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Anglicisms in German car advertising The problem of gender assignment

1. Many studies of the increasing number of Anglicisms in modern German have been made during the last two decades. Up to now the language of newspapers has been the main focus of interest in studies of the frequency of Anglicisms in German (e.g. Bus:1980, Yang:1990). Some studies have also examined Anglicisms in German automotive engineering terminology (Vesterhus:1991,1993). None of them has however been based exclusively on language used in car advertising. It is no secret that German advertising copywriters have a liking for the English language (cf. Zabel 1990). Car advertising is a rapidly growing business. The makers and importers of cars spend vast amounts of money every year on TV commercials, ads in newspapers and magazines as well as on brochures and leaflets. In fact the automobile industry is one of the most important customers of the big international advertising agencies.

The present article examines printed car advertising. The corpus consists of 1008 ads from newspapers and magazines and 435 publicity leaflets and model brochures. The advertisements were all found in well known German publications such as "Die Welt", "FAZ", "Spiegel", "Focus" and "auto motor und sport", whereas the publicity leaflets were all made available by car manufacturers or importers on the German market. In contrast to former frequency studies of Anglicisms in German (cf. Vesterhus:1993) no user's manuals or technical descriptions were taken into consideration. As in the previous studies we have confined ourselves to nouns borrowed from English with British or American spelling. Verbs are thus not represented in the corpus. The predominance of nouns among Anglicisms in German has also been confirmed by other frequency studies (cf. Yang:1990). The problem of gender assignment of nouns of English origin will therefore have to be discussed in the present article (cf. 4.5.).

2. In our corpus 2134 different Anglicisms (types) appear 7680 times (tokens), this being equivalent to a type-token-ratio (TTR) of 3.60. Compared to our former frequency studies (Vesterhus:1991,1993) this result represents a considerable increase:

Type-Token-Ratio (TTR)

Corpus	Types	Tokens	TTR
1991	2820	7190	2.55
1993	2843	8956	3.15
1997	2134	7680	3.60

3. With regard to text frequency a direct comparison of the corpora is problematic because the predominance of advertisements in the new corpus makes it difficult to establish an exact number of pages. If, however, only the brochures and leaflets in the new corpus are taken into consideration, the text frequency in the three corpora would be as follows:

Text frequency

Corpus	Anglicisms (tokens)	Number of pages	Text frequency (page)
1991	7190	8458	0.85
1993	8956	8612	1.04
1997	5636	5103	1.10

3. The text frequency was also established separately for the different makes of cars represented in the corpus. As in 1991 and 1993 it was possible to observe striking differences between the makes of cars. In this study the ads and brochures of a total of 37 different car makes were analysed. New car makes on the German market since the 1993 study are Daewoo, Proton and Ssangyong.

MANUFACTURER	TEXT FREQUENCY (tokens per page)
Daewoo	2.11
Suzuki	2.09
Ssangyong	2.05
Hyundai	1.99
Mitsubishi	1.91
Honda	1.71
Kia	1.70
Mazda	1.63
Citroën	1.58
Proton	1.57
Rover	1.55
Toyota	1.53

Daihatsu	1.50
Nissan	1.49
BMW	1.32
Subaru	1.31
GM (Chevrolet/Cadillac/Buick)	1.23
Renault	1.21
Chrysler	1.19
Bentley/Rolls-Royce	1.15
Lexus	1.13
Audi	1.12
Volkswagen	1.11
Opel	1.08
Ford	1.04
Fiat	0.93
Lancia	0.92
Peugeot	0.84
Jaguar	0.83
Volvo	0.81
Alfa Romeo	0.76
Porsche	0.73
Saab	0.69
Mercedes-Benz	0.67
Seat	0.59
Skoda	0.53
Lada	0.52

Compared to the text frequencies established in 1993 all car makes in the current study except Audi, BMW, Porsche, VW and Volvo show increasing values. Both previous studies have suggested that the copywriters of ads and publicity leaflets for cars of Asian origin have a special liking for the English language. This tendency is even more evident in the new corpus. Thus, all the Japanese (Honda, Lexus, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Subaru, Suzuki, Toyota), Korean (Daewoo, Hyundai, Kia, Ssangyong) and Malaysian (Proton) makes of cars show text frequency values well above the established average value of 1.10 per page.

3.1. As a result of increasing production costs in Japan and above all because of the rocketing Yen exchange rate most Japanese car manufacturers have seen their market shares drop in Europe and in the U.S. In order to improve competitive power and avoid trade barriers most Japanese car manufacturers have major production plants in Europe and North America.

Thus most Nissan models sold on the European market are made in Sunderland (UK). Toyota's Avensis model and Honda's Accord are also

made in England. Design Centres in Europe and the US are developing models suitable for the European and American markets. Interestingly, most advertising agencies working for Japanese car manufacturers in Europe are also located in the U.K. However, whether these facts are of importance for the high frequency of Anglicisms in the advertising material for Japanese cars is difficult to ascertain.

3.2. For the last ten years the Koreans have been a true emerging force in car making. Their production of cars has in fact doubled since 1990 and the models of Hyundai, Daewoo and Kia are among the Top Twenty in the new car registration charts in many countries.

It is interesting to observe that the success of the Korean car makers started on the Anglo-American markets. Thus, Hyundai made their first export attempts with the subcompact Excel model on the American market in the 1980s. In Europe Daewoo used Britain as a test market during their introduction campaign on the European market in 1992. Besides, most Daewoo models until 1997 (i.g. Nexia, Espero) were replicas of old American General Motors products.

The importance of the Anglo-American markets for the Korean car manufacturers is thus evident. However, the surprisingly high frequency of Anglicisms in Korean car advertising could of course be a pure coincidence. In view of the comparatively restricted corpus this question must therefore remain unanswered.

4. As we have already seen, the average TTR (type token ratio) of the Anglicisms in the new corpus has increased by some 15 per cent since the study in 1993.

Listed below in order of frequency are all Anglicisms occurring in the corpus more than 15 times. The table also shows the gender of the Anglicisms alongside their frequency, two genders occurring in the corpus in the case of some nouns. Consequently, the sometimes difficult question of gender assignment as well as that of "competition" with equivalent German nouns, will have to be touched on briefly.

NOUN	GENDER			NUMBER OF REFERENCES
	m.	f.	n	
Design			+	698
Styling			+	601
Look	+			453
Outfit			+	345
Airbag	+			321
Cockpit			+	297
Feeling			+	234
Star	+			198

	m.	f.	n
Crash-Test	+		196
Bestseller	+		156
Side-Bag	+		156
City		+	121
Power		+	112
Feature			98
Limit		+	79
Story		+	78
Display			77
Highlight		+	75
Set	+	+	69
Check	+		65
Sound	+		60
Team		+	59
Know-how		+	59
Recycling		+	58
Leasing		+	57
Touch	+		55
Show		+	45
Finish		+	44
Newcomer	+		44
Spoiler	+		43
CD-Player	+		42
Trendsetter	+		42
Label		+	37
Highway	+		36
Cruising		+	35
Mix	+	+	32
Level	+		30
Countdown	+	+	29
Offroader	+		28
Dummy	+		27
Goody		+	25
Eyecatcher	+		24
Understatement		+	24
Equipment		+	23
Pickup	+		22
Hardtop	+		21
Injection		+	20
Facelifting		+	18
Kit	+		18
Showroom	+		17
Kickdown	+	+	17

	m.	f.	n
Charts (pl.)			16
Fight	+		15
Freak	+		15
Killer	+		15
Establishment		+	15
One-Box-Concept		+	15
Powerplay		+	15
Showdown	+	+	15

In the following, the differences in results from the present study and the 1993 study with regard to the frequency of the most popular Anglicisms will be briefly discussed. Since 1993 new Anglicisms have come up, whereas other Anglicisms with a comparatively high number of references in the 1993 corpus seem to have lost their popularity. Finally, the question of gender assignment of the English nouns in German will be touched on.

4.1. Only 5 of the 10 most popular nouns in the study from 1993 are among the Top Ten in this year's study: *Design*, *Styling*, *Crash-Test*, *Airbag* and *Star*. In position 11 in the frequency table we find the new Anglicism *Side-bag*. The brand new invention *Windowbag* is also represented in the new corpus. In fact, 5 of the most frequent Anglicisms in this study are related to passenger safety. This shows the increasing importance of safety as a selling-point in today's car advertising. The following quotation from a Volkswagen brochure might serve as a typical example:

Damit Sie sicher fahren können, mußte unser Bestseller in neuem Outfit in zahlreichen Crash-Tests sein hohes Sicherheitsniveau beweisen. Ab sofort ist er sogar mit Side-Bags zu haben.

In contrast to safety, environmental aspects seem to be less important as a selling-point in the new corpus. Thus, in 1993, *Recycling* was one of the most frequent Anglicisms. This is no longer the case.

4.2. Several of the most frequent English nouns in this year's study have one thing in common. They describe the visual appeal of the car: *Design*, *Styling*, *Look*, *Outfit*, *Eyecatcher*. All these nouns have grown in popularity since the 1993 study. As a matter of fact, in some ads the good looks of the car seem to be the main argument:

Hier sehen Sie den neuen Star in der Kompaktklasse. Sein verführerisches Styling und zeitloses Design machen ihn zum Eyecatcher.

4.3 The development in automotive engineering is breathtaking and new inventions are introduced every year. This situation is of course reflected in

the vocabulary, in which old terms representing old technology give way to new terms. Typical examples in our corpus are *Overdrive*, *Overboost* and *Dolby*. These three nouns were all relatively frequent in 1993, whereas no references at all could be found in the new corpus. *Overdrive* was used by many car manufacturers, e.g. Volvo, as a mechanism providing an extra gear above the normal top fourth gear in order to reduce fuel consumption. Since the early nineties *Overdrive* has been replaced by modern gear boxes with five or even six gears. *Overboost* was used in the 1980s in turbo engines in order to increase power at high speeds. The development of turbo engines has now made this mechanism redundant.

Dolby was a system developed by the American company R.M. Dolby Laboratories designed to reduce noise in cassette recorders. Nowadays, most new cars are equipped with CD players making cassette recorders with Dolby less important.

4.4. In the "competition" between English loanwords and equivalent German nouns the Anglicisms very often have proved hard to beat. A typical example was *Luftsack* which never stood a chance against the English *Airbag* (cf. Schneider:1997). However, the present study also contains examples of the opposite. Thus, *Klimaanlage* in today's car advertising seems to have taken over for the Anglicism *Airconditioning*, for which there are no references in the new corpus. This also seems to be the case with *Einspritzung* vs. *Injection*.

4.5. In the 1993 study (Vesterhus:1993:8) uncertainty with regard to the gender of the examined Anglicisms was recorded in only 6 cases. The nouns *Hardtop*, *Kickdown*, *Mix*, *Set*, *Countdown* and *Showdown* all alternated between the masculine and the neuter gender. No alternation between m. and f. or between f. and n. was recorded. Since 1993 two of the six Anglicisms mentioned above (*Mix* and *Hardtop*) are no longer problematic as far as gender allocation is concerned, whereas the remaining four cases (*Set*, *Countdown*, *Kickdown*, *Showdown*) still alternate between the masculine and neuter gender in the new corpus.

4.5.1. *Mix* occurs in our corpus mostly in compounds like *Drittelmix*, which refers to the average petrol consumption of new cars in 3 different traffic situations. In 1993 mention was made of both *das Mix* and *der Mix*, whereas in the new corpus only the masculine gender is used in the case of *Mix*.

4.5.2. In contrast to the results of the 1993 study *Hardtop* is used only as a masculine noun in the new corpus. One should bear in mind, though, that *Hardtop* according to Duden Fremdwörterbuch (1991) has two different meanings:

a. "abnehmbares Verdeck von Kraftwagen, insbes. Sportwagen" (removable roof of motor vehicle, especially sports cars)

b. "Sportwagen mit einem abnehmbaren Verdeck" (sports car with a removable roof).

Duden (1991) and Carstensen (1980:47) prescribe the neuter gender for the first meaning and the masculine for the second. In the new corpus there are references of *Hardtop* only with the second meaning. Taking into account that advertising is the basis for the new corpus, this is not really surprising. In ads and publicity leaflets the different types of bodywork (German: *Limousine*, *Kombi*, *Coupé*, *Cabriolet*, *Hardtop*) often play a very important part.

4.5.3. As in the case of *Hardtop* differentiating between two meanings, according to some studies (Carstensen 1980:50), is also necessary with regard to *Set*. This noun can in Carstensen's opinion either refer to a set of objects which belong together and are mostly of the same kind (e.g. *Dekor-Set*, *Tuning-Set*) or it can denote a "Platzdeckchen" (table-mat). He prescribes the masculine gender with the first meaning and the neuter gender in the second case. This distinction was not evident in 1993 when a clear majority of references with the first meaning were allocated to the neuter gender (*das Tuning-Set*, *das Dekor-Set*). This tendency is confirmed in our new study where the preponderance of the neuter gender is overwhelming, thus producing the following percentage distribution in terms of gender:

	m.	n.
Set	10.5	89.5

Set normally occurs in compounds such as *Dekor-Set*. A typical example from a Toyota publicity leaflet:

Das Dekor-Set bekommen Sie gegen einen kleinen Aufpreis. Dadurch können Sie Ihren neuen Toyota optisch aufwerten.

4.5.4. The relatively large group of English nouns consisting of a verb + a particle (e.g. *Countdown*, *Kickdown*, *Showdown*) are often problematic when it comes to gender assignment in German (cf. Yang:1990, Vesterhus:1993). Both the masculine and neuter gender occur in these cases. In the study from 1991 a slight preference for the neuter gender was observed, whereas the 1993 corpus and the new study show a very clear tendency towards the masculine gender:

Corpus	1991		1993		1997	
	m.	n.	m.	n.	m.	n.
<i>Countdown</i>	49.5	50.5	58.5	41.5	95.5	4.5
<i>Kickdown</i>	43.2	56.8	49.5	50.5	65.0	35.0
<i>Showdown</i>	46.5	53.5	56.5	43.5	83.5	16.5

Kickdown was one of the more frequent Anglicisms both in 1993 and in the new corpus. This reflects the growing popularity of automatic gearboxes on the German market. *Kickdown* is a mechanism in the automatic transmission designed to ensure optimum acceleration, e.g. when overtaking. A typical example from the corpus:

Der Kickdown sorgt für beeindruckende Beschleunigungswerte.

4.6. The preponderance of masculine nouns has been confirmed in several studies of Anglicisms in German (cf. Fisiak:1975, Carstensen:1980, Yang:1990). This result is in accordance with the values established for our three corpora from German automotive terminology. In all three studies the majority of English nouns acquired the masculine gender in German, whereas Anglicisms are given the feminine gender comparatively rarely in German. The following table shows the percentage gender distribution of all Anglicisms (tokens) in the three corpora:

Corpus	1991			1993			1997		
Gender	m.	f.	n.	m.	f.	n.	m.	f.	n.
%	57.7	12.2	30.1	65.8	11.3	22.9	59.7	10.8	29.5

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Sprache und Geschlecht. Zum Sprachwandel und Sprachgebrauch unter dem Einfluß der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*

Bei einer Reihe von Veränderungen in der Sprache kann man ziemlich genau ihren historischen, außersprachlichen Anlaß ermitteln. Ein solches Beispiel aus der jüngsten Sprachgeschichte sind Veränderungen im Wortschatz und im Sprachstil, die durch die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik der letzten 30 Jahre hervorgerufen wurden.

Die bundesdeutsche Studentenbewegung der 68er war von Anfang an durch Spannungen zwischen Frauen und Männern im Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbund (SDS) geprägt. Die Auseinandersetzungen fanden ihren Höhepunkt darin, daß während eines Kongresses in Frankfurt Studentinnen des SDS auf die männlichen "Patriarchen" Tomaten warfen. Mit diesem nun inzwischen schon historischen Tomatenwurf konstituierte sich in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland die Neue Frauenbewegung - und mit der Neuen Frauenbewegung der 68er setzten auch die feministische Sprachreflexion und Sprachkritik ein. Damit waren die Weichen gestellt für eine interessante Entwicklung innerhalb des deutschen Wortschatzes, die geradezu als ein Musterbeispiel soziolinguistischer Prozesse angesehen werden kann. Es betrifft die Erweiterung des deutschen Wortschatzes durch feminine Berufs- und Personenbezeichnungen, die sich besonders in der Rechtssprache, aber auch fast flächendeckend in der öffentlichen Kommunikation abzeichnen.

Eine Grundkritik innerhalb der feministischen Sprachreflexion ist die Kritik am androzentrischen Sprachgebrauch (gr. andros - Mann): Maskuline Personenbezeichnungen seien neutral und werden stellvertretend für die Bezeichnung von Frauen verwendet; umgekehrt könnten feminine Personenbezeichnungen die maskulinen nicht ersetzen (z.B. *Hebamme - Entbindungshelfer, Schwesternhelferin - Krankenpflegehelfer* usw.). Bis in die 60er Jahre ist der Unterschied zwischen dem grammatischen Genus im Deutschen (maskulin, feminin, neutrum) und den semantischen Merkmalen [weiblich und männlich] von den Sprachträgern kaum in Frage gestellt worden. Ende der 70er und Anfang der 80er Jahre hatte sich jedoch in der politischen Öffentlichkeit die Vorstellung bereits verbreitet, daß es zwischen

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