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Through the Cognitive Looking Glass: Studying Bilingual Wordplay in Public Signage

Abstract: This article looks at German-English puns as a specific subtype of bilingual wordplay in the Linguistic Landscapes of Berlin. The study unites cognitive linguistic with sociolinguistic and contact linguistic perspectives and discusses the formal and functional dimensions of individual cases of bilingual punning. The usage-based approach that is taken here includes the perceptions of sign viewers who move within the cityscape of the German capital. The data show that bilingual puns constitute a niche phenomenon which is constrained by structural factors and the cognitive investments necessary for their decoding, while they create interesting discursive effects.

1 Introduction

Manifestations of language contact are found in various settings and different medial realizations, which cover a broad continuum that ranges from spontaneous oral exchanges to more or less planned types of written production. Amongst others, the written sphere may be represented by data from the press, bilingual literature, television or music, but also Computer-Mediated Communication or Linguistic Landscape Studies. Typically, researchers working in the latter field, which is at the center of this article, make photographs of the myriad of written signs that are found in a specific place in order to document language use. What is important in such research is not only the frequency in which particular languages are visible on the signs, but also their concrete interaction. For instance, there may be a preference for monolingual signs in some domains or some areas of a multicultural city. By contrast, signs that belong to other domains or are located in districts with different sociodemographic conditions might exhibit a higher share of bilingual language use. Even then, however, the messages they carry may be encoded in different form, i.e. the languages may be structurally kept apart or combined within a single information unit of the Linguistic Landscapes (hereafter LL). By gaining insights into the

distribution and interplay of languages on public signage, Linguistic Landscape Studies (henceforth LLS) may thus help to reveal how widespread particular languages are, what prestige they enjoy and what discursive practices they are embedded in. In this sense, they are linked to fundamental socio- and contact linguistic questions.

While many investigations in LL take a macro-perspective in that they include both mono- and bilingual signs from one or several linguistic areas, this article, which is based on an examination of the LL of Berlin, is more narrowly oriented. In a nutshell, the current study aims at exploring to what extent and how bilingual wordplay, involving German and English material, is exploited in the public sphere of the German capital. In particular, the investigation focuses on bilingual puns (see also Paviour-Smith this volume and, for oral contexts, Härmävaara and Frick, this volume). As pointed out in previous research, bilingual German-English wordplay is frequently based on a merger of same- or similar-sounding German and English elements which are associated with different meanings (see Stefanowitsch 2002 and Knospe 2015). This scenario of language crossing is somewhat facilitated by the structural relatedness of the two languages, which belong to the West Germanic family. An example for that is the playful coinage *Cool-tour* [kuːlˈtuɐ] (Stefanowitsch 2002: 69). This wording stems from an advertising campaign trying to persuade young people that the cultural heritage of their regions hides cool and surprising things (see discussion in Knospe 2015: 163–164). Visibly, the coinage plays with the German noun *Kultur* [kʊlˈtuɐ] 'culture' and the paronymic (similar-sounding) English adjective / anglicism *cool* [kuːl], which contains a long *u* and is orthographically foregrounded. A creation where, by contrast, full interlingual homophony is played upon is the wording *Sind Sie es light?* (Stefanowitsch 2002: 72). This example puns on the anglicism *light* [laɪt] and the German adjective *leid* [laɪt] 'to be sick of something'. It occurs in a trailer of a diet show in which the participants are supposed to lose as much of their excess weight as possible by doing sports and getting used to eating light food.

As part of prominent signs, German-English puns may also surface in the LL of a place, as is illustrated by the name of a theater in Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf given in (1).

(1)   Bar jeder Vernunft

This name operates with the formal and slightly obsolete German preposition *bar* 'without' (as part of an idiomatic phrase) and the anglicism *Bar*. If we assume the integrated pronunciation [baːɐ] here, the imported English noun is

homophonous with the German function word. Although it is hard to translate the sense of Germ. *Vernunft* into English, the whole name can be read in two ways: either as 'Bar for every reason', standing for an institution that offers many motives for educated people to go there, or 'Bare of reason', i.e. a location where one can also let go off one's *Vernunft*. This is linked to a theater program that involves chansons, cabaret, concerts, and musicals. Moreover, there are culinary offers, as the theater also serves food and drinks in the lounges and a beer garden – a fact which is in the referential scope of the anglicism *Bar*.

This example gives us a first insight into bilingual puns in LL and provides a general impression of the type of phenomena at work here. These are discussed in greater detail in the following parts of this article. To show how bilingual puns operate in the cityscape of Berlin and to depict how sign producers and recipients interact, this study proposes a micro-oriented, usage-based model which derives from a framework that incorporates ideas from sociolinguistics, contact linguistics and cognitive linguistic. A merger of these domains of inquiry has been pleaded for by different scholars (Kristiansen and Dirven 2008; Harder 2010; Backus 2013) but rarely been attempted so far in the field of LLS (see, however, Koll-Stobbe 2015). Taking the format of a case study, this article tries to illustrate how a greater interlocking of the two disciplines could be established. For that purpose, section 2 introduces relevant sociolinguistic notions used in LLS and works out some of the existing interfaces to cognitive linguistics. Following from this, section 3 details the methodology which was used for collecting bilingual puns in the LL of Berlin. After that, section 4 discusses relevant examples of bilingual puns in the LL of Berlin, examining them from a socio-cognitive perspective. The analysis hinges on the assumption that bilingual puns are structural or code blends (Sebba 2011) and conceptual blends at the same time (Knospe 2015). As is argued here, this restricts their occurrence but makes them attractive for setting information in specific segments or niches of the LL. In line with the attempt of establishing a usage-based approach, section 5 presents the findings which were gained from short interviews with passers-by. Finally, Section 6 summarizes the main outcomes of this study and identifies some of its limitations.

2 Developing a Cognitive-*Cum*-Contact Linguistic Approach

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of LLS

Before discussing why a cognitive turn in LLS makes sense, the main theoretical foundations of this paradigm need to be depicted. The short sketch in this section is necessarily selective because LLS have become quite heterogeneous over the years, partly because of the different sociodemographic profiles of the areas under scrutiny, partly because of varying scientific objectives pursued. Since this study looks at data from the city of Berlin, the overview provided is wherever possible tailored to this context.

To begin with, the question of which units should be included in LL research requires some thoughts. Usually, a wide definition of 'sign' is adopted. Following Backhaus (2007: 1), this comprises "office and shop signs, billboard and neon advertisements, traffic signs, topographic information and area maps, emergency guides and political poster campaigns, stone inscriptions and enigmatic graffiti discourse." All of these signs may be enriched with textual and accompanying non-verbal information. Next to this, scholars like Hutton (2011) propose to incorporate inscriptions on mobile objects such as buses, taxis and other vehicles, an idea opposed by Gorter (2006: 3). Furthermore, Hutton (2011: 175) suggests taking into account "circulating written texts such as wrappings and packaging, receipts, tickets, currency, coins, name cards, menus, labels on clothing, fliers and various forms of litter." Although the additional types of signs the author mentions certainly characterize most urban agglomerations, it seems legitimate to exclude them, as their appearance tends to be considerably more random and evanescent than that of the signs in Backhaus' (2007) list. Also, most of the items which Hutton (2011) adduces are, by comparison, not fixed or they may be transported to and from other locations along with their owners or users. Admittedly, graffiti, placards and political posters, which Backhaus considers to be important objects for LLS, may be discarded as well, but they may also stay there for a longer time and become part of the identity of a place. Still, they were not acknowledged in this study either.

The types of signs which Backhaus itemizes can be arranged according to different criteria. For example, their size and shape along with their contents and the density of the information which they provide may vary considerably, the smallest and most conspicuous units being names. A classification of signs which has often been discussed in LL literature goes back to Ben-Rafael, Shoha-

my, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht (2006). Their grouping is especially operationalized in studies that strive for a quantification of the share of different languages in the public sphere, but it can also be seen in a critical light. Essentially, Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht (2006) propound to roughly distinguish between *bottom-up* and *top-down signs*. While the former, according to their definition, are created by shop owners or other private business people, the latter are put up by local authorities. A more fine-grained distinction is given in Fig. 1:

Top-down signs:
–   Public institutions: religious, governmental, municipal, cultural/educational, medical
–   Public signs of general interest
–   Public announcements
–   Signs of street names

Bottom-up signs:
–   Shop signs, e.g. clothing, food, jewelry
–   Private business signs: offices, factories, agencies
–   Private announcements: 'wanted' ads, sale or rentals of flats or cars

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Fig. 1: Top-down vs. bottom-up signs (cf. Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht 2006)

As straightforward as the distinction between top-down (official) and bottom-up (private) signs may appear at first glance, it is far from representing a real dichotomy. In fact, there are various interlinks between the public and private sectors as in the possible side-by-side existence of bottom-up and top-down messages even on small surfaces in public space. Further examples are the possibility that public signs may be overwritten (illegally) and that official regulations can constrain the freedom of private business owners to choose any kind of information display. In principle, restrictions may impinge on the size, contents, and form of signs, but also on the languages used. (The final of the aforementioned constraints does not hold for the setting of this study, since language laws as they are found in France, for instance, are no established instrument in Germany.)

Despite the remarks on the fuzzy boundary between the two categories of signs, one might feel tempted to accept the statement that official signage is inclined to be more factual and thus possibly less prone for wordplay. Yet, it would be an oversimplification to assume a 1:1 mapping between the originator / source of a sign and its degree of formality: On the one hand, private agents may choose a formal or less formal style for expressing their messages in public depending, for example, on the exact contents to be conveyed. On the other

hand, corpus linguistic studies have stated a general trend for informalization, even in more regulated discourse (see Pearce 2005; Mair's 2006 findings for English; on German see Fix and Lerchner 1996). Also, there are public-private partnerships these days, and we often find advertisements in both the public and the private sector.

For reasons like these, Hutton (2011: 175) reinterprets the differentiation between top-down and bottom-up agents as a continuum, offering examples closer to one or the other pole. Foregrounding the criterion of formality, Muth (2012: 28–30) distinguishes *formal* and *informal signs* while stating the need to offer a closer characterization of them, since, as already remarked, there are different degrees of (in)formality. To develop a descriptive framework, Muth (2012: 13–15) refers to Scollon and Scollon (2003) who are interested in the ways signs are embedded in their respective social and discursive spaces, which they regard as parts of the material world. From the authors' point of view, this brings to the fore a set of four questions which echo the approach to oral discourse in the sociolinguistic traditions of Fishman (1965) and Hymes (1974): "Who has uttered this? Who is the viewer? What is the social situation? Is that part of the material world relevant for such a sign?" (Scollon and Scollon 2003: 3). Similarly, Coupland (2010), and Sebba (2010) argue for complexified analyzes by identifying the spatial and topical contexts the signs are set in (see also Jaworski 2005: 79 and Winter-Froemel, this volume). Also, they argue that it is essential to look at the information the signs communicate about their recipients and producers although the actual sign makers are not always tangible. Observations of language use in a cityscape may, strictly speaking, only refer to potential or imagined viewers. Yet, the perspective adopted by Scollon and Scollon (2003), Coupland (2010), Sebba (2010), and Jaworski (2015) allows for a meticulous, qualitative interpretation of written inscriptions in a social semiotic way.[1] Such a qualitative approach is also favorable for an in-depth study of the linguistic phenomenon under examination: German-English bilingual puns. As is contended in this article, they can be best described in their complexity by widening the basic socio- and contact linguistic perspective with a cognitive linguistic point of view. The next section details how this can be achieved.

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1 Instead of LL, one could therefore also speak of *semiotic landscapes* (see, e.g., Jaworski and Thurlow 2010). Other researchers (e.g. Puzey 2011) also talk of *signscapes*.

2.2 Proposing a Cognitive Turn for LLS – Focus on Bilingual Puns

Traditionally, sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics were relatively independent branches of research that have only recently grown closer. For one part, the increasing cooperation between the two fields has been facilitated by the fact that both of them depart from a usage-based approach to language and communication, which is corroborated by the empirical turn of cognitive linguistics (see, e.g., Harder 2010 as well as Kristiansen and Dirven 2008). As a result, both disciplines have developed an interest in an array of texts, whether spoken, written or multimodal in nature (see Sebba 2013; Dancygier, Sanders and Vandelanotte 2012). For the other part, the two paradigms are compatible because of two basic relations: (a) the insight that also social facts are cognitively represented, and (b) the shared idea that speakers generally have linguistically diverse repertoires at their disposal which may include standard and substandard elements as well as linguistic components from different languages (Blommaert and Backus 2011).[2] These repertoires are acquired through different patterns of learning and are maintained and changed through social interaction, leading to a pool of linguistic options, which are cognitively stored (Matras 2009: 4–6). Starting from there, both disciplines examine from complementary standpoints how meaning is constructed with language. While sociolinguistics is interested in the social bases and consequences of linguistic choices (Coulmas 2013: 1) and tries to identify, for instance, linguistic markers of group identity, one of the endeavors of cognitive linguistics is to unravel the mental processes accompanying linguistic behavior. In Semino's words, "cognitive linguists do focus on linguistic choices as prompts for the construction of mental representations in the [hearers' or] readers' minds" (Semino 2009: 66). These are then, on a denotative and connotative level, subject to the social evaluations of others. Competent speakers anticipate this before producing an utterance or a piece of information, which enters the LL of a place.

In this interactive process, particular linguo-communicative and metalinguistic competences are at work; they are determined by the concrete decoding and encoding tasks at hand. In the case of bilingual puns, speakers must be able to exploit homonymy or paronymy relations between German and English. This presupposes at least some bilingual skills. For the context of this study,

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2 For a discussion of the universals and variation of metaphor in culture see, for instance, Kövecses (2007), who acknowledges that the aspect of variation, in general, was not sufficiently studied in pioneering works of cognitive linguistics.

this condition can be seen as fulfilled, as many younger Germans today have at least some command of English, albeit with individually varying degrees of proficiency (see Blommaert 2010 and the discussion in Knospe 2015: 165–171). Usually, speakers know at least crucial grammatical patterns, some formal or informal vocabulary as well as some routine phrases, which enable them to engage in everyday conversations in English and to play with their repertoire wherever effective. One of the factors responsible for this status of English is that it is firmly anchored in German school teaching and meanwhile also in kindergarten instruction as well as in university education. Due to ongoing globalization, English is also used in a number of domains such as technology and science and in entertainment culture including movies, popular music, books etc. As a result, speakers have various occasions for learning this language. These conditions, along with a lack of institutional purism in Germany, increase the readiness for codeswitching and codemixing, though with varying degrees of fluency and skillfulness (see Paviour-Smith, this volume).

Still, these circumstances alone do not sufficiently explain the emergence of bilingual puns since these creations usually come about only in specific communicative contexts, i.e. as an output of a conscious search for an expression. Such a search is all the more likely when the signs occur in public space due to the decisions of different, interacting stakeholders, i.e. local authorities, entrepreneurs or private persons. Again, the social and the mental dimensions intersect here, as such creations, before entering the LL of a place, must have been contrived by producers[3] who may wish to stand out in the social arena by choosing a conspicuous or possibly even a unique sign (see section 4.4). As a matter of fact, the need to attract recipients, who face many information-bearing entities in the urban agglomerations of our times, entails a constant competition for attention. This also molds the choice of communicative means. Two things may play a role for the coiners:

– First, English is generally regarded as a prestigious language signaling modernity, innovation and other positive values. In this sense, it works as a "language of commodification" (Rubdy and Tan 2008; Heller 2010; see also Hilgendorf 2001) that may interact in various forms with other codes.

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3 As already pointed out above, a certain idealization is necessary because the real producers of public signs are only partly known or can only be speculated on, as the name of a shop, restaurant etc. and the design of a sign may go back to the work of a professional advertising agency. This problem is also discussed by Jaworski (2015: 79) who still assumes that "every sign carries information about who produced it and about who is selected to be its recipient, even though this information may not be immediately transparent."

– Bilingual puns represent playful combinations, which need special cognitive investment to be successfully decoded. This, along with the structural requirements for bilingual puns, may be a threshold limiting their occurrence. Nonetheless, the coinage of such forms of wordplay may be conducive to the goal of the producers to reach a particular target group which could be tentatively described as cosmopolitan, having a ludic orientation and being semiotically mobile.

Koll-Stobbe (2015: 66–71) terms all signs that make use of puns or other creative devices in the LL *ideofiers* so as to stress their quality as idiosyncratic, highly context-dependent entities which may play with meanings on a denotative and connotative level. She points out that they emerge from an indirect discursive mode, as the meaning-relevant components are not immediately accessible but have to be deduced through complex inferences based on non-linear processing. Commonly, puns are therefore classified as instances of *wordplay in absentia* or *vertical wordplay* (Hausmann 1974: 17). In Koll-Stobbe's (2015: 66–71) terminology, such signs are opposed to *identifiers*, which are generally more transparent as they work with conventional, codified semantic building blocks that can be processed in linear fashion. Names as identifiers may, for example, consist of a component indicating the branch and the name of the owner of this shop or institution.

Against this background, this study aims at analyzing the specifics of bilingual puns by delving into the cognitive or "conceptual landscape[s]" (Harder 2010: 29) they stand for, i.e. the ideas evoked by them and presented to the recipients. Another point which deserves further enquiry is whether bilingual puns cluster around specific domains and / or spatially around particular parts of the social world, namely specific quarters or districts, depending on the passers-by who are supposed to visit a particular location. To integrate this perspective, the interpretations laid out in the analysis (section 4) are confronted with the findings of sociolinguistic interviews which were carried out with viewers of the signs.

3 Methodology

The results of this study spring from two field trips, during which the LL of Berlin were explored in May and June 2015. To reduce complexity, it was decided to exclusively study name signs which, as such, stand out because of their prominence, their more or less permanent character and their identifying function. In

this investigation, bilingual puns are therefore defined as name configurations which involve a German element and (part of) an anglicism with the same or a similar sound shape. Following the definitions proposed by Görlach (2003), an anglicism is understood as "a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three) [...]" (see also Onysko 2007 and Knospe 2014; for critical perspectives on this matter see Paviour-Smith, this volume). Hence, adapted units that have lost their formal Englishness are left out of consideration, whereas units which are formally marked as English are included. That is why a pun like *Inwestor* [ɪnˈvɛstoːɐ̯], which ironically refers to a West German donor by playing on homophony of the German adjective *West* [vɛst], is not treated as bilingual here. In this case, the noun *investor* [ɪnˈvɛstoːɐ̯] is an integrated loanword whose form cannot be interpreted as recognizably English based on Görlach's three criteria (i.e. spelling, pronunciation and / or morphology).

As the distribution of German-English puns is not foreseeable, it was necessary to devise an efficient and effective methodology for their identification in the LL of Berlin:

As a first step, a random sample was collected in different areas of Berlin by photographing name signs in the sense of section 2.1, always documenting the locations where they were spotted. The items collected this way were then searched through for signs which make use of bilingual German-English puns to be able to find out what domains of the LL could be fruitful for the study at hand. According to the data, the name signs of hairdressers' shops (see also Paviour-Smith, this volume) and of bars or cafés seemed to be particularly useful for further investigation, although their numbers decrease according to their order of mentioning. All these signs belong to the category of bottom-up or, more-specifically, commercial signage which has been at the center of studies in Edelman (2009), Huebner (2009), Kallen (2010), Bogatto and Hélot (2010), and Koll-Stobbe (2015).[4]

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4 Yet, as already pointed out, it would not be correct to believe that objects in the LL which have been placed there by top-down actors were barred from (bilingual) wordplay. For instance, the BSR (Berliner Stadtreinigungsbetriebe, city cleaning Berlin) are known for using public rubbish bins with creative inscriptions. An example involving a bilingual pun is the coinage *Appfalleimer*. Interestingly, these containers, which are habitually called *Abfalleimer* [ˈapfalˌʔaɪ̯mɐ] in German, offer an app, the latter term being a recent English loan in German. Through its condensed form and its placement on the orange surface of these baskets, this ad hoc wording easily captures attention. On a discursive level, it makes use of the closeness of pronunciation of the particle *ab-* [ap] and the anglicism *app* (BrE [ap], AmE [æp], usually ren-

As a next step, the online version of the German telephone directory of businesses http://www.gelbeseiten.de (accessed 01.05.2015) was consulted, searching systematically for all entries in the categories found above. Allocating the addresses indicated on the yellow pages to concrete areas in the city of Berlin, it turned out that four of them contained most examples of bilingual puns: Berlin-Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Charlottenburg and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. These areas represent different sociotopes, which are briefly explained below.[5]

– As the name indicates, Berlin-Mitte is situated in the center of Berlin, where many tourist attractions such as the Brandenburg Gate, the Museum Island or the 'Fernsehturm' are found.

– Prenzlauer Berg (for a previous LLS see Papen 2012), by contrast, is a more and more gentrified area which is situated close to the center of the city but makes part of the larger district of Pankow. It is known for its comparatively high birthrate, a high amount of young inhabitants, and an influx of American, Australian and European migrants.

– Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf is a bourgeois area in the Western part of the city where many hotels, bars and restaurants are located, most of them built before the German reunification.

– Finally, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, uniting two boroughs of former East and West Berlin, is famous for its high amount of immigrants as well as innumerable bars and clubs and its alternative scene.

Next to resorting to the business directory *Gelbe Seiten*, Google Maps® was used to search for businesses of the categories given above in the four areas (see the map in Fig. 2), thus combining different data sources. Again, only names containing bilingual puns were selected.

Building on the examples found after looking through c. 5,100 entries – a number including repetitions of the same name in the case of several subsidiaries – the places concerned were visited. Private photographs of the signs[6] were taken, keeping an open eye for examples of bilingual puns possibly not listed in the sources. Surprisingly, the output amounted to merely 16 items, i.e. slightly above 0.3% of all tokens, which were mainly found in Prenzlauer Berg or Kreuz-

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dered as [ɛp] in German) to construct the image of a service-oriented, modern waste disposal company which asks all passers-by for help in keeping the streets clean.

5 For further information see http://www.visitberlin.de/en/plan/city-info/berlin-districts (accessed 15.03.2016). For reasons of space, no demographic data are provided here.

6 Some of the photographs are reproduced below. It is worth noting that there are sometimes overlaps between the name signs as such and the information found on the display windows.

berg-Friedrichshain. That shows that bilingual puns are (still) a niche phenomenon on name signs in the LL of the German capital, also in the two trendy areas of Berlin just named, and that they mostly concern creative branches, especially hairdressers. This domain is also abundant in the use of German configurations such as *Schnittstelle,* which plays with the meanings 'location for getting a haircut' and '(social) intersection', and *Kopfsache,* which implies not only that hairdressing is a matter of the head in the sense that the hairstyle must fit the person concerned, but that it is also a mental matter, as there must be a relation of trust between a hairdresser and his / her clients. Also, the sample includes creative English names like *James Blond* and *Hairforce One* for a hairdresser situated close to one of the airports in Berlin. Even though the actual yield of bilingual puns is rather limited, two areas, namely Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg offer most examples. This result is in line with the trendy profile of the shops, restaurants, cafés and bars they are known for.

Fig. 2: Location of the areas of Berlin investigated in this study
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_of_Berlin#/media/File:Berlin.bezirke.png,
accessed 15.03.2016)

For the data analysis, background information on the websites of the owners of the cafés, bars and hair salons was included wherever available. This served to complement the interviews with passers-by (see section 5) and proved to be useful for interpretation purposes. Also, this information helped to decode underspecified or initially non-transparent items so that they could either be included as bilingual puns or discarded from the final list. For instance, the name *WAU* for a restaurant-café in Berlin-Kreuzberg phonemically overlaps with the English expletive *wow*, which may be realized as [vaʊ̯] or [waʊ̯] in German. The name might be taken as a pun playing on the phonetic spelling of *wow*. A detailed look at the context reveals, however, that it is an abbreviation of <u>W</u>irtshaus <u>A</u>m <u>U</u>fer 'Riverside Inn'. This speaks against an immediate categorization as a pun, although the overlap with *wow* may also have played a role in the coining process. The name parallels the abbreviation used for a theater nearby, the *Hebbel Theater Am Ufer* (HAU) 'Riverside Hebbel Theater', located at the Landwehrkanal.

Based on this identification method, the bilingual puns were then classified according to different criteria. In general, their description is guided by several questions:

(1) Which linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge is activated by the bilingual puns, and how can their linguistic processing be modelled?

(2) Which kind of English material is used in the puns: items at the lexical level, below or above it? Do the LL data confirm Stefanowitsch's (2002) observation that the English elements used in the bilingual puns are all accepted items in German?

(3) Moreover, how is linguistic and visual information, e.g. color, size and specific strategies of highlighting, combined on the signs as multimodal units?

(4) Which functions do the puns fulfill in the LL?

These issues, which represent different aspects of a structured whole, are addressed in section 4, which reproduces selected pictures of the name signs discussed.

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Bilingual Puns as Structural and Conceptual Blends

One of the points needing closer analysis is the question of what makes the processing of bilingual puns and their effects so special. Following Knospe

(2005), it is postulated here that their particularity arises from their being blends in a structural and in a conceptual sense, which limits their frequency of occurrence. Structurally, interlingual puns are constrained in that they have to involve two items of, as in this case, German and English origin, which have fully or nearly identical phonemic strings (also as a result of the integration of anglicisms). Orthography may, but need not be the same, however. Since the forms constituting a bilingual pun can thus coincide phonemically, Sebba (2011) also speaks of *code blends*.

If this structural condition is met, complex steps of meaning construction follow, which, as argued in Knospe (2015), can be in many cases described by the theory of conceptual blending, originally developed by Fauconnier and Turner (1998, 2002). In their model, the authors posit the existence of *mental spaces* which are "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk [and write], for purposes of local understanding and action" (Fauconnier and Turner 1998: 137). Minimally four mental spaces are involved in each blending process; complex blends may involve more spaces. They are interconnected with one another in speech and thought, a dynamics which is graphically represented by lines linking the spaces. Importantly, all blends get specified for the individual case, although the process of blending as such is believed to be at the heart of many linguistic processes such as metaphor, metonymy and counterfactual reasoning, etc. The following paragraphs briefly explain the process of blending (Fauconnier and Turner 1998: 137–144, 2002: 40–50) and specify it for the object of this study, i.e. bilingual puns:

– Each blend is based on a minimum of two *input spaces* that are enriched with different concepts. In our case, these are linked to two formally similar or congruent German-English units, which can be identified as such if associative links have been formed between these elements in the minds of bilingual speakers. Due to the (partial) identity of form, one unit co-activates the other so that the processing is non-linear (see section 2.2).

– When abstract similarities (e.g. based on function, spatial or temporal relations etc.) are identified between the inputs, these form a *generic space*. In this connection, Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 102) also acknowledge the role of larger scripts and frames, which are entrenched in the speakers' mind: "When the elements and relations of a mental space are organized as a package that we already know about, we say that the mental space is *framed* and we call that organization a 'frame'."

– Through further mental operations, the *blended space* is constituted. Here, a new emergent meaning is created which is not laid out in the input spaces. This is an accomplishment that may be seen as rewarding by the reci-

pients, since this process, when bilingual puns are used, requires a higher processing load because of two factors: (a) the inputs stem from two languages, which must be available to the users; (b) they are not accessible in linear fashion. Rather, this is only possible through paradigmatic networks resting upon relations of interlingual homonymy / paronymy and sufficient awareness of the context. This limits the number of successful recipients

Let us flesh out the process of conceptual blending with the example below:
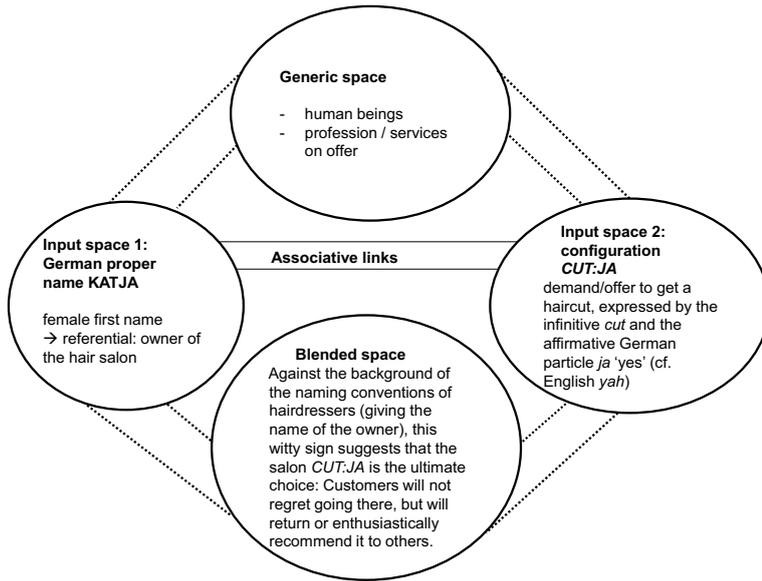
(2)   Friseur Cut:ja

Fig. 3a: Friseur *Cut:ja*
(Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015, © S. Knospe)

This configuration, used by a hairdresser in Prenzlauer Berg, manipulates the name of the hair salon owner Katja ['katja] by creatively reinterpreting her name, splitting it into two elements. First of all, there is the English noun *cut* [kʌt], likely to be pronounced [kat] in a German context, which foregrounds one of the basic tasks a hairdresser has; second, the German particle *ja* 'yes' is activated. On a material ground, the blend relies on the homophony of the first name, which was originally borrowed from Russian, and the orthographically altered version, although the colon marks a split into two words. The formally alienated proper name evokes the promise that the hairdresser Katja knows how to satisfy her clients' needs so that they will certainly agree to come back, as signaled by the phatic element *ja*. In short, the name tries to create a special persuasive effect and accepts the significant orthographical deformation of the personal name, as there is no interlingual homography at the same time. Yet, this hazardous step is compensated by the correct inscription of the name (and surname) on the door of the hair salon so that a clear identification of the owner is possible. Moreover, the antecedent element *Friseur* 'hairdresser' marks the type

of shop and provides orientation to customers who might not be able to make sense of the pun. As co-textual information, this is also relevant to the processing of the wordplay, activating scripts and frames in use in this context (see Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 85–86). The complex course which the blending takes in (2) is visualized in Fig. 3b:

Generic space

- human beings
- profession / services on offer

Input space 1: German proper name KATJA

female first name
→ referential: owner of the hair salon

Associative links

Input space 2: configuration CUT:JA
demand/offer to get a haircut, expressed by the infinitive *cut* and the affirmative German particle *ja* 'yes' (cf. English *yah*)

Blended space
Against the background of the naming conventions of hairdressers (giving the name of the owner), this witty sign suggests that the salon *CUT:JA* is the ultimate choice: Customers will not regret going there, but will return or enthusiastically recommend it to others.

Fig. 3b: Conceptual blending of *CUT:ja*

While the English form is manifest on the surface level of (2), the pun in example (3) is smoother, as there are no orthographical divergences between the English and the German element.

(3)   barbier Bar

This pun (see Fig. 4) refers to a hair salon that combines the services of a barber with that of a bar, offering different kinds of beverages. This formation exploits the homonymy of the element *Bar-* in the German noun *Barbier* 'barber' and the anglicism *Bar*, which shows up in final position. As an indicator of the profession, the lexeme *Barbier* also contains the element *-bier* that phonemically matches the German term *Bier* 'beer'. When combined with the preceding element this brings about the compound *Bierbar* 'beer bar' [ˈbiːɐ̯ˌbaːɐ̯] whose sylla-

ble sequence wittily reverses that of *Barbier* 'barber' [baʁˈbiːɐ̯]. Yet, this is only one reading. Alternatively, we may also take *Barbier* as the modifier and *Bar* as the head of the compound, which is in line with the variable menu of drinks.
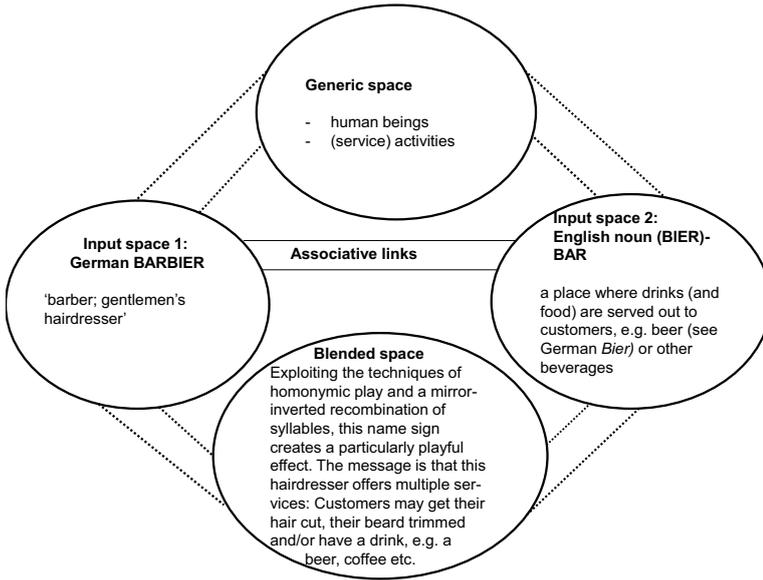

Fig. 4: Conceptual blending of *barbier Bar*

On a formal level, the constellation in (3) is similar with the structural base of the pun in (4).

(4)   Café LebensArt

This is the name of a café in Berlin-Mitte. The wordplay hinges on a pair of homonymous German-English nouns ([aːɐ̯t]) as part of input spaces 1 and 2. The message which is created by the blended space in Fig. 5 is also underlined by the information that the owners of the café provide on their website.[7]

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7 The website (http://www.cafe-lebensart.de/wir-uber-uns/, accessed 15.03.2016) sketches the following idea behind the choice of the name: "Der Name 'LebensArt' soll für alle verständlich vermitteln, was sich hinter dem italienischen Begriff 'Ambiente' verbirgt: nämlich das Bestreben, dem Gast eine angenehme Umgebung zu schaffen in der er sich wohl fühlt und gern
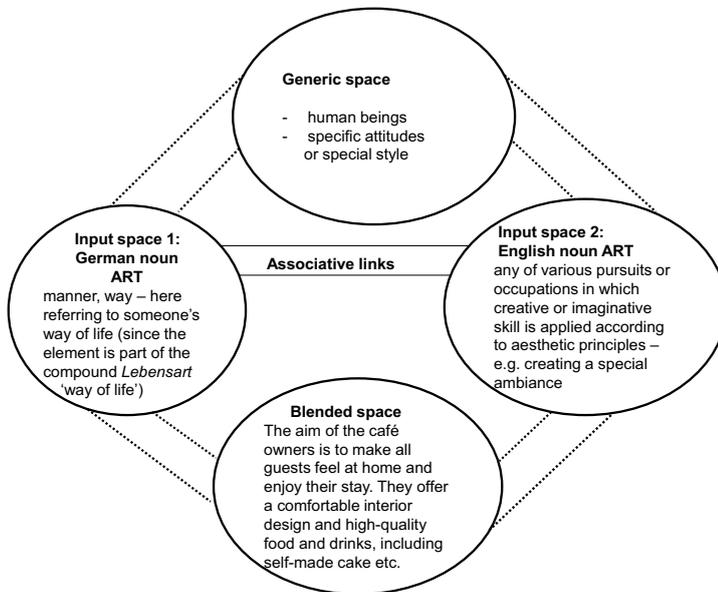
Fig. 5: Conceptual blending of *Café LebensArt*

Example (5) was spotted on the name sign of a hair salon in Prenzlauer Berg.

(5)   Kamm in

Structurally, (5) exploits homophony between the German element *Kamm* 'comb' and the English phrase *come in* which is well-known from touristic contexts. Linking these concepts, the blend (see Fig. 6) remains a playful construction which intensifies the welcoming message (for further discussion see section 4.2). This is comparable to the following example.

(6)   KAMM 2 CUT

verweilt, um frisch zubereitete Speisen, Getränke sowie in der hauseigenen Konditorei gefertigten Kuchen zu geniessen." (sic!, punctuation and spelling following the original) [The name 'LebensArt' intends to clearly communicate what is connected to the Italian notion of 'ambiance': the wish to create a nice atmosphere for guests in which they feel at home and like to stay for enjoying freshly prepared meals, drinks and cakes produced by our home bakery; translation into English SK]

What is noteworthy in (6) is the abbreviation of the preposition *to* by the letter-number-homophone *2,* which also elegantly marks that men and women may get their hair cut at an equal basic price, as visible in Fig. 7.
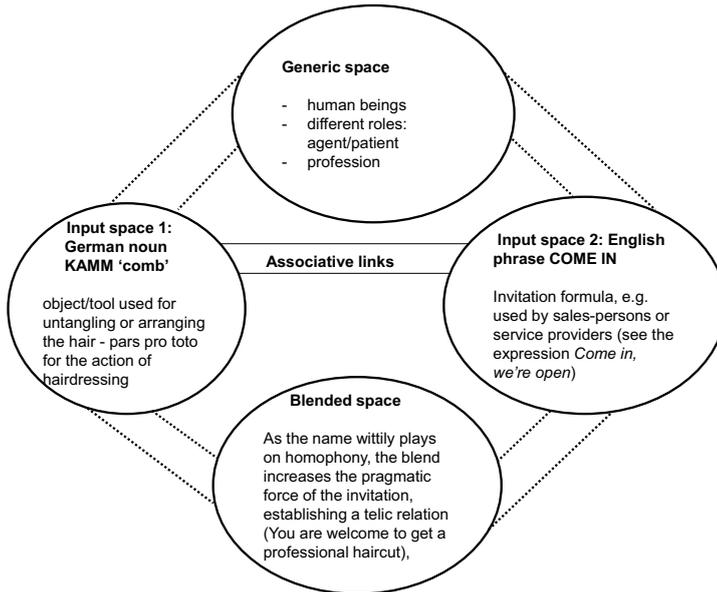

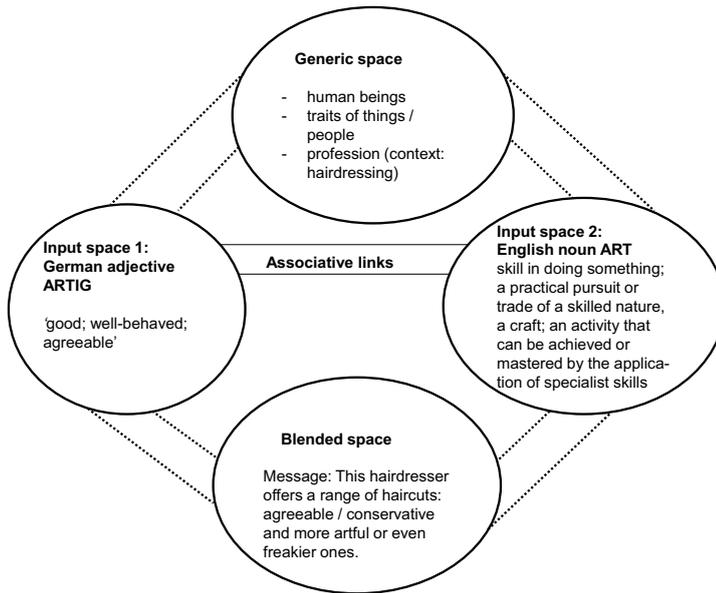**Fig. 6:** Conceptual blending of *Kamm in*

Fig. 7: *KAMM 2 CUT*
(Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015, © S. Knospe)

As example (4), configuration (7), which is used by another hairdresser in Prenzlauer Berg, exploits the linguistic ambiguity of the element *ART* that can be read as either English or German.

(7)   John's ARTiger Frisiersalon

As in (6), this element is embedded into a larger (phrasal) chunk, which enters the blending procedure (see Fig. 8). Instead of interlingual homonymy, homophony is at work in (8) which undergoes a blending procedure as indicated in Fig. 9.

(8)   haarspree Frisöre

Fig. 8: Conceptual blending of *John's ARTiger Frisiersalon*

Similar to example (2), *Cut:ja,* the label in (8), *haarspree Frisöre*, entails a proper name, which, in this case, refers to one of the rivers found in Berlin, the Spree ['ʃpʀeː]. The pronunciation of the river name matches that of the phonemically integrated anglicism *spray,* although it may also be pronounced as [spʀeː]. In combination with the German word *Haar* 'hair', this initiates a playful, but rather loosely associative blend (see Fig. 9). The proper name *Spree* gives it a local grounding due to the fact that this hairdresser is situated closely to this river in a scenic quarter known as Wrangelkiez. The catchy and witty name is thus inviting for potential customers.
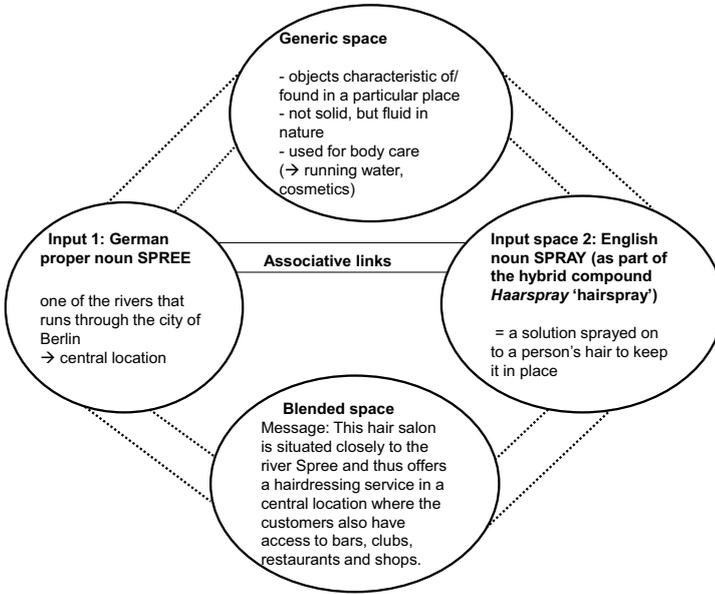
Fig. 9: Conceptual blending of *haarspree Frisöre*

These instantiations of wordplay sufficiently illustrate the typical blending procedures in bilingual puns, which play with the denotations or connotations of the linguistic elements involved and specific types of world knowledge. The next session discusses which linguistic status the items in the puns have.

4.2 Linguistic Status of the English Material in the Bilingual Puns

As was shown above, both homophony and paronymy relations may hold between the German and English elements, which form the base of the bilingual puns. In some cases, even full homonymy exists, i.e. the German and the English unit are adapted to German pronunciation habits and identically pronounced and spelled (if capitalization is disregarded). This option can be illustrated by the elements *bar* [baːɐ̯] or *art* [aːɐ̯t] in examples (1), (3), (4), (7) and (9).

If the pun is based on interlingual homophony or paronymy, it is usually the English element which is realized orthographically to flag the English reading of these elements. Formations (5), *Kamm in* [kam in], and (6), *KAMM 2 CUT*, are exceptions in this regard as they foreground the indexical German unit

Kamm 'comb' [kam] and modify the English frames *come in* [kʌm ɪn] / *come to* + verb.

Another descriptive aspect concerns the size of the linguistic units involved. Usually, the bilingual puns that were found in the LL of Berlin are based on units which are sublexical in one and lexical in the other language, as is the case with *BAR* (a bound, adjective-forming morpheme in German, but a noun in English) and examples which play with the English element *hair* and the German particle *her.*[8] Also, units that are lexical in both languages (see example (8) *haarspree Frisöre*) may be modified through punning, whereas an integration of the pun into a supralexical (phrasal) unit as in (1), *Bar jeder Vernunft*, or (5), *Kamm in* (see Engl. *come in*), is the option most rarely attested in this data set.

Moreover, the German and English elements that serve as inputs to the puns generally belong to different word classes. Although this is a given fact which cannot be changed by the punsters, it may be beneficial from a semantic point of view since different word classes bring about different conceptualizations (Croft 1991; Gärdenfors 2008; Kemmerer 2014). For instance, the conceptual blending of same- or similar-sounding nouns and verbs prototypically creates a relation between an object or place and a particular quality ascribed to it as in examples (2), (5) and (6). Addressing potential customers, this, in turn, may encode a specific promise. Other conceptual blends are based on a merger of directional (verbal) particles and nouns so that they express invitations or give guidance to passers-by (see examples (11) and (13) below). Such mechanisms may also affect supralexical puns. Indeed, the syntagmatic relation between the individual components of the multi-word unit (1), *Bar jeder Vernunft*, changes depending on what type of interpretation is given to the element which fills the first paradigmatic slot – preposition or noun (on this issue see also Chiaro 1992: 33–34).

Another tenet in the literature on bilingual puns is that the English and German segments used in the inputs are generally entrenched items. This suggests that mainly (parts of) anglicisms which have made their way into common use and are thus also likely to be known by individual passers-by,[9] are exploited

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8 By comparison, the status of *hair* is more variable in the corpus of German, English, French, Italian and Romansh in Swiss hair salon names compiled by Paviour-Smith (this volume).
9 Despite this observation, the relation between the entrenchment of an item and its integration in use on the community level is a problematic one (see Backus 2012). This issue cannot be discussed further in this article. Suffice it to say that there is a certain likelihood for a widespread anglicism to become part of the mental lexicon of an individual. Also see Langacker (1987: 59) who states that "units are variably entrenched depending on the frequency of their occurrence [in a speaker's own use and in that of the surrounding social environment]."

by punsters. Concerning the data at hand, the statement about the necessary entrenchment or integratedness in use of the English element in bilingual puns can be confirmed: most of the items use integrated anglicisms such as *bar* and *spray*. Even though the noun *hair* (see examples (11, (13) and (15)) cannot be considered an anglicism widespread in everyday use – it represents a basic term not likely to be borrowed and is not listed in Görlach's (2001) *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* –, it is found in product names of shampoos or conditioners. Since the German equivalent *Haar* [haːɐ̯] just differs in one vowel sound and orthographic symbol, this element can be easily projected onto the domain of hair salons (see section 4.4).

Entrenchment may also depend on the sociolinguistic status of the items punned on. Accordingly, some terms may be understandable for specific target groups only. Consider, e.g., the pun *Haarcore* in example (16) below, which alludes to knowledge of subculture, and the creation in (1), *Bar jeder Vernunft,* which presumes acquaintance with the slightly dated use of the German preposition *bar* 'bare of, without' (for further observations see section 5).

4.3 Interplay of Linguistic and Visual Information

Some of the observations made so far are also valid for bilingual puns in other domains or medial manifestations (see, e.g., Knospe 2015 on bilingual puns in press discourse). One of the specifics of signs in the LL of a place is, however, that they involve an interaction of linguistic and visual information. This is important for their effect in the social arena and for triggering the cognitive operations discussed. Based on the findings of this study, the following forms of interplay of the verbal and non-verbal modes could be identified, whereby some of the visual cues are also used cumulatively:

What is to be noted first of all is the conscious use of capitalization, blank space or hyphens to separate elements. Cognitively, this helps to draw attention to one of the meaning-bearing chunks which, via interlingual homophonous or paronymic links, serve as points of departure for the respective pun. In example (3), two techniques are exploited, as is visible from the picture in Fig. 10: Interestingly, the element *barbier-* is written in small letters. This puts more emphasis on the capitalized element *BAR* which is additionally set apart by a gap. In example (7), *John's ARTiger Frisiersalon*, the graphic manipulation is necessary to make the recipients deviate from the common understanding of the morphologically complex German adjective *artig,* which normally translates as 'good; beautifully behaved; agreeable'. Hence, it is only through the capitalization of *ART* (and the smaller font of the inflected derivational suffix *-iger*) that

an additional meaning component comes into play, evoking the idea of 'artful haircuts' that may be more conservative (well-behaved) or hip (Fig. 11).

Fig. 10: *barbier BAR*
(Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, photographed 19.06.2015, © S. Knospe)

Fig. 11: *John's artiger Frisiersalon*
(Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015, © S. Knospe)

This contrasts with the use of *art* in (9).

(9)   artgerecht

(9) is a name for a hairdresser in Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, which uses no capitalization or other cues. Nonetheleess, *art* can be treated as German (see the compound adjective *artgerecht* 'appropriate for someone') or English. This leads to semantic ambiguity because the name may indicate haircuts appropriate to the needs of men and women while, at the same time, meeting aesthetic concerns (haircutting as a form of art). Fig. 12 gives further examples of signs with graphically emphasized German-English puns:

– **Use of capitalization**

(10)   DeliCUT (hairdressers' shop in Prenzlauer Berg)

The English element *cut* in (10) stands for one of the central services offered by hairdressers. It alters the habitual German adjective *delikat* 'sensitive, delicate', implying that everyone's hair should be taken care of by professionals to avoid potentially disastrous outcomes, especially in a fashion-related way. There might also be a play on *Delikatessen,* which can be abbreviated as *Deli*.

(11)   HAIRreinspaziert (hairdressers' shop in Prenzlauer Berg)

Name (11) expresses a welcome to all potential customers of this hairdressers' shop by modifying the German imperative *hereinspaziert* 'come right in' with the English noun *hair,* which is homophonous in German pronunciation and points to the target object of the business.

– **Use of hyphenation**

(12)   Wunder-Bar (bar in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg)

This bilingual pun in (12) plays with the common German adjective *wunderbar* 'wonderful, marvelous; terrific'. Reinterpreting the derivational suffix as a noun, i.e. as the anglicism *Bar*, the meaning of the name is rendered literally, insinuating a wonderful stay.

Fig. 12: Further examples of bilingual puns using capitalization and hyphenation

Besides, signs containing bilingual puns may use visual cues which are related to the business, especially in the field of hair salons. See, for instance, the scissors in Fig. 13, which serve as an additional explanatory element that separate the two units in (13).

(13)   VORHAIR NACHHAIR

The image of the scissors creates a causal link, insinuating a clear reason for the difference between before and after (based on a homophonous play with the German adverbs *vorher* and *nachher*). Similarly, the names of salons (5), *Kamm in* (Fig. 14), and *Haarcore* (see the discussion below in (16)) use this symbol.

Fig. 13: *VORHAIR NACHHAIR* (Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, photographed 20.06.2015, © S. Knospe)

Fig. 14: *Kamm in* (Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015, © S. Knospe)

Sometimes, bilingual puns are also segmented through different shades of color. These also work as attention-directing devices, as can be seen in example

(14)   Cutbusser.

The pun in (14) links the hairdressers' shop and its style of haircutting (signaled by the element *cut* and a cue in terms of a wisp of hair) to the borough it is situated in, close to the tube station *Kotbusser Tor* (Fig. 15).

Fig. 15: *CUTBUSSER* (Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, photographed 20.06.2015, © S. Knospe)

Fig. 16: *haarspree Frisöre* (Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, photographed 19.06.2015, © S. Knospe)

Particularly refined is the strategy in configuration (8), *haarspree Frisöre*, as the opening times are sprayed in a graffiti-like manner on the shutters of the salon when it is closed (Fig. 16), thus playing with notions of color (see also the term *color spray*) and different styles. Finally, (11), *HAIRreinspaziert*, makes use of moving letters which evoke creativity and dynamicity. Additionally, the element

HAIR is capitalized and put into a larger font than the rest of the wording (see Fig. 17). Similarly, the hair salon name in (15) draws on fonts in the shape of curly hairstrands (see Fig. 18) that are decorated by a flower.

(15)   HAIRLICH NATÜRLICH

This adds to the message that the salon is more than an average hairdresser. The core of the pun, i.e. the creation *hairlich*,[10] builds a connection to the target of all haircutters and creates a slogan which could be translated as 'naturally hair-based', while the second meaning component is *herrlich natürlich* [ˈhɛʁlɪç naˈtyːɐ̯lɪç] 'wonderfully natural'. This is motivated by the concept of this hair-dressers' shop, which only uses natural, plant-based products and offers a re-laxed atmosphere in Feng Shui style.[11]

Fig. 17: *HAIRreinspaziert*
(Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015, © S. Knospe)

Fig. 18: *HAIRLICH NATÜRLICH*
(Prenzlauer Berg, photographed 16.05.2015), © S. Knospe)

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10 *Hairlich* [ˈhɛʁlɪç] exploits homophony with the German adjective *herrlich* 'wonderful'. Structurally, it can be split up into the English element *hair* and the bound (derivational) mor-pheme *-lich* '-ly'.
11 This URL of the website is http://www.hairlichnatuerlich.de/Philosophie.html (accessed 15.03.2016).

4.4 Functions of Puns in the LL

In light of the analysis carried out above, this section focuses on the functions of bilingual puns in the LL. Since the puns appear on name signs, which are placed in different parts of Berlin, the general functions of names in public space need to be considered. According to Huebner (2009), they can be described as follows (see also Koll-Stobbe 2015: 61–62):

First, names that occur in the commercial sphere communicate concepts that are referential and symbolic in the sense that they relate to the craft or business of the owners of the shops, restaurants, bars etc., or construct a particular image. More specifically, bilingual puns, cognitively and socially, open a window onto different worlds of meaning that are associated with the local code German and the global code English so as to portray the business and the individuality of the shop or venue. For Jaworski (2005: 82), this process amounts to an act of "(self-)styling", as creations like (1), (2), (8) and (15) show.

As a result of the connotations evoked by some of the names, German-English puns may also address specific feelings, emotions or interests – for instance in pun (12), *Wunder-Bar,* which suggests moments of surprise. This makes them vague, however, which represents a challenge at least for the theory of conceptual blending.[12]

In their condensed form and their more or less prominent placement in commercial spaces, these "cute names", as Byrd (1982) labels signs including puns (see also Paviour-Smith, this volume), are intended as persuasive, attention-getting devices. Their image-centeredness is confirmed by some of the website information given above.

Eventually, names, as labels and means of advertising, also establish and maintain contact between the business owners and their (potential) clients or customers. Bilingual puns contribute to this aim inasmuch as they invite viewers to make some additional cognitive investments when trying to give meaning to the labels. This communicative engagement initiates a process of social bonding.

Fully in line with the argumentation developed above, this set of functions reflects the idea that both social and cognitive aspects are involved in the interactive process of meaning-making. It also explains why the cityscape is probably not plastered with names based on bilingual puns, as the effects of this device do not fit every business and user type and could also wear out.

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12 Such examples could thus be seen as instances of frame-shifting (see Onysko, DF, and Fuhrich and Schmid, this volume).

5 The Opinions of Language Users on Bilingual Puns in Public Signage

Pursuing a usage-based approach which is grounded in a socio-cognitive framework, it is important to finally include the views of language users, i.e. to investigate to what extent those who frequent the LL of Berlin comprehend the bilingual puns discussed above and to find out what their impression of the respective business / shop is.

The scope of the article allows the implementation of a case study, which involves interviews with passers-by on the spot, i.e. vis-à-vis the respective sign. For this, 15 people were randomly chosen, irrespective of their age and gender. In this context, no controlled setting was possible, which means that the passers-by were not grouped according to their acquaintedness with the place in question, as the status (resident, casual / regular visitor, tourist, …) was not asked for. In order not to influence the answers, the interviews consisted of two short questions (in German):

(1) What kind of message does this sign aim to convey from your point of view?
(2) What does it suggest about the shop / restaurant / bar?

The interviewees showed different reactions depending on factors such as time pressure and their general willingness to talk, which led to answers varying in length and precision.

Despite these restrictions, certain tendencies have become visible, as the results suggest different degrees of transparency or motivatedness that are perceived by the passers-by. The main results are summarized below:

First of all, hair salon names which include the element *hair* such as examples (11), *HAIRreinspaziert,* (13), *VORHAIR NACHHAIR,* or (15), *HAIRLICH NATÜRLICH,* on average, struck more than 70% of the interviewees as motivated and relatively transparent, the exception being older recipients with little knowledge of English. *Hair* is a conspicuous English unit that is used to modify entrenched German elements such as the prepositions *vorher* [ˈfoːɐ̯heːɐ̯] 'before-(hand)' and *nachher* [ˈnaːχheːɐ̯] 'afterwards' in (13), the adjective *herrlich* [ˈhɛʁlɪç] 'magnificent' in (15) and the participle form *hereinspaziert* [hɛˈʁaɪ̯nʃpaˈtsiːɐ̯t] 'come right in!' in (11). The element *hair* can be easily linked to the business as such. As a result, most of the passers-by were able to see a connection to the craft concerned and identified the wish to mark the hairdressers' openness for international trends via the use of an English keyword or shibboleth, which is phonemically not far away from the German noun *Haar* [haːɐ̯]. According to the

interview data, a similar transparency (66.66%) holds for names such as (12), *Wunder-Bar*, which puns on the English noun *bar* (likely to be pronounced as [baːɐ̯] in German) and the adjective *wunderbar* [ˈvʊndɐbaːɐ̯] 'wonderful'.

Despite a general understanding of the puns, around a third of the interviewees remarked that some of the names created looked artificial or odd to them, e.g. as a result of the changes on the orthographical level in names like (11), *HAIRreinspaziert,* or (15), *HAIRLICH NATÜRLICH.* Linguistically, this can usually not be avoided since true interlingual homonymy between German and English elements is rare.

Also, the interviewees saw the evocations of some names as relatively unspecific so that conclusions on the kind of shop and its image were not easy for them. A vague impression was triggered, for instance, by the name in (10), *DeliCUT,* for which only 30% of the recipients came up with an interpretation of haircuts being a delicate matter so that a hairdresser needs the trust of his / her clients. The concept of *Wunder-Bar* (see example (12)) appeared to be semantically vague to about 20% of the viewers. One interviewee remarked, however, that it could be convenient from the owner's perspective that it remains open which miraculous things are offered by the bar. In fact, such a global promise may be referred to exotic drinks on offer, the interior design, etc.

Much more uncertainty on part of the interviewees was provoked by the name in (16).

(16)   Haarcore

This name appears on a hair salon in Prenzlauer Berg. Only 26.66% of the interviewees in this small sample were able to see a motivation behind the example. This may be due to the polysemy of English *hardcore* which may depict a strong commitment to a particular purpose or group or, more specifically, to either very explicit pornography or "[p]opular music that is experimental in nature and typically characterized by high volume and aggressive presentation" (see *OED* Online). The answers might have been slightly different, though, if the interviewees had all been familiar with the decoration in the display window, which shows skulls and other objects confirming the subcultural orientation of the shop.[13]

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13 This impression is corroborated by the pictures presented on the homepage of the hairdresser (http://www.haarcore.com/, accessed 15.03.2016), not available to the interviewees, and the self-portrait, in which the owners play with certain associations, e.g. by humorously labeling the separate laundry area where the hair of the customers is washed and where they

Similar results were accomplished for the name *Cutbusser* (see example (14)) with only five, i.e. one third of the 15 interviewees being able to give an interpretation. Indeed, the latter is only decipherable for those who see the relation between the English element *cut* and the first element of the noun *Kottbusser* [ˈkɔtbʊsɐ] with which it is paronymous and which refers to the tube station *Kottbusser Tor* that is located nearby in the borough of Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain. That is, the local reference did not seem to be conspicuous for most of the interviewees, possibly because of the interview method and its restrictions based on random choice and / or because of the spelling modification the pun involves, which leads to a replacement of the vowel, the initial <k> and the removal of one occurrence of the letter <t>. However, another, more general factor might be that the play is situated on a loosely associative level not accessible to some speakers. This is also the case with examples such as (5), *Kamm in*, and (6), *KAMM 2 CUT,* as reflected in the blended spaces above.

Although even such bilingual puns were certainly not randomly chosen by the shop owners, this shows that this type of bilingual wordplay is a risky choice. Yet, the niche function of the puns may be attractive from the perspective of the punsters, as it would be unrealistic to reach all consumers when adopting a specialized business concept.

6 Conclusion and Outlook

This article has shown that a combined cognitive and socio- / contact linguistic approach to bilingual wordplay in the LL of urban areas is utile because it offers a usage-based framework that captures the complexity of multimodal information setting in the commercial cities of our times. As has been demonstrated, German-English puns, as part of names, are creations that build on a construed congruency between German and English. They often operate on the sublexical or lexical level and exploit existing homophony or paronymy relations between the two languages although full homonymy can also occur. Visible on public signs, especially in the names chosen for shops, cafés, bars, etc., bilingual puns, which are very condensed units, may help to create a particular image, suggesting special mottos, offers or a particular atmosphere. At the same time, they

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receive a head massage a "darkroom." Moreover, the female staff name themselves "Frisetten." This word reminds one of other dialectal terms used in Berlin such as *B(o)uletten* '(fried) meat balls', which is sometimes also pejoratively used for people from Berlin.

are cognitively attractive in that their meaning is hidden behind one surface form. Another factor that the data in this study have revealed is that the strategy of bilingual punning is not so common on name signs but remains more of a niche phenomenon. Therefore, business owners who expect their customers to think beyond language boundaries and to make some efforts for decoding them may use bilingual puns as attention-getting devices. Still, this is no sure-fire success. In other words, this choice, as virtually all choices in communication, is connected to certain risks which are even higher in LL communication. For instance, the bilingual puns may be understood differently than intended because of the semantic vagueness of one of the inputs, because they may not be related to the business concerned or because they are not accessible at all to individual recipients, especially if one of the units in the input spaces is less common. Whether this is the case or not can be investigated sociolinguistically, while the process of meaning construction may be adequately illustrated by drawing on the theory of conceptual blending.

In the analysis of bilingual puns that enter the LL, additional cues such as the explicit naming of the profession, special graphic techniques, different color shades, capitalization or hyphenation should play a role, too, as they seek to guide the viewers' interpretation.

Although the analytical framework in this study acknowledges different aspects of bilingual wordplay (including the dimension of speaker-hearer interaction), this approach has several limitations. First, the theory of conceptual blending is certainly not able to explain all kinds of punning, especially when loosely associative meanings are at work. This was already hinted at in the discussion of examples such as (5), *Kamm in,* (6), *KAMM 2 CUT,* and (14), *Cutbusser.* Second, the amount of data was not sufficient for a detailed investigation of divergences in the distribution of bilingual puns on name signs in different districts of Berlin and their sociodemographic structure. Besides, it would have been desirable to include other shop types (florists, optical stores etc.), as well as a comparison with other German cities and a higher number of informants for the interviews in section 5. Asking the shop owners or service providers could also have substantiated the findings. Another aspect for further investigation would be to find out the productivity of certain (sub)lexical items in bilingual punning. In addition, it may be worthwhile to consider the price range of the businesses under investigation and do so in a much larger corpus. Testing the attention levels reached through different signs would also be an important aspect. Finally, the focus of this investigation was solely on German-English puns, involving material from two structurally closely related languages. It might be interesting, however, to look at other playful forms such as hybrid formations,

blends (see also Cacchiani, this volume) or bilingual puns involving German and other languages (e.g. French and Italian). One example of a German / French pun is the hairdressers' shop name *Chic-Saal* spotted in Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf close to Kurfürstendamm. It modifies the German noun *Schicksal* 'fate' by bringing in the notion of chicness and fashionability, the loanword *chic* [ʃɪk] being homophonous with the first syllable of *Schicksal* [ˈʃɪkˌzaːl]. This reminds one of the fact that the LL of a place does not form a single system, but consists of several subsystems where standard and vernacular, formal and informal elements as well as different discursive practices exist side-by-side (see Kallen 2010).

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