, although this correspondence may not be immediately recognized by learners.

Examples of the two types of structure, i.e., both real and pseudo-divergent, are taken from business French and Italian as contrasted with German.

2. Divergent learning structures

We shall first deal with the classic divergent learning structures. These comprise a variety of different constellations: Although they always reflect lexical or even semantic difficulties, the divergent structure can appear on various levels, different language varieties can be involved and finally, there can be multiple divergences or even more complex types of corresponding structures. Moreover, a divergent structure between German and French can have an exact parallel between German and Italian, but the two Romance languages may also diverge, so that, for instance, Italian may have an additional complication compared to French.

2.1. *un changement/une modification un cambiamento/una modificazione changer/modifier cambiare/modificare*

Our first example is a simple, straightforward divergence, with the two Romance languages being in conformity with each other: the equivalents of the German verb *verändern* ‘to change’ and the noun *eine Veränderung* ‘a change’. According to the extent of change, French and Italian distinguish between *un changement/un cambiamento* on the one hand, and *une modification/una modificazione* on the other. If the change is a fundamental one, i.e., a radical alteration, the word used is *changer/cambiare*; if it pertains only to details and is thus basically a modification, *modifier/modificare* is used (4).

(4)

	Veränderung, verändern (total, radical)
change, changer	(partial, of details) modification, modifier
cambiamento, cambiare	modificazione, modificare

The semantic issue is therefore clear and simple; however, complications arise from the existence of a related noun: *le change/il cambio*, corresponding to Ger. *der Wechselkurs* ‘rate of exchange’, as well as from morphological divergences, because the reflexive verb *sich verändern* ‘to change’ has to be translated into the intransitive *changer/cambiare* in the two Romance languages, while *se changer/cambiarsi* corresponds to the German verb *sich umziehen* ‘to change [clothes]’ – a classical faux ami constellation (5).²²

(5)

sich verändern	sich umziehen
changer/cambiare	se changer/cambiarsi

2.2. *un paysan/un agriculteur un contadino/un agricoltore*

Judging by its primary pattern, the next example does not seem to belong to divergent learning structures, because two French²³ and Italian words, respec-

tively, do not correspond to one but two German words this time. As can be seen in (6), French and Italian once more show conformity with each other.

(6)

Bauer	Landwirt
paysan	agriculteur
contadino	agricoltore

The opposition in (6) is not a semantic one but one pertaining to the language register: *Bauer*, *paysan* and *contadino* 'farmer' are part of general terminology, while *Landwirt*, *agriculteur* and *agricoltore* represent specific terminology. Thus, each of the three languages has a general and a specific term for the profession in question.²⁴ However, their conditions of usage show significant divergence. If, in a journalistic-political context, the farmers are to be viewed as a group sharing a common interest, German takes unproblematic recourse to the general term *die Bauern* (for example, *Die Bauern demonstrieren gestern gegen die Agrarpolitik der EU*. 'Yesterday the farmers staged a demonstration against the Common Agriculture Policy'). French and Italian, on the other hand, definitely require the specific term *les agriculteurs/gli agricoltori* in such contexts, since the term *les paysans/i contadini* would be regarded as pejorative (*Les agriculteurs ont manifesté hier contre la politique agricole de l'UE. Ieri gli agricoltori hanno fatto una manifestazione contro la politica agricola dell'UE*). The terms *paysan* and *contadino* evoke images of farm holidays (*raccogliere la frutta assieme ai contadini* 'to harvest the fruit together with the peasants'), ranging from rural idylls to rural backwardness. Terms identical both semantically and even with regard to register can thus show divergence in respect of their conditions of usage, as already shown by Wojak (1984: 120, 129).²⁵ The "right" pattern in this case should therefore be as in (7) (with the divergent structure once more emerging clearly).

(7)

Bauer	Landwirt
paysan	agriculteur
contadino	agricoltore

Example (7) shows that code differences may play an important role in divergent structures (cf. Lavric 1994: 101, 1998: 973–974). Divergence can not only be found between L1 and L2, but often also between everyday language and special languages, and, generally speaking, between two subcodes of the same language.²⁶

- 2.3. *les chômeurs* *i disoccupati, i senzalavoro*
i lavoratori in mobilità/in cerca di lavoro
i lavoratori in esubero/esuberanti

The next example (8) involves only one of the two Romance languages; however, divergence here is at least five-fold. It is about the different, subtly shaded denotations for a problematic group in society, i.e., "the unemployed". In French, as in German, they are designated by one single straightforward term, namely Fr. *les chômeurs* and Ger. *die Arbeitslosen*. Italian language and culture however have a particular regard for these people, a fact which is reflected in euphemisms and taboo. In this context, the time dimension, as well as that of expectations and chances, plays a vital role. The terms *i disoccupati* and *i senzalavoro* evoke images of long-term unemployed people and those whose integration into the labour market seems particularly difficult (*i disoccupati giovanili*, e.g., in the *mezzogiorno* 'the young unemployed, e.g., of Southern Italy'); both terms convey a certain hopelessness and are therefore often unconsciously or even deliberately avoided. Italian journalists prefer the terms *i lavoratori in mobilità* and *i lavoratori in cerca di lavoro* 'workers who have been released, who are looking for employment', which suggest a transitory state.

However, a different aspect, which is also determined by euphemism, is expressed by the terms *i lavoratori in esubero* or *i lavoratori esuberanti* 'redundant workforce', i.e., surplus workers who have either been made redundant already or will have to be made redundant in the near future. Finally, *gli inoccupati* is used to refer to all people (like, e.g., women and young persons) who have never been employed before but are looking for their first job.

(8)

Arbeitslose chômeurs		
disoccupati	senzalavoro	lavoratori in mobilità/ lavoratori in cerca di lavoro
		lavoratori in esubero/ lavoratori esuberanti
		inoccupati

- 2.4. *le chiffre/le nombre* *la cifra/il numero*

The next example shows a further increase in complexity, where French and Italian, however, march in step again. It is a particularly tricky case because complex and non-isomorphic structures stand in opposition on either side, in the two Romance languages as well as in German. Yet it looks simple enough at first sight: It is about the equivalents of Ger. *die Zahl* 'number', i.e., *le chiffre/la cifra* vs. *le nombre/il numero*. In this context, let us disregard lex-

icalizations, "expressions figées" such as Fr. *le chiffre d'affaires*,²⁷ Ger. *der Umsatz* 'turnover', or Fr. *nombre de*, Ger. *zahlreiche* 'numerous', and focus on the core meaning of *Zahl*, *chiffre/cifra* and *nombre/numero*. A first glance suggests a simple divergence as in (9).

(9)

	Zahl	
	chiffre	nombre
	cifra	numero

However, an analysis of relevant examples soon reveals that things are much more complicated, as various German equivalents come into play. Fr. *le chiffre/Ital. la cifra* are also equivalents of Ger. *die Ziffer*²⁸ i.e., 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, the elements our numbers consist of. In the sentence *Un nombre est une suite de chiffres/Un numero è una sequenza di cifre* 'a number is a sequence of digits', *nombre/numero* corresponds to *Zahl* and *chiffre/cifra* to *Ziffer*, as could be expected.

In the following examples, however, *chiffre/cifra* has to be translated using *Zahl*:

- (a) *Les chiffres fournis par le ministère sont faux./Le cifre fornite dal ministero sono sbagliate.*
 'The figures provided by the ministry are wrong.'
- (b) *Les auteurs ne donnent pas de chiffres précis./Gli autori non danno delle cifre precise.*
 'The authors don't give any precise figures.'
- (c) *... 20 milliards de dollars. Ce chiffre indique que ... 20 miliardi di dollari. Questa cifra indica che ...*
 '... 20 billion dollars. This figure indicates that ...'

Fr. *nombre/Ital. numero* are mostly used in the sense of Ger. *Anzahl*, i.e., *die Zahl* or *die Anzahl der Opfer*: *le nombre des victimes/Il numero delle vittime* 'the number of victims'. This usage correlates with the existence of a supplement (*le nombre de quelque chose/il numero di qualcosa* 'the number of something'). This is one of the typical cases in which one language offers the possibility of sloppy expression: For instance, in German it is possible to say *die Zahl der Opfer* instead of *die Anzahl der Opfer*, while other languages require more terminological precision. Such examples already foreshadow the problems dealt with in the second part of this contribution.

Apart from that, there are also forms of usage of *nombre/numero* without supplements and where Ger. *Anzahl* would not be possible: *une dictée de nombres/un dettato di numeri* 'a dictate of numbers'; *les nombres naturels/i numeri naturali* 'natural numbers'; *les nombres réels/i numeri reali* 'real numbers';

le nombre π/il numero π 'the number π'. The complete pattern of the field therefore has to look like that in (10).

(10)

Ziffer	Zahl	Anzahl
chiffre		nombre
cifra		numero

It is remarkable that French and Italian each contribute two words and that German contributes even three words to this structure. This actually results in three different divergent structures, as shown in (11), one causing German interferences in French and Italian, and two causing French or Italian interferences in German (the latter allows us to predict the occurrence of errors for French and Italian learners of German as well).²⁹

(11)

Ziffer	Zahl	Anzahl
chiffre		nombre
cifra		numero

Yet, the middle one of the three divergences still remains unsolved, namely, the distinction between *chiffre/cifra* and *nombre/numero* in those cases where neither *Ziffer* nor *Anzahl* are possible equivalents. A look at some of the examples provided in this section (*ces chiffres sont faux/queste cifre sono sbagliate* vs. *les nombres naturels/i numeri naturali*) shows that *nombre/numero* is more of a mathematical term, an abstract measure, the cardinality (number of elements) of a set. *Chiffre/cifra*, on the other hand, is an element in a statistic or a table, something which materializes in black and white, in writing. Further research will be necessary to shed light on all the subtleties of this distinction.

2.5. *un impôt/une taxe un'imposta/una tassa*

The next example is characterized by the fact that here, French and Italian do not make the same semantic distinction. The real divergent learning structure is between German and French: Ger. *eine Steuer* 'a tax' finds its equivalent in Fr. *un impôt* on the one hand and in Fr. *une taxe* on the other hand, including a subtle semantic difference between the two terms which is difficult to pin down. Why is it *l'impôt sur le revenu* for *die Einkommensteuer/Lohnsteuer* 'income tax', *l'impôt sur les sociétés* for *die Körperschaftsteuer* 'corporation tax' or *l'impôt sur la fortune* for *die Vermögensteuer* 'wealth tax', but *la taxe sur la valeur ajoutée* for *die Mehrwertsteuer/Umsatzsteuer* 'value added tax' or *la taxe sur les chiens* for *die Hundesteuer* 'dog tax' on the other hand?

Roughly speaking, the difference, as shown in (12), is that *un impôt* is imposed on income, while *une taxe* relates to consumption.³⁰

(12)	Steuer (income) impôt	(consumption) taxe
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Italian also has two words for *Steuer*, namely *l'imposta* and *la tassa*, but the distinction is not exactly the same as in French. *L'imposta* is used both in *l'imposta sul reddito* corresponding to *die Einkommensteuer* 'income tax' and *l'imposta patrimoniale* corresponding to *die Vermögensteuer* 'wealth tax', as well as *l'imposta sul valore aggiunto* which corresponds to *die Mehrwertsteuer* 'value added tax'. Examples such as *la tassa sullo smaltimento dei rifiuti solidi urbani (TARSU)*, which is *die Müllabfuhrgebühr* 'utility fee' in German, shed some light on the matter. Ital. *la tassa* always relates to a public service and thus corresponds to the German term *die Gebühr* (13). Therefore, the Italian structure belongs to the category that will be dealt with in the second part of this contribution: Two Italian terms corresponding to two German terms, with a subtle but identical distinction between the two constituent elements – so subtle indeed that the foreign language learner is not always aware of it.

(13)	Steuer imposta	Gebühr tassa
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Having introduced the German term *Gebühr* into the discussion, we would like to point out that the French equivalent for Ger. *Telefongebühr* 'telephone rate' is *la taxe téléphonique*. Thus, Fr. *taxe* also extends to the realm of Ital. *tassa* and Ger. *Gebühr*, as shown in (14).

(14)	Steuer (income) impôt	Gebühr (consumption) taxe	Gebühr tassa
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However, this is not the whole story, because the question has to be asked all over again when it comes to plural forms: How would anger about the government raising *die Steuern* 'taxes' again be expressed in everyday French and Italian? The French expression in this case would be *Le gouvernement augmente encore les impôts!* In contrast to that, an Italian would resort to the theatrical exclamation *Governo ladro! Aumenta di nuovo le tasse!*

2.6. *la balance/le bilan/le budget la bilancia/il bilancio/il budget*
The last example in this part is – unsurprisingly – the most complicated one. Between German and French, things look simple enough: Ger. *die Bilanz* trans-

lates into Fr. *la balance* if it is a macroeconomic balance (*la balance commerciale* 'the balance of trade', *la balance des paiements* 'the balance of payments') but as *le bilan* if it refers to a corporate balance sheet, which means it belongs to the field of business administration. This is an extremely simple example of a divergent learning structure: The polysemic aspects can be easily understood from the point of view of the mother tongue, it is simply a case of one and the same word belonging to two different areas of usage, as shown in (15).

(15)	(economics) balance	Bilanz (business administration) bilan
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Exactly the same distinction can be found in Italian between *la bilancia* and *il bilancio*; the basic pattern therefore looks like (16).

(16)	(economics) balance bilancia	Bilanz (business administration) bilan bilancio
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Unfortunately Ital. *il bilancio* is itself a polyseme: it is used to refer to the federal budget as well, cf. (17).

(17)	(economics) bilancia	Bilanz (business administration) bilancio	Budget budget
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Ger. *das Budget*, however, is polysemic too, denoting not only the federal budget but also a budget allocated to a particular project or purpose. In Italian, that would again be *il budget* (with the English pronunciation). The only positive aspect is that Fr. *le budget* shows total conformity with Ger. *das Budget* in this polysemy (federal vs. individual project budget). Thus, our final pattern (18) comprises four categories, which are subdivided differently in each of the three languages.

(18)	(eco- nomics) balance bilancia	Bilanz (business adminis- tration) bilan bilancio	Budget (government) project budget budget
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Roughly speaking, the difference, as shown in (12), is that *un impôt* is imposed on income, while *une taxe* relates to consumption.³⁰

(12)	Steuer (income) impôt	(consumption) taxe
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Italian also has two words for *Steuer*, namely *l'imposta* and *la tassa*, but the distinction is not exactly the same as in French. *L'imposta* is used both in *l'imposta sul reddito* corresponding to *die Einkommensteuer* 'income tax' and *l'imposta patrimoniale* corresponding to *die Vermögensteuer* 'wealth tax', as well as *l'imposta sul valore aggiunto* which corresponds to *die Mehrwertsteuer* 'value added tax'. Examples such as *la tassa sullo smaltimento dei rifiuti solidi urbani (TARSU)*, which is *die Müllabfuhrgebühr* 'utility fee' in German, shed some light on the matter: Ital. *la tassa* always relates to a public service and thus corresponds to the German term *die Gebühr* (13). Therefore, the Italian structure belongs to the category that will be dealt with in the second part of this contribution: Two Italian terms corresponding to two German terms, with a subtle but identical distinction between the two constituent elements – so subtle indeed that the foreign language learner is not always aware of it.

(13)	Steuer imposta	Gebühr tassa
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Having introduced the German term *Gebühr* into the discussion, we would like to point out that the French equivalent for Ger. *Telefongebühr* 'telephone rate' is *la taxe téléphonique*. Thus, Fr. *taxe* also extends to the realm of Ital. *tassa* and Ger. *Gebühr*, as shown in (14).

(14)	Steuer (income) impôt	Gebühr (consumption) taxe
	imposta	tassa

However, this is not the whole story, because the question has to be asked all over again when it comes to plural forms: How would anger about the government raising *die Steuern* 'taxes' again be expressed in everyday French and Italian? The French expression in this case would be *Le gouvernement augmente encore les impôts!* In contrast to that, an Italian would resort to the theatrical exclamation *Governo ladro! Aumenta di nuovo le tasse!*

2.6. *la balance/le bilan/te budget la bilancia/il bilancio/il budget*

The last example in this part is – unsurprisingly – the most complicated one. Between German and French, things look simple enough: Ger. *die Bilanz* trans-

lates into Fr. *la balance* if it is a macroeconomic balance (*la balance commerciale* 'the balance of trade', *la balance des paiements* 'the balance of payments') but as *le bilan* if it refers to a corporate balance sheet, which means it belongs to the field of business administration. This is an extremely simple example of a divergent learning structure: The polysemic aspects can be easily understood from the point of view of the mother tongue, it is simply a case of one and the same word belonging to two different areas of usage, as shown in (15).

(15)	Bilanz (economics) balance	(business administration) bilan
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Exactly the same distinction can be found in Italian between *la bilancia* and *il bilancio*; the basic pattern therefore looks like (16).

(16)	Bilanz (economics) balance bilancia	(business administration) bilan bilancio
------	----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------

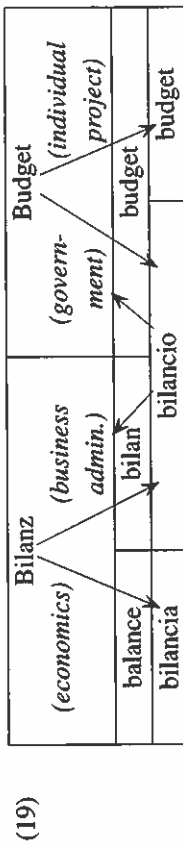
Unfortunately Ital. *il bilancio* is itself a polyseme: it is used to refer to the federal budget as well, cf. (17).

(17)	Bilanz (economics) bilancia	(business administration) bilancio	Budget
------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------

Ger. *das Budget*, however, is polysemic too, denoting not only the federal budget but also a budget allocated to a particular project or purpose. In Italian, that would again be *il budget* (with the English pronunciation). The only positive aspect is that Fr. *le budget* shows total conformity with Ger. *das Budget* in this polysemy (federal vs. individual project budget). Thus, our final pattern (18) comprises four categories, which are subdivided differently in each of the three languages.

(18)	Bilanz (economics) balance bilancia	(business administration) bilan bilancio	(government) budget	Budget (individual project) budget
------	----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	------------------------	------------------------------------------

As with *Ziffer, Zahl, Anzahl* vs. *chiffre/cifra* and *nombre/numero* a total of three different divergent learning structures can be distinguished in pattern (18), including the added difficulty of the two Romance languages not being in conformity with each other this time, as shown in (19).



3. Pseudo-divergent learning structures

The second class of sources of error to be dealt with here has attracted hardly any attention in literature and in faux amis collections, less, at any rate, than the divergent structures discussed in Section 2.³¹ This is due to the fact that in the cases to be discussed, the source and the target language are actually in conformity in terms of their semantic structure, so that at first sight, they should not give rise to any errors.³²

And yet there are quite a few typical and frequent errors which can be traced back to the existing analogies with the mother tongue not being recognized. As with genuine divergent learning structures, these "pseudo-divergent structures" are about overgeneralization errors, if, e.g., Fr. *les effectifs* is used as a synonym for *le personnel*, while it really denotes *Personalstand* 'headcount'; Ger. *das Personal* 'staff', on the other hand, always has to be rendered by *le personnel*. The two languages distinguish between the two concepts in exactly the same way, and the obvious remedy would be to get the learners to memorize the exact, not only the near, equivalents of the concepts involved.

The inaccuracy is often not so much a question of language as it is of cognitive processes. This is the case when conceptual distinctions are not perceived clearly enough or are not regarded as particularly relevant. No wonder that problems such as the ones above occur frequently in special language teaching, where in the course of studies, more and more new concepts and distinctions are introduced and refined. These kinds of structures, which merely seem to be divergent, thus confirm, from the point of view of error linguistics, the existence of a close link between language and content in foreign language teaching for specific purposes.

These "pseudo-divergent" structures prove furthermore that the common expectations concerning transfer from the mother tongue are not necessarily right, since this transfer does not always happen on its own. They rather prove that some cases require cognitive help on the part of the teacher, to guarantee the transfer of conceptual structures from the mother tongue.

3.1. *le revenu/les recettes* *il reddito/le entrate*

The very first example in this section illustrates the inaccurate language use described in Section 3. It is relatively simple, partly because French and Italian are in conformity with each other. Teachers of either language equally complain about the constant confusion of *le revenu*³³/*il reddito* corresponding to Ger. *das Einkommen* '[net] income' and *les recettes/le entrate* which corresponds to *die Einnahmen* 'revenues', cf. (20).

(20)

Einkommen	Einnahmen
revenu	recettes
reddito	entrate

This wrong use occurs only in one direction: Learners overgeneralize *le revenu/il reddito* in both French and Italian, even where the correct terms would be *les recettes/le entrate*. Although the latter is the hyperonym, it is still the less frequent and more specific term, the existence of which is simply not acknowledged in certain phases of learning.³⁴ What comes into play additionally might be an interference from English.

3.2. *estimer/évaluer* *stimare/valutare*

Very much the same holds true for the following example, with Italian paradoxically being more complex and perhaps due to that very fact providing fewer error sources. The example is about the distinction between Ger. *schätzen* and *bewerten*, Fr. *estimer* and *évaluer*, and Ital. *stimare* and *valutare*, corresponding roughly to Eng. 'to estimate' and 'to value'.

Fr. *estimer* and Ital. *stimare* are both highly polysemic, which, however, does not pose a major problem since this polysemy can be found in all the three languages. *Schätzen* can be applied to an object or a person (in the former case this means putting some value on the object, in the latter case it is equivalent to the English 'esteem' and therefore always positive). *Schätzen* (, *dass* ...) can also mean 'guess', if applied to possible future events. All these forms of usage can be unproblematically emulated by *estimer* and *stimare* without leading to errors.

The problem is caused by the opposition between the first-mentioned usage, *ein Objekt schätzen*, and the competitive expression *ein Objekt bewerten*. If *schätzen* is used with reference to an object, a layperson voices his/her opinion about what the object might be worth (roughly corresponding to Eng. 'estimate'); if, however, *bewerten* 'appraise' is used, an expert ascribes a value to the object by virtue of his/her function, and that value will henceforth be linked to the object. The distinction is one of specific terminology and can be found in all three languages investigated, but is very often not recognized by students.

The difference between *schätzen* and *bewerten* is mirrored by the French opposition between *estimer* and *évaluer*. In Italian, *valutare* is the equivalent of *bewerten*; *stimare*, however, is employed for either and can mean both *schätzen* and *bewerten*. This could schematically be represented as in (21).

(21)	schätzen	bewerten
	estimer	évaluer
		valutare
		stimare

3.3. *dernier (passé)/précédent* *scorso/precedente*
prochain/suivant *prossimo/sequente, successivo*

The next example shows how confusion and inaccuracy are not reserved to specific terminology alone but can occur with relatively simple terms as well, even though the mother tongue makes the same distinctions as the foreign language. Once more, Italian and French – and in this case German, too – have parallel structures.

Reference is made to the temporal ranking adjectives, which are typically combined with such nouns as month, year, or century. Here, learners confuse Fr. *dernier* (or *passé*) and *précédent*, Fr. *prochain* and *suivant*, Ital. *scorso* and *precedente*, Ital. *prossimo* and *sequente/successivo* ('last' and 'previous', 'next' and 'following'), even though the opposition principle is the same in all three languages: If the point of reference (the deictic origo) is the here and now, Fr. *dernier* (or *passé*) and *prochain*, and Ital. *scorso* and *prossimo* are used, while a reference point in the past or the future requires *précédent* and *suivant*, or *precedente* and *sequente/successivo*, cf. (22) and (23).

(22)	voriges	voriges
	letztes	vorhergehendes
	vergangenes	
	demie (passé)	précédent
	scorso	precedente

(23)	nächstes	folgendes
	kommendes	darauffolgendes
	prochain	suivant
	prossimo	sequente successivo

3.4. *en plus/De plus, ... in più/Per di più, ...*

One more problem well-known to teachers of Italian as well as of French, is the confusion of Fr. *de plus* and *en plus*, Ital. *per di più* and *in più*, or rather, overgeneralizing *en plus/in più* for either form of usage. Time and again, learners start a sentence with **En plus, .../In più, ...* thus using this term to mark a new step in a process of argumentation. However, for this purpose, *De plus/Per di più*, which correspond to Ger. *Außerdem* 'Moreover', have to be used, while *en plus/in più* mean simply *zusätzlich* 'additional', 'more' (24), thus adding elements not arguments; cf. the sentence: *De plus, il y aura bientôt dans l'Union européenne dix pays en plus./Per di più, ci saranno presto nell'Unione Europea dieci paesi in più.* 'Moreover, there will soon be ten additional countries in the European Union.'

(24)	zusätzlich	Außerdem ...
	en plus	De plus, ...
	in più	Per di più, ...

3.5. *finalment/enfin* *finalmente/in fine*

At first sight, only teachers of Italian seem to have problems with the two terms *finalmente* and *in fine*. Ital. *finalmente* means *endlich* 'at (long) last', in the sense of something for which one has been waiting a very long time. However, learners also use it to introduce the last element in an enumeration – a position in which Ital. *in fine*, meaning *schließlich, zuletzt* 'finally', would actually have to be used. French teachers do not complain about anything similar, because their pupils can make use of a much simpler structure and employ *enfin*, which is good for both types of uses. But as a matter of fact, it might be French that is at the bottom of the Italian learners' difficulties since Fr. *finalment* introduces the last element in an enumeration, i.e., it has exactly the function learners tend to assign to its Italian brother. *Finalmente* is thus revealed as an authentic 'faux ami' (25).

(25)	endlich	schließlich
		finalment
	finalmente	enfin in fine

3.6. *conduire à > entraîner > causer > provoquer > déclencher*
conduire/apporter a > comportare > causer > provocare > scatenare

At this point the examples are getting decidedly more complicated – insofar as they involve ever more elements. French and Italian causative verbs are a case in point (26). Interestingly, the two Romance languages are more or

less parallel in this field, and French and Italian teachers report similar difficulties. One typical error consists in overgeneralizing Fr. *provoquer* or Ital. *provocare*, which learners mix "à toutes les sauces" although it really only serves a relatively narrowly defined area of usage, namely direct causes with mostly negative consequences, cf. *provoquer un choc, une crise, une réaction, des pertes/provocare uno shock, una crisi, una reazione, delle perdite* 'cause a shock, cause/provoke a crisis, cause/provoke a reaction, cause losses'. The learners' favourite verbs in this field seem to be Fr. *causer* and Ital. *causare*, which unfortunately are subject to much narrower restrictions than their German equivalents *verursachen/bewirken*, insofar as they can refer only to negative consequences (*causer des dépenses, causer des dégâts, causer la mort de quelqu'un/causare delle spese, causare dei danni, causare la morte di qualcuno* 'to cause expenses, to cause damage, to cause death'. Another verb often used by learners of French is *mener à 'to lead to'*, the area of usage of which is even more narrowly defined and includes merely indirect causes which, in the long run, will lead to a bad end; typical expressions would be *mener à la mort, mener à la catastrophe* 'lead to/cause death, lead to/cause a catastrophe'. *Mener à* should therefore not be included in the list of causative verbs recommended for usage, while *provoquer/provocare* and *causer/causare* do have a place there, even if their use is limited.

(26)

conduire à > entraîner > causer > provoquer > déclencher			
conduire a > comportare > causare > provocare > scatenare portare a	(etwas) nach sich ziehen	(etwas) Negatives) verur- sachen	(etwas) auslösen Negatives) hervor- rufen
to lead to	to involve	to cause (sth. negative)	to provoke (sth. negative) to trigger

The "larger than" symbols between the five verbs in (26) are meant to show a progression from the most distant and indirect to the most direct cause; the lack of dividing lines between the elements of the table hints at the fact that the different causative verbs are not clearly demarcated in their areas of usage but actually intersect. Thus, e.g., in French, *conduire à* and *entraîner*, or *entraîner* and *causer*, can often be replaced by each other, as can *causer* and *provoquer* or *provoquer* and *déclencher*. The same holds true for the Italian series (which, by the way, is surprisingly parallel to the French one). Clear semantic differences between verbs can only be detected if two verbs in this

pattern are two columns removed from each other. The most indirect causal relationship is represented by *conduire à/conduire a, portare a*, e.g., *La mauvaise gestion a fini par conduire à la faillite/La cattiva gestione ha finito per condurre al fallimento*. 'Poor management finally led to bankruptcy'; the most direct causal relationship is expressed by *déclencher*, e.g., *déclencher une réaction chimique/scatenare una reazione chimica* 'to trigger a chemical reaction', *déclencher la guerre/scatenare la guerra* 'to trigger war'. In between are the relatively neutral terms *entraîner/comportare* and *causer/causare*, with *causer* showing the additional difficulty of being mostly linked to negative consequences (see above)³⁵. This leaves us with Fr. *entraîner* and Ital. *comportare*, which are used currently for mathematical and logical causation, and which are certainly the most recommendable of all causative verbs since they can be employed for both distant and direct causes and do not predict the nature of their consequences.

3.7. *le personnel/les effectifs/les salariés/les employés* *il personale/l'organico/i salariati/gli adetti/gli impiegati*

The last example is no less complicated than the one preceding it. Again it involves both Romance languages, although the parallel is not as complete. The terms to be investigated are those denoting employees, that section of the population integrated in the work process, in particular those in salaried employment. It would be beyond the scope of this article to discuss the whole field, and we will therefore restrict ourselves to those terms which lead to confusion in foreign language teaching, disregarding workers, self-employed people and civil servants as we go along.³⁶

For instance using *les employés*³⁷ (Ger. *die Angestellten* 'clerks') instead of *les salariés* (Ger. *die Arbeitnehmer*) is a frequent overgeneralization in French; this opposition finds its – equally error-prone – parallel between *gli impiegati* and *i salariati* in Italian, cf. (27). The pseudo-divergent structure is in fact an interference from English, where the term *employees* really has the wider meaning attributed by students to its French cognate *employés*.

(27)

Arbeitnehmer	Angestellte
salariés	employés
salariati	impiegati

The distinction mentioned in Section 3 between Fr. *le personnel*, Ger. *das Personal* 'personnel/staff', and Fr. *les effectifs*, Ger. *die Beschäftigtenzahl/der Personalstand* 'headcount' is another very characteristic source of errors in this field. Although students know the term *les effectifs*, which can quite frequently be found in economic texts, they are not aware of its exact meaning.

The problem arises because both terms can be used unproblematically in the most common contexts such as *une réduction du personnel/les effectifs* 'a cut in staff'. In German, speaking of *Reduktion des Personalstands* instead of simply *Reduktion des Personals* even sounds a bit pedantic. On the other hand, there are contexts which unambiguously deal with people, not numbers, and in which no-one would think of writing Ger. **der Personalstand protestierte gegen die Politik des Generaldirektors* *'the headcount protested ...' or **die Zufriedenheit des Personalstands konnte gesteigert werden* *'the headcount's job satisfaction ...'. In French, students like to use *les effectifs* in such contexts as well: **Les effectifs ont protesté contre la politique du P.D.G.*, **la satisfaction des effectifs a pu être augmentée*; perhaps because the French term is familiar, albeit semantically not transparent, to them.

In Italian, similar to German, *il personale* tends to be used for both terms, even though there is a specific term, *l'organico*, for *Personalstand* 'headcount'; one can speak of both *una riduzione del personale* as well as of *una riduzione dell'organico*. However, this distinction is not error-prone at all in Italian; not just because *l'organico* is seldom and therefore not familiar to most students, but mostly because the two competing terms, *l'organico* and *il personale*, are exchangeable in practically all contexts. There is no such strict semantic divide as in French; often, both terms alternate in one and the same text for the sake of stylistic variation.

The semantic structure in the three languages thus has to be represented as in (28).

(28)

Personal	
Beschäftigtenzahl, Personalstand	personnel
effectifs	
organico	personale organico

However, that is not all. Italian has one more additional term – and an additional distinction along with it: *Gli adetti* here denotes those employed, be it in a line of business (*gli adetti all'industria tessile*, *all'industria chimica*, *alle autostrade* 'the employees of the textile industry, of the chemical industry, of highway maintenance'), in a company (*gli adetti della Fiat, delle linee urbane* 'the employees of Fiat, of the municipal transport system') or on a mere construction site (*proibito l'accesso ai non adetti ai lavori* 'no access – workers only'). Apart from that, there is also the term *i salariati*, which, just like the French *les salariés*, is used both for employees in a company or line of business as well as for *die Arbeitnehmer* 'employees' in general. *Gli adetti*, on the

other hand, expresses a specific meaning for which there is no equivalent term in French, as shown in (29).

(29)

Arbeitnehmer	Beschäftigte (<i>firm, industry</i>)
salariati	salariés
salariati	adetti

The whole pattern for this field (30) shows how all three languages investigated make basically comparable (but not always identical) distinctions. However, it also illustrates the terminology's overall complexity by representing a small section of it. In view of such complexity it is hardly surprising that learners do not recognize the existent conformities with the mother tongue.

(30)

Personal	Arbeitnehmer	Beschäftigte (<i>firm, industry</i>)	Angestellte
Beschäftigtenzahl, Personalstand			
effectifs	personnel	salariés	employés
organico		salariati	impiegati
personale organico			

4. Cognitive and methodological implications

The two problems dealt with here, real and pseudo-divergent learning structures, cast an interesting light on the role of the mother tongue in foreign vocabulary acquisition. It was traditionally assumed that convergent semantic-cognitive structures are simply positively transferred while different structures necessarily lead to errors due to negative interference – especially if the foreign language is more finely grained.³⁸ Transfer is considered easy, potential interference a difficulty.

The latter assumption is corroborated by the existence of divergent learning structures, while the former has been shown to be questionable by the existence of pseudo-divergent structures, which shows that interference through overgeneralization can also occur with two languages which have basically comparable structures, and that transfer from the mother tongue is not always as spontaneous and automatic as it is often supposed to be.

Finally, there is the question of what this means for language teaching methodology. Or, put in simpler terms: How can these two types of structures be taught and learned? Surely not by banning the mother tongue from foreign language teaching,³⁹ puristically enforcing teaching in the target language alone, as was fashionable for some time.⁴⁰ Neither – although this is obviously important – by simply confronting learners with as comprehensive an input as possible, i.e., by presenting each item in a great variety of contexts, in the hope that learners will draw the right conclusions by themselves.⁴¹ After all, even very advanced learners often fall into the traps described. Such difficulties can actually only be overcome by means of explicit explanation, with comparisons to the mother tongue always being important.⁴² As for the transfer from another Romance language, in many cases it can prove extremely useful; sometimes, however, it can also be deceptive, because the semantic-cognitive structures are not only divergent between German and the Romance languages but, as could be seen, between French and Italian themselves as well. On these points again, explicit comparison will be extremely useful.

The cognitive ability of learners, combined with explicitly contrastive explanations by teachers, have to provide the soil of interlingual language awareness in which comprehensive input and exercises can prove fruitful. This point is strongly corroborated by the research about vocabulary acquisition in the foreign language classroom (see Ellis 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; De Florio-Hansen 1994; Börner 1997): In fact, the problems caused by divergent and pseudo-divergent structures are located precisely on that 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 true state of affairs, at least according to Ellis (1994c), while Börner (1997) advocates a less clear-cut distinction, arguing 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 verbalize,⁴³ and he shows that the learners' explicit semantic knowledge is based to some extent on the explicit explanations they received from their teachers. An important part of this explicit semantic knowledge is interlingual and thus contrastive in nature (equivalences, similarities, contrasts, transfer possibilities), i.e., explicitly related to the 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 kind of explanation we try to give with our structural-semantic schemata; it is certainly the simplest solution for the teaching of pseudo-divergent structures, but it has proved helpful also with respect to

divergent structures, as in many cases it is sufficient to add short supplementary specifications to the diverging schema (see sections 2.1, 2.5 and 2.6).

So how can divergent and pseudo-divergent structures be actually taught and learned in the foreign language classroom? The first task of the language teacher will be to call the learners' attention to the points he or she knows from experience to be problematic and prone to mistakes. This can be done simply by making appropriate comments in connection with reading foreign language texts, but perhaps more efficiently, by developing and using types of exercises which elicit the mistakes 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 in this context is gap-fill exercises, translations into the target language and summaries of source language texts in the target language, in other words, all types of exercises where learners have to select and use foreign language expressions corresponding to a given meaning. Thus in a first stage, the mistakes are deliberately triggered for language teaching purposes. But, the crucial point is that these errors must be immediately corrected and commented upon in class,⁴⁴ making explicit comparisons between the source and the target languages.⁴⁵ These ad hoc explanations must then be followed up by additional exercises in order to consolidate the new information, for example, in specially designed translation and transformation exercises. Consciousness-raising can contribute to improving foreign language competence, but it is certainly not sufficient by itself. (For a critical view see James and Garrett 1991a: 17–20; House 1997.)

The whole process typically involves three stages: (i) elicitation of errors, (ii) explanations/raising of awareness and (iii) consolidation/automation. An example of how to design and structure such a sequence of exercises can be found in Lavric and Pichler's (1998) business French textbook. The book comprises three main parts:⁴⁶ A battery of introductory exercises designed to elicit the errors to be focused on, then an "explanations and translations" part, involving the structural schemata plus all the necessary explanations and illustrative examples, and finally, a consolidation and application part with exercises in which the newly learned lexical knowledge has to be applied in new but characteristic contexts.⁴⁷

In fact, the real touchstone comes later, when the student has long put the textbook 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 might be suggested as an appropriate measure for the success or failure of the contrastive approach outlined here.

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divergent structures, as in many cases it is sufficient to add short supplementary specifications to the diverging schema (see sections 2.1, 2.5 and 2.6).

So how can divergent and pseudo-divergent structures be actually taught and learned in the foreign language classroom? The first task of the language teacher will be to call the learners' attention to the points he or she knows from experience to be problematic and prone to mistakes. This can be done simply by making appropriate comments in connection with reading foreign language texts, but perhaps more efficiently, by developing and using types of exercises which elicit the mistakes 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 in this context is gap-fill exercises, translations into the target language and summaries of source language texts in the target language, in other words, all types of exercises where learners have to select and use foreign language expressions corresponding to a given meaning. Thus in a first stage, the mistakes are deliberately triggered for language teaching purposes. But, the crucial point is that these errors must be immediately corrected and commented upon in class,⁴⁴ making explicit comparisons between the source and the target languages.⁴⁵ These ad hoc explanations must then be followed up by additional exercises in order to consolidate the new information, for example, in specially designed translation and transformation exercises. Consciousness-raising can contribute to improving foreign language competence, but it is certainly not sufficient by itself. (For a critical view see James and Garrett 1991a: 17–20; House 1997.)

The whole process typically involves three stages: (i) elicitation of errors, (ii) explanations/raising of awareness and (iii) consolidation/automation. An example of how to design and structure such a sequence of exercises can be found in Lavric and Pichler's (1998) business French textbook. The book comprises three main parts:⁴⁶ A battery of introductory exercises designed to elicit the errors to be focused on, then an "explanations and translations" part, involving the structural schemata plus all the necessary explanations and illustrative examples, and finally, a consolidation and application part with exercises in which the newly learned lexical knowledge has to be applied in new but characteristic contexts.⁴⁷

In fact, the real touchstone comes later, when the student has long put the textbook 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 might be suggested as an appropriate measure for the success or failure of the contrastive approach outlined here.

To avoid interferences characteristic of divergent learning structures and simultaneously make use of the unexpected transfer possibilities characteristic of pseudo-divergent structures, we advocate for vocabulary acquisition an explicitly contrastive, cognitive-structural, and language-awareness centred methodology.

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Notes

1. James and Garrett (1991b) dedicate a whole part of their well-known book to "Language Awareness in teacher training and education". This kind of teacher- and teaching-centered contrastive analysis could bridge the gap between highly theoretical contrastive studies done by linguists and more intuitive awareness raising activities on the pupils' level.
2. It would go beyond the scope of this article to discuss the merits and perils of error analysis – e.g., its understanding of errors as an opportunity for learning while showing an insufficient focus on the totality of interlanguage (cf. James 1990, as well as the selective bibliographies in Lavric 1994, 1998.)
3. With regard to the French examples, this article is based on Lavric and Pichler's (1998) textbook, which was already sketched and described in Lavric and Pichler (1996). In Lavric (2000), many examples of divergent learning structures are dealt with, which, however, only marginally overlap with the ones provided here. The present article adds a new category, namely pseudo-divergent learning structures. Moreover, another new aspect is the inclusion of the Italian language.
4. The concept of "default supplier" language stems from Williams and Hammarberg (1998), who prove that in the course of a learning process it is often not so much the mother tongue but a previously learned foreign language which is activated along with the new interlanguage and, in cases of doubt, employed as lexicon supplier for foreign language utterances.
5. See to the same effect Barrera-Vidal (1995: 19–21) (about German, French and Spanish).
6. A series of contributions about the contrastive approach in language teaching and learning can be found in Gnutzmann (1995).
7. Of course, the type of language awareness we are interested in here is the one related to foreign language teaching and learning (also known as "consciousness-raising"), 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, 1991b; Edmondson and House 1997: 5; Sharwood Smith 1997.)

9. Error analysis can be used to predict fields of difficulty and consequently to prevent errors through an adequate curricular design. This function was recognized very early; it is emphasized e.g., in Nickel (1972: 160); Kaufmann (1974: 4,10); Fehse et al. (1977: 39); Mayr (1982: 31); Tarantino (1984); Dority (1987); as well as in Lavric (1988: 478), (1994: 81), (1998).
10. The term "faux ami" originates in Koessler and Derocquigny (1928); the state of research in the 1970s is, e.g., reflected in the theoretical article by Maillot (1977). For a terminological and bibliographical overview from the 1990s, which takes several language pairs into account and schematically contrasts the various divisions, see Heinle (1992: 309–315). Less comprehensive but even more recent and of much interest is the overview provided by Gabrovšek (1998).
11. This is explicitly stated in Nütbold (1993: 201) and Gabrovšek (1998: 166).
12. In many definitions, including the original one by Koessler and Derocquigny (1928), etymological relations between the error-prone items also come into play. Others, e.g., Maillot (1977: 67), emphasize the role of so-called internationalisms. See Gabrovšek (1998: 165) for either criterion.
13. *La succursale* is the general term, *l'agence* a specific expression in banking.
14. A good presentation thereof can be found in Heinle (1992: 313–314).
15. The expression is taken from Fehse et al. (1977). "Divergenz" is already mentioned by Gnutzmann (1972). Gabrovšek (1998: 169) coins the term "diverging polysemy". Cf. Flament-Boistrancourt (1985).
17. We cannot refrain from suggesting that good old semantic structuralism with its word field analyses and collocation studies, which is often called outdated, can still provide learners with a valuable help in vocabulary acquisition.
18. Or *lorsque*, respectively.
19. This holds true for all parts of the lexicon, including prepositions, discussed by Blumenthal (1992). Thus, the typical prepositional error of German-speaking learners of French, using *de* instead of *par* with the "complément d'agent" of the passive voice, represents such an error through overgeneralization (Blumenthal 1992: 115).
20. On the dichotomy transfer / interference see Mayr (1982: 29–30), Lavric (1988: 476–477, 1994: 74) and above all the terminological clarification in Rattunde (1977: 12). The problem is due to the fact that the expression "transfer" is used for both positive and negative transfers from the mother tongue (or another foreign language). Rattunde suggests limiting it to positive, successful instances of transfer and thus contrasting it with the always negative interference, with "inference" functioning as a hyperonym for either.
21. Putzer (1994) on Italian–German is interesting, but focuses more on grammatical than on lexical interferences.
22. Cf. also Fr. *changer de quelque chose* for Ger. *etwas wechseln* 'change sth.', e.g., *changer d'emploi, de métier, d'adresse* 'to change one's job, one's profession, one's address'.
23. Let us for the moment disregard the fact that there is yet another French term for *former* 'former', i.e. *fournir*

25. Cf. also Gabrovšek (1998: 169), who lists, as a variant form of faux amis, cases of identical denotation with different connotations, different levels of style or different collocation possibilities.
26. Cf. Heinle (1992), whose article has the significant subtitle *Ein Beitrag zur Frage der innersprachlichen faux amis* 'A contribution to the question of intralingual faux amis'. The subcodes she identifies as potential faux amis sources are specific terminologies, regional and historical varieties of one and the same language. Her examples pertaining to German, however, remain anecdotal (due to the fact, among others, that she only accepts misunderstandings which have actually occurred as proof of interlingual faux amis).
27. Ital. *il fatturato*.
28. Here there is the additional difficulty of divergent gender between French and German.
29. Strictly speaking, there is only one really problematic constellation in the other direction of learning, i.e., the polysemy of *chiffre/cifra*. As for *nombre/numero*, on the other hand, learners can render them as Ger. *Zahl* in all contexts and will always be right.
30. This, at least, is the result of a long discussion at the Department of Romance Languages at Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration.
31. However, it is possible to detect a certain similarity to Huber's (1996) "verbes synonymes faciles à confondre" 'synonym verbs easy to mix up', e.g., *écouter/entendre, fréquenter/visiter* and others. Huber's (1998) "adjectifs à ne pas confondre" 'adjectives that should be distinguished', however, focus more on confusion due to morphological similarity (*compréhensif/compréhensible; luxueux/luxurieux/luxuriant* etc.).
32. Heinle (1992: 311) introduces a category of "amis inattendus" (based on Svobodová-Chmelová 1982). This could be an appropriate name for the kind of pseudo-divergent structures dealt with here. However, Heinle suggests a relation to faux amis in the narrow sense, which would imply the existence of a morphological resemblance, while the pseudo-divergent structures are typically based on a semantic parallel.
33. *Le revenu* is an additional orthographic source of errors in French, since the ending of Eng. *revenue* is often transferred.
34. Kattenbusch (1993: 97) also notes that with regard to interferences due to divergent structures ("durch Polysemie hervorgerufene Normverstöße" 'violations of the norm triggered by polysemy') "das zuletzt gelernte bzw. das am besten eingepärrte Wort Verwendung findet" 'the most recently learned or best memorized word is used'.
35. The same holds true for the complex prepositions à cause *dela causa di* 'because of'. The French one, furthermore, is often used wrongly because it cannot come at the beginning of a sentence.
36. Another interesting and error-prone field is the terminology for pay of the different groups, cf., e.g., Fr. *le salaire* for Ger. *das Gehalt* of a white-collar (salaried) employee, but *les salaires*, for Ger. *die Löhne und Gehälter* of employees in general.
37. Another problem connected with this word is its ending, which, due to interference from English, is often spelled *-ee* or *-ée*, even if the masculine form is intended.

38. A more recent psycholinguistic study on foreign language acquisition is, e.g., McWhinney (1992); cf. his conclusion (1992: 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."
39. This position was upheld (with special regard to faux amis and divergent learning structures) as recently as 1991 by Sonaiya, who thinks that learners should link (and compare) target-language words to other target-language words and not to words from the mother tongue.
40. In his 1995 article, Barrera-Vidal sketches a short history of the transfer and interference debate in language teaching research and contrastive linguistics: According to him, the older, outdated positions on the question of transfer are those which see the mother tongue (or other languages acquired earlier) primarily as an obstacle to foreign language learning. In the early 1960s, in the first enthusiasm for the new audio-lingual and audio-visual methods, this approach led to banning from foreign language teaching any reference to the mother tongue. In a later phase, new approaches began to take into account not only interference but also opportunities for positive transfer (from the mother tongue as well as from other foreign languages), focusing not only on typical errors, but on the interlanguage in its totality. In our view, the pendulum actually seems to have swung to the other extreme, since positive transfer is central to the new approach called *Mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktik*, which teaches learners to understand a whole series of interrelated languages although they have formally studied only one of them (see Meißner and Renfried 1998, 2001).
41. At any rate, this seems to be what Sbėa-Jarbuė (1998) suggests. However, her examples comprise mainly verbs and adjectives, where the syntagmatic dimension, i.e., the combinability with special contexts, actually seems to be very important. In the case of nouns, however, the paradigmatic dimension, i.e., the contrasting nature of related terms according to their usage, plays an at least equally important role. In fact, Sbėa-Jarbuė additionally suggests a kind of annotated word list to facilitate learning divergent structures. This implicitly confirms the importance of the cognitive dimension and of language awareness, especially when dealing with lexical-structural difficulties such as the ones analysed here.
42. 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), Camilleri (1998) and Lavric (to appear) provide empirical evidence about the actual types of uses of the mother tongue that can be found in foreign language classrooms.
43. See the title of De Florio-Hansen's (1994) book: *Vom Reden über Wörter* 'Talking about words'.
44. James and Garrett (1991a: 19) insist on the importance of feedback and of correct models for the raising of foreign language consciousness.
45. Or sometimes between different foreign languages.

46. Plus some additional facilities as an introductory overview, a multiple-choice final test, a German and French index, and, of course, the correction of all exercises.
47. Generally speaking, the exercises proposed are translations into the target language, as this seems to be the most demanding type of exercise with regard to foreign language competence and the one that forces the learners to really face the problems and use the terms that are to be commented upon. Of course, a teacher who uses this textbook can easily transform the translations into gap-fill and other types of exercises that he or she considers to be less demanding or more appropriate for his/her learners.

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