Nice to *Miet* You: Bilingual Puns
and the Status of English in Germany

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0.   Introduction

When I walked off the plane at Hamburg Airport in May, 1999, the first thing that caught my eye was a giant billboard advertisng the *Computer Bild*, a German home computing magazine, with the words

(1)   *Auf gates!*

In order for the slogan in (1) to have the desired effect, the addressee must have at least the following pieces of linguistic and world knowledge: (i) *Auf geht's!*, literally 'up it goes,' is a fixed phrase in German, meaning 'Let's go!'; (ii) *Gates* refers to Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corp., the world's largest maker of PC operating systems; (iii) the phrase *geht's* is pronounced [ge:ts] in Standard German; (iv) the name *Gates* is pronounced [geɪts] in Standard English,[1] but in a German-speaking context, it is likely to be pronounced as a homophone of *geht's*, while a typical English-accented pronunciation of *geht's* is roughly homophonous with *Gates*. In addition, there has to be a reasonably strong expectation on the part of the addressee to find English and German in close juxtaposition (at least on billboards), since otherwise the addressee would presumably not process the pun in the few seconds he or she is looking at the billboard.

In light of the relative complexity of the kinds of knowledge required to process the message conveyed by the billboard – presumably something like 'let's enter the world of home computing' – I began to wonder how it was possible for an advertising agency to assume that such puns would be sufficiently widely understood to fulfill their intended function, and I also asked myself how wide spread the practice of bilingual punning might be in Germany. I soon realized that, as I will show in this paper, English-German puns such as that in (1) are ubiquitous in advertising an journalistic writing in Germany, and I also realized that the linguistic situation in Germany – more precisely, the status of English – is such that bilingual punning should be expected to be widespread,

and that it is, in a sense, taking various other code-mixing practices found in Germany to their logical conclusion.

1.   The data: bilingual puns and blends

In this section, I will discuss some representative examples from my collection of roughly 100 English-German puns occurring in print ads, journalistic writing, and on the internet between 1997 and 2001. I will point out their formal and semantic properties; in particular, I will show, first, that English-German puns are tightly constrained formally in requiring a highly conventionalized linguistic frame; and second, that they are highly motivated semantically, rather than being based on random exploitation of homonymy.

The clear majority of puns in my collection (approx. two-thirds)[2] occur below the word level; a syllable of a German or English word is replaced with a word from the respective other language. The replaced syllable may correspond to a morpheme, as in (2), where the German word *Mißstimmung* consists of the two morphemes *Miß-* 'dis-, mis-' and *Stimmung* 'mood, atmosphere':

(2)   *MISS-stimmung*
        German source: English source:
        Mißstimmung   Miss
        [mɪsʃtɪmʊŋ]   [mɪs]
        'bad feelings, discord'

However, the replaced syllable does not have to be a morpheme, as in (3), where the German word *Krokodil* is mono-morphemic:

(3)   *Kroko Deal*
        German source: English source:
        Krokodil   deal
        [kʰokodiˇl]   [diːl]
        'crocodile'

The puns in (2) and (3) also exemplify nicely the high degree of semantic motivation typical for English-German puns. Example (2) was the headline of a short article discussing a public discord in relation to a Miss World contest held in Bangalore in 1997: the pun *MISS-stimmung* (recognizable as a pun only in writing) simultaneously evokes the semantic domains 'beauty contest' and 'discord'; similarly, example (3) was the headline of a short article about a store selling (fake) crocodile purses: the pun *Kroko Deal* (again only recognizable in writing) evokes the domains 'crocodile' and 'commercial transaction'.

As a final example, consider the German word *Kultur* [kʊltuå] 'culture', which has spawned a whole family of puns, some of which are quite frequently found: (i) *Kul-Tour*, replacing the second syllable with the English word *tour*; this was repeatedly used by travel agents to refer to package tours focusing on the culture of a country; (ii) *Cool-tur*, replacing the first syllable with the English word *cool*; this occurred in an ad attempting to get young people interested in their cultural heritage (attempting to convince them how 'cool' it is); (iii) *Kult-Tour*, again replacing the second syllable with English *tour*, and the first syllable with the German word *Kult* 'cult'; this was again found repeatedly in the context of advertising package tours with a focus on popular culture (note that *Kult* 'cult' is used here in the sense of *Marilyn Monroe is a cult figure*); and finally, (iv) *cool-tour*, replacing the first and second syllable with the English words *cool* and *tour* respectively; this was the title of a webzine (the idea presumably being that this webzine offers its readers a 'tour' of 'cool' pop culture). Note that, as with examples (1-3), these puns show a high degree of semantic motivation.

The same degree of semantic motivation is found with puns at the word level (i.e. puns where whole words, rather than parts of the word, are exchanged). For example, consider (4):

(4)   *Nice to miet you*
        German source: English source:
        mieten   nice to meet you
        [miːtn]   [naɪs t´ miˇt jʊ]
        'rent'

This was the headline of an article informing readers about car-rental companies on the Spanish island of Majorca – which of them to trust, and which of them to avoid. By combining the German word *mieten* 'rent' with the English phrase *Nice to meet you*, the headline evokes the domains of 'renting' (an accompanying picture of a car made it clear, what *mieten* referred to), and 'pleasurable first contact', appropriate in a situation where you are in a foreign country. The combined semantic domain evoked by (4) is something like 'car-rentals which you will encounter for the first time, but which we assure you it will be a pleasure to rent from'.

At this point, let me draw attention to the first, and fundamental formal constraint on the type of bilingual pun discussed here, a constraint which holds for every example in my collection. Note that these puns always require a strong linguistic 'frame', by which I mean here a recognizable, entrenched chunk of language serving as a known, easily processed background against which the pun can be perceived. In the case of the puns below word level, the word itself provides such a frame. Since words are the most highly entrenched linguistic

units, this frame is very stable; this may be the reason that below-word-level puns are so frequent. In the case of puns at the word level, the frame is provided by a highly entrenched expression at the phrase or clause level, like the pragmatic formula *Nice to meet you* in (4). The crucial role played by such highly entrenched frames may be clarified by considering a hypothetical example where the German word *mieten* replaces the English word *meet* in the sentence *John is going to meet Mary*. Although an interpretation of *John is going to miet Mary* can easily be found, such a pun is highly unlikely to occur, since the sentence *John is going to meet Mary* does not provide an entrenched frame that would allow speakers to process the pun effectively.

Strong empirical evidence for the importance of such frames comes from the fact that every single one of the word-level substitutions in my collection have an entrenched phrase (a pragmatic routine, a well-known slogan, a proverb, etc.) serving as a linguistic frame for the pun. In about two-thirds of these, the frame is English, and the substituted word is German, as in (4) above, or in the following examples:

(5)   *Message in a Zottel*
        German source: English source:
        Zottel   message in a bottle
        [tsçtl]   [mEsIdZ In ´ bÅtl]
        'shaggy-haired (person)'
(6)   *Fit for fahr'n.*
        German source: English source:
        fahr'n   (< fahren)   fit for fun
        [fa:n]   [fIt f´ f√n]
        'to drive'
(7)   *Always look on the breit side of life*
        German source: English source:
        breit   Always look on the
                                            bright side of life
        [b″aIt]   [çˇlweIz lUk çn D´
b®aIt saId
        'broad, wide'   ´v laIf]

Example (5) was the headline of an article about Brit-pop bands: the English phrase *Message in a bottle* evokes the song by the famous British band *The Police*, while *Zottel* 'shaggy-haired person' alludes to the type of hair style stereotypically associated with British musicians since the early days of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. In its entirety, the phrase in (5) also evokes the

idea that part of the message that musicians may have is communicated by their visual appearance.

Example (6) was used by Mitsubishi in print ads advertizing a new, sporty variant of their Colt. The phrase *fit for fun* is well-known in Germany: it is the name of a lifestyle magazine focusing on health and fitness-related issues. By substituting *fahr'n* for *fun*, the pun evokes the domains 'fitness', 'fun', and 'driving' simultaneously.

Example (7) appeared as a slogan on billboards advertizing a new, oversize pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes. By combining the well-known line *Always look on the bright side of life* (from the movie *Monty Python's Life of Brian*) with the word *breit*, the slogan evokes a positive attitude (in a somewhat ironical way, for those familiar with the movie) simultaneously with the fact that Lucky Strikes are now available in oversize.[3]

In addition, examples (5), (6), and (7) also show that the phonological similarity between the two forms underlying the pun does not have to be absolute. In examples (2) to (4), the English word is actually phonologically identical to the syllable or word it substitutes (this situation is made possible by the fact that the phonological inventories of (British) English and German, despite some drastic differences, overlap considerably. In example (7), the difference lies simply in the realization of the rhotic as an alveolar approximant in English as compared to a uvular trill (or fricative) in German; in (6), the difference is one of vowel quality and length; and in (5), there are two completely different initial segments (a voiceless alveolar affricate in the German word *Zottel*, and a voiced bilabial stop in the English word *bottle*).

As mentioned above, the frame for word-level substitutions is typically English, but in about a third of the cases, it consists of a German phrase, as shown in (8) and (9):

(8)   *Site ist Geld*[4]
        German source: English source:
        Zeit ist Geld   site
        [tsaIt Ist gElt]   [saIt]
        'Time is money'
(9)   *Sind sie es light?*
        German source: English source:
        Sind sie es leid?   light
        [zInt ziˇ Es laIt]   [laIt]
        are you it suffering
        'are you sick of it'

In such examples, as in those with English frames, the frame is an entrenched chunk of language. In (8), the proverb *Zeit ist Geld* 'time is money' is combined

with the English word *site* (as in *web site*) in the headline of an article about a company who evaluates the user-friendliness of web pages for companies. The whole sentence evokes the idea that an efficient, easy-to-navigate web page saves the users time and the company money. In (9), the idiomatic expression *etwas leid sein* 'to be sick of something' is combined with the word *light*, which has become a standard expression for reduced-calorie foods in many countries,[5] in the trailer for the TV show *Big Diet*, in which overweight contestants compete against each other in a race to lose weight. The pun thus combines the idea of 'being sick of something' with the idea of reduced-calorie foods to yield something like 'are you sick of having to pay attention to what you eat?'.

The last two examples also nicely demonstrate a further constraint on English-German puns: the English language element is typically fairly conventionalized in German usage (often, it is a clear case of a well-established loan-word, as with *cool*, *tour*, *miss*, or *light*, or it is on its way to establishing itself as a loan-word, as with *site*, or with *chill out* in example [10] below). This makes sense, given that in order to interpret a pun, the addressee has to know both the frame and the substituted word. Although the majority of Germans have some knowledge of English (see next section), the authors of the headlines and slogans discussed cannot rely on their audience to understand any randomly picked English word. For example, a bank could theoretically advertise loans with the slogan *Sind sie es plight*, which would mean something like 'are you sick of your difficult situation', but this would not be very effective, since most Germans are unlikely to know the word *plight* 'unfortunate/distressing condition or state'.

The fact that many of the English words found in English-German puns are loan-words in German also has an important consequence for the semantic interpretation of the puns: loan-words often do not have the same meaning that they have in their source language, or they only have a subset of these meanings (cf. Rohde, Stefanowitsch, and Kemmer 1999). This means that puns containing these words will be processed on the basis of the target-language (set of) meanings. Good examples for this are (8) and (9): the pun in (8) immediately evokes the domain of web sites, since this meaning of *site* is the only one conventionalized in German; the pun in (9) immediately evokes the domain of reduced-calorie food, since this is the only domain that *light* refers to in German.

To conclude this section, note that all puns discussed so far are based on lexical or sublexical units. Only very rarely does one find puns that involve a higher linguistic level, such as syntax or pragmatics. The only example from my collection which exploits the syntactic level is shown in (10):

(10)   *Schill-Out*
          German sources: English source:

Schill	Chill-out
[SIl]	[tSIl aUt]
(proper name)	

During the Hamburg state elections in the summer of 2001, this was a widely used slogan used by various political groups in protesting against a candidate by the name of *Schill*, who was widely perceived as holding right-wing views. The slogan was used widely on pamphlets, stickers, and posters, and was even registered as a web-domain (www.schill-out.de, last access: Aug. 2001). It combines the name of the candidate in question with the English phrase *chill out*, which is currently used to mean roughly 'relaxing get-together'. Thus, it should theoretically yield a meaning like 'relaxing get-together related to (perhaps: in support of?) the person called Schill'. It is difficult to see how this could be used in *protesting* against Schill.

The solution to this puzzle is found on the level of syntax: in German, there is a conventional construction [NP *raus*], lit. 'NP out', meaning something like 'NP get out!' or 'NP go home!'. This construction is frequently used by extreme right-wing political activists as *Ausländer raus!* 'Foreigners go home' to rally against foreigners, and by all other activists as *Nazis raus!* 'Nazis get out' in reply. The pun in (10) can only be understood against the background of this construction: the English pattern [V out] can be interpreted as a calque of the [NP raus] construction (due to the wide-spread verb-noun homophony in English), and the meaning of (10) then becomes 'out/away with Schill', while at the same time accusing Schill of being a Nazi by evoking the phrase *Nazis raus*, and retaining some of the associations with *chill out*, i.e. the idea that protest against this politician is 'cool'.

2.   English in Germany

Having discussed the phenomenon of bilingual puns in some depth from a linguistic perspective, we can now begin to address the question, what sociolinguistic conditions must hold in a speech community in order for this phenomenon to be as ubiquitous as it is in Germany. I will argue that the specific type of language contact situation in Germany (and countries like it) provide the ideal conditions for the emergence of a wide-spread practice of bilingual punning. In this section, I will describe the status of the English language in Germany. It will become clear, that this status is in some sense contradictory: on the one hand, English has a high prestige associated with it (at least in certain domains), and a high percentage of the population has a reasonable command of English; on the other hand, there is not a single social domain in which English functions as a means of communication.

Let us begin by looking at the education system. English is by far the most intensively and most widely taught foreign language in Germany. It is virtually

impossible to go through the German educational system without coming into contact with English at all, as shown on the next page in Table 1 (collated from statistics provided by the *German Federal Bureau of the Census* [cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1997-8]).

	Grade school level (Grades 1-4)		High school level (Grades 5-13)	
English	7.51%	(279,705)	96.83%	(4,892,062)
French	2.31%	(85,949)	27.93%	(1,411,081)
Latin	0.00%	(0)	12.53%	(632,944)
Russian	0.01%	(412)	3.05%	(153,978)
Spanish	0.01%	(307)	1.59%	(80,306)
Others	0.32%	(11,875)	1.42%	(71,641)

Table 1: *Students taking foreign language classes*
at German state schools in 1997/98 (all school types combined).

As the table shows, almost 97% of German high school level students are exposed to at least a few years of English instruction, more that three times as many as for French (the language of Germany's largest neighbor and strongest political ally within the European Union).

The same strong presence of formal English instruction can be seen in adult education: English is by far the most frequently studied language at German community colleges. In 1998, English courses accounted for 40.9% of all language courses (and for 12% of all courses). The next most frequently taught languages were French with 12.1%, Spanish with 11.5%, and Italian with 10.7%; all other foreign languages combined accounted for 11.1% (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 2000: 392).

English is also the foreign language with the strongest presence in University education. English Studies (i.e. the study of Anglophone cultures and literatures and English linguistics) is among the twenty most frequently studied subjects at German universities; in 1998, there were 41,335 students (2.3% of the entire student body) majoring in English studies (this figure does not include students with a minor in English Studies, students training to be English teachers, or students with other majors enrolled in EFL or ESP classes). Among the philologies, English is second only to German Studies with 84,895 students (4.7%); the next most frequently studied philology after English Studies is Romance Studies (mainly French, Spanish, and Italian) with 23,348 students (1,3%) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2000: 382f.).

This strong presence of English in the educational system tells us two things about the status of English in Germany: first, especially the importance of English at the University level is evidence for the high prestige that it has enjoyed in Germany since the second world war; second, the overwhelming presence of English at the high school level allows us to draw the conclusion that the majority of Germans have at least a basic functional knowledge of English.

However, despite the its high prestige and its strong position in the educational system, English has no official function at all in Germany. German is the only official language in Germany, and since it is also one of the official languages of the European Union, there is no need and no occasion to appeal to English in the political domain. In fact, English does not even have well-established quasi-official functions. For example, it is not used widely as a medium of education or as an in-house language by international corporations based in Germany (unlike in other European countries, like the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, or Norway, where English is sometimes said to function as a 'virtual second language', cf. McArthur 1998: 53).

One might expect that the overwhelming cultural influence that Anglophone cultures (especially the USA) have in Germany (like in much of the rest of the world) would provide situations in which Germans are exposed to English (movies, literature, popular music, etc.). David Crystal assumes this when he notes that "the fact that most movies are made in the English language must surely be significant, at least in the long term" (Crystal 1997: 91).

Perhaps surprisingly for people not acquainted with the situation in Germany, however, the English *language* does *not* play any significant role in the domain of popular culture.

Let us begin by looking at movies. Table 2 on the next page shows the country of origin for the 50 most successful movies between August 2000 and August 2001, as well as the number of movie-goers for each country of origin. As expected, the world-wide dominance of Hollywood manifests itself clearly in German movie-going culture. Almost 80% of the top 50 movies are made in the USA, and these movies account for more than 80% of the movie-goers. By comparison, German movies account for just over 10% of the movie-goers.

A similar picture emerges with respect to movies shown on TV, as shown in Table 3 on the next page. In the case of the public networks, the trend is much less pronounced: less than 50% of the movies shown are made in the USA, while the proportion of German movies is one-and-a-half times that of the proportion in the top 50 movies. This is obviously due to a conscious effort of the public networks to balance the American influence by devoting air time to European productions. The private networks (whose financial situation is dependent on the number of viewers they reach) show a very similar bias towards American movies as was observed for the top 50 movies.

	No. of movies		No. of movie-goers (in million)	
USA	78.00%	(39)	83.65%	(88.06)
Germany	12.00%	(6)	10.77%	(11.34)
France	2.00%	(1)	0.74%	(0.78)
Hong Kong	2.00%	(1)	0.81%	(0.85)
Italy	2.00%	(1)	1.15%	(1.21)
Sweden	2.00%	(1)	1.04%	(1.10)
UK	2.00%	(1)	1.84%	(1.93)
Total	100.00%	(50)	100.00%	(105.27)

Table 2: *Numbers of movie-goers for the 50 most popular movies between August 2000 and August 2001 by country of origin* (Source: Cinebiz 2001)

	Public networks ARD, ZDF		Private networks SAT1, PRO7, RTL, RTL2	
USA	46.86%	(717)	69.66%	(2220)
Germany	18.24%	(279)	6.24%	(199)
UK	6.93%	(106)	5.65%	(180)
Italy	4.38%	(67)	5.37%	(171)
France	8.95%	(137)	3.14%	(100)
Austria	1.83%	(28)	1.07%	(34)
Sweden	1.57%	(24)	0.19%	(6)
Spain	0.78%	(12)	0.38%	(12)
Others	10.46%	(160)	8.66%	(276)
Total	100.00%	(1530)	100.00%	(3187)

Table 3: *Movies shown in Germany by the major TV networks in 1998 by country of origin* (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2000: 410)

However, while this is evidence of a strong cultural influence, it must not be taken as evidence for a linguistic influence: in Germany (unlike in other European countries, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries) movie theaters overwhelmingly screen dubbed versions. For example, Hamburg, Germany's second-largest city, which prides itself on its cosmopolitan character, has 21 commercial movie theaters with a total of 77 screens, but there is only a single, three-screen theater screening original, non-subtitled, versions of

English-language movies. Similarly, German TV networks *always* broadcast dubbed versions of movies. One of the public networks does occasionally broadcast the original soundtrack of foreign movies simultaneously on a separate channel to give the viewer a choice, but this option is offered extremely infrequently. For example, in August 2001, the six networks shown in Table 3 broadcast a total of 161 movies produced in an English-speaking country, but only 5 of them (i.e. 3.1%) were broadcast in the original version simultaneously.

Let us turn next to the domain of literature. The best-selling books lists for fiction (but not for non-fiction) are typically dominated by English books, as shown in Table 4.

| | Fiction | | | Non-Fiction | | |
	June	July	August	June	July	August
German	2	1	0	13	13	12
English	8	8	8	2	2	2
Other	5	6	7	0	0	1

Table 4: *Best-selling books in Germany for three consecutive months in 2001* (Source: *Der Spiegel*)

However, the books on these lists are the *translations* of English books, not the original versions (although with books, access to the original versions is somewhat easier than with movies; there are English language book stores in any major city, and any book store will order English language titles on demand). Thus, the situation is similar to the one of movies. The reason why translations of books and dubbed versions of movies are available in Germany on such a large scale (unlike in other European countries), is that Germany and Austria (and the German-speaking part of Switzerland) together provide a huge market of over 100 million consumers for German versions of books and movies, and make the costs of translation economically feasible.

Finally, let us look at the domain of pop music. This is the only domain of popular culture actually dominated by the English language as well as anglophone culture. As evidence for this dominance, consider the single charts for the third week of August 2001: only 12 songs in the top 100 single charts had German lyrics (the remaining 88 were in English). Of these 12 songs, only 3 were in the top fifty. The album charts show the same trend: the top 50 were comprised of 43 English-language albums and 7 German-language ones (Tourdaten-online 2001a, b). Thus, one might argue that pop music at least provides a cultural domain in which Germans are exposed to English on a large scale. However, there is some evidence that while Germans prefer to listen to music with English lyrics, they do not typically process the content of these

lyrics. In an informal survey, two students of mine found that while approximately 90% of Germans aged 14-35 prefer English lyrics, the reason they typically give for this preference is that 'it is more relaxing and more fun to listen to music *if you do not have to pay attention to the lyrics*' (Ergin and Schwarz 2001).

Thus, we have to conclude that English as a medium of communication does not play any substantial role in German culture. In spite of this fact, however, English is omni-present in many social domains. Its presence manifests itself in three major ways: first, the heavy use of English vocabulary in certain domains; second, the use of isolated English phrases in the form of slogans, brand names and product labels, movie titles, etc.; and third, various types of more or less conventionalized code-mixing. Let us look at each of these in turn.

The heavy use of English vocabulary (with varying degrees of conventionalization, from nonce-borrowing to fully established loan-words) can be observed in particular in the domain of relatively recent or recently expanding technologies (like telecommunications, home computing, and the internet), in the domain of business (especially globalization), and in the domain of popular culture and leisure (youth fashions, sports, entertainment, travel). Here are some examples from each domain (collected randomly from magazines, but cf. also Zimmer 1997):

(11) a. Telecommunications: *Hotline*, *Roaming*, *Flatrate*, *Voice Mail*, *Callback*, *Freecall*, *Call Center*
      b. Home Computing: *Computer, Motherboard*, *Utility*, *Hardware*, *Software*, *Backup, Drag-and-Drop*, *Plug-and-Play*
      c. Internet: *Provider*, *Browser*, *online*, *Email*, *Homepage*, *Link*, *downloaden*, *Host*, *Client*, *Server*, *Newsgroup*
      d. Business: *Fond*, *Investment*, *Coaching*, *Soft Skills*, *Head Hunter*, *Human Resources Development*
      e. Popular Culture: *Inline Skates*, *Piercing*, *Bungee Jumping*, *Swinger*, *Blind Date*, *Tattoo*, *Bike*, *New Age*, *Hotpants*
      f. Travel: *Business Class*, *Frequent Flyer*, *Airport*, *Cockpit*, *Check-in*

Clearly, many of these words refer to relatively recent innovations that were imported from the English-speaking world, thus, they could be seen as cases of the prototypical context for lexical borrowing: a label is imported along with a new object or practice. However, there are two reasons why this view is overly simplistic: first, many of these words have acceptable, fully conventionalized German counterparts.

Take the domain of computers: the following words from the list in (11) have such counterparts: *Computer = Rechner*, *Motherboard = Hauptplatine*, *Utility = Dienstprogramm*, *Backup = Sicherungskopie*, *Provider = (Dienst-*

)*Anbieter*, *Link = Verknüpfung*, *downloaden = herunterladen*; yet, the English word are more frequently used. Second, many other European countries use such loan-words far less frequently: Zimmer (1997: 86-102) shows for the 100 most frequent words from the domain of home computing that German has native counterparts for only 57%, while, for example, Spanish has counterparts for 80%, Polish for 82%, French for 86%, and Finnish for 93%! Clearly, then, English words are not used out of necessity in German: those words for which there are nativized counterparts are frequently used in English anyway, and other countries show that it is unproblematic to find such nativized counterparts. We can conclude, then, that Germans use the English words due to their high prestige.

Next, let us briefly look at isolated English phrases used as slogans, movie titles, etc. First, note that many German companies use English slogans, regardless of whether or not they compete internationally (cf. Piller 2000: 159ff.). Some examples are shown in (12):

(12)　a.　MAN. *Engineering the future*.
　　　b.　RWE. *One Group. Multi Utilities*.
　　　c.　WestLB. *New issues for the new economy*.
　　　d.　Deutsche Post World Net. *Mail Express Logistics Finance*.
　　　e.　O.tel.o. *For a better understanding*.

Again, the motivation seems to be mainly the perceived prestige of English which motivates the use of such slogans. Companies sometimes claim that they use English slogans because they compete globally and want to use the same slogan all over the world. However, it is doubtful that this is the real reason: note that many truly global companies use German slogans in Germany, for example, Visa (*Die Zukunft spricht Visa* 'the future speaks Visa'), DaimlerChrysler (*Die Zukunft des Automobils* 'the future of the automobile'), or AOL (*Das ist ja einfach!* 'Is this easy!'). I know of no statistics concerning company slogans, but more generally, Piller (2000: 158) found that in a corpus of 658 TV commercials, roughly 51.4% used at least some English (for brand names, songs, slogans, etc.), while only 26.6% used only German (the remainder used some other language, mainly French or Italian). The real reason for using English slogans is presumably that it allows the company to construct itself as a major player in the (U.S.-dominated) global economy (but cf. Piller 2000, who argues forcefully that the motivation for using English slogans is that they construct the *addressee* as a global player).

The function of prestige is presumably also served by English movie titles: although, as discussed above, American movies are routinely dubbed into German, their titles are often left in the original. Of the 39 American movies in Table 2 above, 24 (61.5%) retained their original title (although occasionally a

German phrase or translation is added to these titles, e.g. *Traffic – Die Macht des Kartells* 'the power of the cartel', *Hollow Man – Unsichtbare Gefahr* 'invisible danger', or *Unbreakable – Unzerbrechlich* 'unbreakable'). Again, there is no reason other than the perceived prestige of English for this practice, as evidenced by the fact that many hugely successful American movies *do* have German titles (e.g. *Cast Away*, which was called *Verschollen* 'missing', or *Dude – Where's my car*, which was simply translated as *Ey Mann – Wo is' mein Auto*).

Finally, let us look at various types of German-English code-mixing which occur mainly in advertising. The first type of code-mixing is the completely unstructured (and linguistically unmotivated) type demonstrated by the two items from the menu of an diner-style restaurant in Hamburg shown in (13a, b) (linguistic material which appears in English in the original is underlined in the translation):

(13) a.   *Hollywood Boulevard*
           Mixed Salad mit gegrilltem Hähnchenbrustfillet, Knobi- oder
           Kräuterbrot und Sour Cream
           statt DM ~~14,77~~   *for only DM 9,99*
           ('Hollywood Boulevard. Mixed salad with grilled filet of chicken
           breast, garlic or herb bread, and sour cream. Instead of DM 14.77
           for only DM 9.99')
      b.   *The Great Pretender Vegetarian Burger*
           with Cheese und einer Gemüse-Frikadelle
           dazu eine Baked Potato mit Sour Cream
           statt DM ~~11,98~~   *for only DM 9,99*
           ('The Great Pretender Vegetarian Burger, with cheese and a
           vegetable patty, served with a baked potato with sour cream.
           Instead of DM 11.98 for only DM 9.99')

None of the English words and phrases used in these items is necessary from a linguistic perspective, since they all have widely-used German counterparts (although *Baked Potato* and *Sour Cream* are so widely used in German, that they can be considered established loan words). Clearly, they are used here in an attempt to evoke associations with American culture, and thereby to increase the perceived authenticity of the restaurant.

Finally, consider examples (14) and (15):

(14) a.   Oh, you are it? You look very hübsch heute! ('Oh, it's you? You
           look very pretty today', note that *you are it* is a calque of German
           Du bist es 'it's you')
      b.   *Call-a-Unterhose* ('Call a panty')

(15) a.   *I fly bleifrei* [aI flaI blaIf"aI] ('I fly unleaded')
      b.   *Eins, zwei, fly* [ains tsvai flai] ('One, two, fly')

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Example (14a) is one of a series of slogans which the fast-food chain McDonald's used in Germany in the Summer of 2001; it is simply a random mixture of German and English elements, both on the lexical and the syntactic level. This type of mixture differs from the one in (13) in that it is (presumably) aimed at producing some type of a comic effect (though it eludes me what effect this may be). Example (14b) was used as a slogan for a mail order company specializing in underwear. It is more systematic in it's mixture of German and English, using an entrenched English frame *Call-a(n)-X*, into which a German element has been inserted. This example is already quite similar to the puns discussed in the previous section, except that there is no relation of similarity between the substituted element and part of the frame.

Example (15a) was a slogan with which French car-maker Citroën advertised the first model of its 2CV (popularly referred to as *Ente* 'duck') capable of burning unleaded fuel. Example (15b) was used by a travel agency to advertise last-minute offers. In these examples, the integration of German material into an English frame or vice versa is intuitively even tighter than in the examples in (14). Such examples are very close to the bilingual puns discussed above, differing in that the integration of the English and the German material is achieved by rhyming pairs across the two languages rather than by substituting part of an entrenched frame.

3.   Conclusion

This paper has shown that bilingual puns are semantically highly motivated: they are not random exploitations of (near-) homonymy, but instead they use homonymy across languages are a means to efficiently evoke two semantic domains at the same time in order to arrive at a message that tightly integrates these two domains.

Bilingual puns are formally constrained. First, they require a highly entrenched word or a well-known phrase (a proverb, a famous song title, a pragmatic routine, etc.) which can serve as a linguistic frame for the pun. Second, they require the elements from the foreign language to be well entrenched; thus, they are likely to occur in speech communities with a large number of loan words and/or well-established practices of code-mixing. In other words, as this paper has argued, there is a particular type of language contact situation required for bilingual puns to occur frequently and widely.

I have shown that although English has a high prestige in Germany, its function outside of the foreign language classroom is largely decorative. Most importantly, it is never found by itself, used as a medium of communication, so that Germans rarely encounter a whole text, or even a whole sentence of English unless they make a special effort to do so. Instead, isolated English words and phrases are ubiquitous in many areas of every-day life, where they always

appear in close juxtaposition with German.[6] This situation is made possible by – and at the same time fosters – a tradition where a great value is placed on the ability to speak English, but where there is no need (and indeed no opportunity) to use this ability in every-day life. Furthermore, the practices of code-mixing described above create a strong expectation for German speakers to find English words and phrases interspersed with German.

This paper has claimed that these are precisely the conditions under which the practice of bilingual punning can and will emerge and spread: under these conditions, the authors of such puns can be assured that they will be understood, i.e. that speakers have sufficient command of both languages, as well as the expectation of language mixture necessary to process the puns; second, the practice of bilingual punning is in a sense a logical endpoint for various other types of code-mixing found under such conditions. Of course, in-depth research on bilingual punning in other speech communities is needed to substantiate this claim, and it is hoped that such research will be forthcoming in the next few years. [7]

Notes

1.   Although American culture is more influential and more prestigious in Germany than British culture, most Germans still consider British English to be the 'standard'; British English was for a long time the only variety taught in schools, and it is still the most widely taught variety.

2.   All statements about the relative frequency of certain types of puns made in relation to my collection of examples must be interpreted with care: since my collection is essentially 'opportunistic' (it consists of examples I happened to come across rather than the results of some systematic corpus analysis or the like), it is difficult to tell whether it is representative.

3.   Lucky Strike occasionally uses bilingual puns and has thus contributed to spreading this practice in recent years. When they introduced Lucky Strike Light to the German market, they advertised it by showing an empty pack of cigarettes with the slogan *Tut uns light*, based on the German expression *Tut uns leid* 'We're sorry'; the effect was something like 'we're sorry, the lights are already gone', perhaps evoking the idea that anyone interested should hurry to buy their own pack. Incidentally, the name *Lucky Strike* itself became the frame for a German-English pun during a nation-wide student strike in 1998, when the slogan *Lucky Streik* was disseminated on stickers, T-shirts, and baseball caps (*Streik* obviously being German for 'strike').

4.   Thanks to Lena Bodewein (the author of this headline) for pointing out this great example to me.

5.   For example, *Diet Coke* and *Diet Pepsi* are marketed as *Coke Light* and *Pepsi Light* outside of North America.

6.   Piller (2000: 162) points out that, moreover, the isolated words and phrases found in advertising never contain crucial information; the latter is always given in German. This strongly underlines the claim that English is used decoratively, i.e. in order to evoke stereotypical associations with American culture, like dynamicity, fun, etc.

7.   One speech community that seems in some ways similar to Germany with respect to the status of English is Japan, thus, we might expect a similar punning practice. I cannot tell how wide-spread this practice is in Japan, but I know of one English-Japanese pun of the type described here: *Mai Girl* (from Japanese *mai* 'dance' and English *My Girl* [the title of a well-known movie]), which is the name of a computer game involving a dancing girl.

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