Germans have traditionally displayed a strong ambivalence toward adopting foreign words. Some people enthusiastically embrace trendy items from other languages (e.g. "der Trend"), while others throw up their hands in horror at the degradation of their language.

The conflict is an old one. The 17th century saw the founding of a number of *Sprachgesellschaften* (language societies), dedicated in part to limiting such borrowings, which seemed to be overwhelming "real" German (However, the story that early purists tried to replace the supposedly-foreign word "Nase" [*nose*] with the artificial construction "Gesichtserker" [*facial oriel*] is apocryphal). Nor were other nations free of analogous concerns. The *Académie française* was founded around the same time and still aggressively combats linguistic imports. Later on, in the 18th century, German purists' most impassioned objections centered on French imports, which, it was felt, represented foppish, reactionary, aristocratic forces that were antithetical to the values of the rising middle class. In the 19th and 20th centuries, English seemed to pose the greatest threat, first as the language of industrial capitalism, then of the metropolis, modernism, and finally popular culture. These curmudgeonly objections were of course responses to other Germans' enthusiasm for such things.

Actually, loanwords have always constituted huge portions of the German vocabulary. Most of them have become so much a part of the language that modern speakers are unaware of their origin. Only etymologists know that words like "das Fenster" (*window*) and "die Mauer" (*wall*) are building-construction terms that the early Germans learned from the Romans (*fenestra*; *murus*).

Some words acquire appeal through folk etymologies that attribute foreign origins to them. The plural noun "Fisimatenten" (*excuses; nonsense; gimmickry*) has in fact unclear roots, but popular lore traces it to French soldiers in Berlin who were either trying to lure young women inside (to visit their aunt) or offering a false excuse to explain an absence ("visitez ma tante", "visité ma tante").

In this Grammar Review, however, we are concerned with just two categories of foreign words:

> 1) traditional, well-established loanwords that are still recognized as imports because of certain features;
> 2) recent imports that draw significance - of whatever sort - from their obvious foreignness.

Nouns that are traditional (i.e. established) loanwords but still foreground their origins can have a variety of sources, but most of them come from English, French, Greek, Italian, and Latin. Often it is their suffixes that call attention to their roots. (see also canoonet's general description of [suffixes associated with imported words](#)). Just a few examples of such suffixes:

From the French:
"-té": ["-tät"](#) creates a feminine noun (e.g. "die Universität" [*university*]);
"-aire" becomes ["-är"](#) and creates a masculine noun (e.g. "der Sekretär" [*secretary*]);
"-eur" becomes ["-eur"](#) (or ["-ör"](#)) and creates a masculine noun (e.g. "der Friseur" [*hairdresser; barber*]); (likewise, the feminine form is ["-euse"](#) [or: ["-öse"](#)]);
"-ant" and "-ment" stay the same in German but become neuter (e.g. "das Restaurant", "das Appartement") The plural is formed with "-s". Note that German imports both "Appartement" from French and "Apartment" from English, using the two synonymously.
"-tion" stays feminine but takes an "-en" plural (e.g. "die Nation, die Nationen");
"-ique" becomes the feminine "-ik" (e.g."die Politik" [*politics*]).

From the Greek:
"-ικη" becomes ["-ik"](#) and creates a feminine noun (e.g. "die Logik" [*logic*]);
"-λογος" becomes ["-logie"](#) and creates a feminine noun (e.g. "die Biologie" [*biology*]);
"-α" becomes a neuter noun with the plural "-en" (e.g. "das Drama, die Dramen"; "das Thema, die Themen");
"-ος" becomes "-us", creating a masculine noun (e.g. "Christus" [*Christ*]); its declension corresponds largely - but not completely - to the Greek: *acc.* "Christum", *dat.* "Christo", *gen.* "Christi");

From Italian: the most characteristic suffixes are "-o", which becomes neuter ("das Konto" [*bank account*], "die Konten"; "das Cello, die Cellos"), and the plural "-i" ("die Spaghetti").

From Latin: most of the adapted Latin terms retain suffixes that indicate their origin, e.g., the Latin masculine *globus* becomes the German "der Globus". The Latin plural "globi", however, becomes "die

Globen."

A similar pattern applies to neuter loanwords ending in "-eum", "-ium", "-uum", and "-on" (e.g. "das Museum, die Museen"; "das Partizipium" [*participle*], "die Partizipien"; "das Individuum" [*individual*], "die Individuen"; "das Distichon" [*distich*], "die Distichen").

From English: the most common suffix is "-ing" (e.g. "das Training"; "das Coaching"):

Market of the future: healthcare. My job opportunity. Desired qualifications for the field of healthcare. Job coaching included!

As with French, the suffixes "-ment" and "-tion" stay the same, but the former is neuter ("das Management"), the latter feminine ("die Relaxation"). Note that German imports both "Appartement" from French and "Apartment" from English, using the two synonymously. All nouns retain their plural "-s", but a final "-y" does not change to "ie" ("die Party, die Partys"; "das Hobby, die Hobbys").
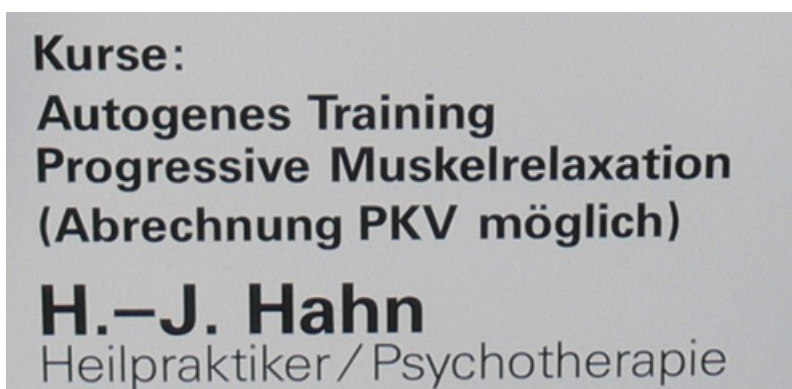
Autogenous training, Progressive muscle relaxation, (Privat health insurance possible).

Pronunciation can also be an indicator of foreign origin. Especially French words retain as much of the original pronunciation as the speaker can manage, concentrating on distinctive consonants (such as the voiced fricative "-g-") or certain clusters (nasalized "-ant", "-ent", "-in"): e.g. "das Arrangement", "die Blamage", "die Garage", "die Politik", "das Restaurant", "die Chance", "der Cousin" (With "cousin," the attempt at the nasalized syllable at the end often comes out "couSÄNG"; for some reason "das Kompliment", in contrast to "das Apartement" and "das Arrangement", does not nasalize the final syllable).

The "French pronunciation" also involves an alternative to the usual German pattern of stressed syllables. German typically stresses the first syllable of a word, so long as it is not an inseparable prefix. While French has no stressed syllables, German ears register that lack by perceiving a stress on the last one ("ParDON", "PoliTIK", "RestauRANT") - unless its vowel is a schwa, which never receives stress in German.[1]

It that case, the penultimate syllable is emphasized: "BlaMAGe", "CHANce", "GaRAGe".

"English pronunciation" usually takes the form of trying to imitate the American "a" (as in "cat"). Since that sound is not part of the German repertoire, the best approximation becomes a short "e" or "ä". Thus borrowings like "der Manager" or "gehandicapped" are pronounced as if the "a" were umlauted: ""der

Mänäger" or "gehändicäpped". "Das Handy" (*cell phone*) is not a borrowing from English at all, but Germans think that it is and pronounce it as if it were spelled "Händy" (the plural is "die Handys").

Verbal suffixes that mark three large classes of established loanwords: "-ieren", "-isieren", and "-izieren"). These verbs are regular, except that their past participles do not take "ge-".

"-ieren" (derived from the Old French verbs ending in "-ier" [or the modern "-er"]): "blamieren" (*to embarrass*); "jonglieren" (*to juggle*); "manipulieren" (*to manipulate*); "pausieren" (*to pause*); "rebellieren" (*to rebel*); "repetieren" (*to repeat*); "requirieren" (*to requisition*); "stimulieren" (*to stimulate*); "studieren" (*to study*); "tabulieren" (*to tabulate*); "telefonieren" (*to telephone*).

In the high middle ages this suffix also became attached to some verbs that are actually not of foreign origin: "buchstabieren" (*to spell*); "gastieren" (*to give a guest performance*); "glasieren" (*to glaze*); "halbieren" (*to cut in half*); "hausieren" (*to peddle door-to-door*).

"-isieren" corresponds to the English "-ize": "brutalisieren" (*to brutalize*); "fraternisieren" (*to fraternize*); "modernisieren" (*to modernize*); "tyrannisieren (*to tyrannize*).

"-izieren" corresponds to the English "-fy": "modifizieren" (*to modify*); "qualifizieren" (*to qualify*); "quantifizieren" (*to quantify*); "verifizieren" (*to verify*).

TELE INTERNET
Internet
Telefonieren
Surfen
Chatten
Email
Faxen
Kopieren

workout sonderheft

Unser neues Bookazine
Der Workout-Guide mit den 200 besten Übungen für das Training im Studio oder daheim – inklusive DVD. Ab sofort für 12,90 Euro in unserem Online-Shop. ...mehr

Workout special edition. Our new bookazine. The workout guide with the 200 best exercises for training in the health club or at home - including a DVD. Available right now in our on-line store.

Today there is an enormous influx of **modish words and phrases, largely from English**. The plural form of such nouns is generally "-s". How they receive their gender can be a mysterious process, but often one of four principles applies (see Canoonet):

1) If the language of origin has gendered nouns, the original gender is retained: "der Karton," "die Kaper" (from the French *le carton; la câpre*), "der Cappuccino" (Italian *il cappuccino*).

2) But sometimes the gender can change to conform to analogous structures. For example, French masculine nouns ending in "-e" can become feminine in German: "die Garage", "die Zigarre" (*le garage, le cigare*); the Italian *il duetto* becomes "das Duett" (on the model of "das Tablett" and "das Amulett"); the English *computer* becomes "der Computer" on the analogy of German nouns that are derived from verbs by adding the suffix "-er" (That process leads to the plural "die Computer," rather than the otherwise expected "-s").

3) If the borrowed word has an obvious German translation, it usually assumes that gender: "der Star" (because it's "der Stern"), "der Miami Beach" (from "der Strand"), "der Times Square" (from "der Platz"), "die Card" (from "die Karte"), "die Bouillon" (from "die Brühe" [despite the French *le bouillon*]).

4) Some imports take the gender of other items in the same field: "das Marihuana" (on the analogy of "das Heroin" and "das Kokain").

When several of these principles are in conflict, the gender may be uncertain. Both "die Grappa" and "der Grappa" are possible, based either on the first principle (the Italian *la grappa*) or the fourth (the related alcoholic drinks "der Whisky", "der Cognac", "der Schnapps").

Coffee & Ice on the way

"Der Job": some imported words introduce concepts that were not necessarily already articulated in the language.

"Der Job," for example, denotes a different relationship between a worker and his or her employment than do the available German terms like "der Beruf", "die Arbeit", "der Arbeitsplatz", "die Arbeitsstelle", "die Berufstätigkeit", "die Beschäftigung", etc. Upon entering the language, the noun received a gender. The process by which the word became masculine is not obvious, but there is no controversy about the choice. Its inflexions are also easily established: genitive: "des Jobs", plural: "die Jobs." And other derivations proceed according to normal patterns: "der Nebenjob", "der Studentenjob", "der Ferienjob", "der Traumjob", etc. The verb form, "jobben", obviously does not derive directly from the English, which has no such verb, but rather from German analogies (e.g., "die Arbeit" becomes "arbeiten"). The double consonant preserves the German pronunciation of the short "o" (compare "joggen" or "stoppen"), and the conjugation conforms to the regular pattern: ("jobbte, gejobbt").
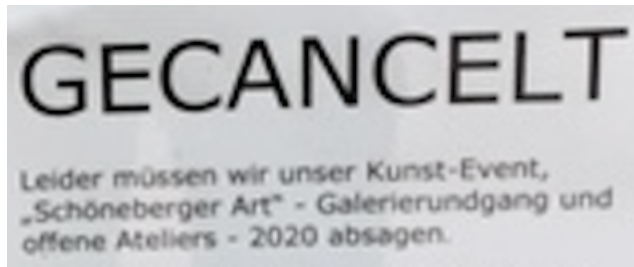
Canceled. Unfortunately we have to call off our 2020 art event, "Schöneberger Art" - tour of galleries and open ateliers. [Note that "Schöneberger Art" can mean either "in the manner of Schöneberg" or, if "art" is read as a loan from English, "Art in Schöneberg.]"

"Der Computer": some other words bow to international trends.

Rather than try to preserve more insular terms like "Datenverarbeitungsanlage" or "Rechner", Germans go along with "Computer". As noted above, they make it masculine on the analogy of German nouns that add the suffix "-er" to verbs, and, following that analogy, they make the plural "die Computer," rather than the otherwise expected "-s". Other examples of such "international terms" are "das Ticket" and "die Card" (e.g. "die Bahncard").

The world of alternative health offers many examples of such borrowings, including those that strike native-speakers of English as odd:

Pseudo-borrowings from English, presumably chosen to appeal to buyers wishing to be associated with modern sensibilities, are also common.

We have already seen "das Handy" (complete with "American pronunciation") used to denote a cell phone. Another pseudo-loanword is "der Beamer" (*projector* - like "Computer", it has no "-s" in the plural). And some such fictional constructions can be truly grotesque: a knapsack that has just one strap that crosses the body (called a "Schulterrucksack") is sold as a "Bodybag". Another comical borrowing continues this unintended morbidness: a "Public Viewing" refers not to an open-casket, but to a live broadcast open to the public:

Public Viewing zur Fußball-WM in Berlin nur mit Auflagen

Nachtruhe hat Vorrang: Die Senatsverwaltung will die Übertragung von Spielen der Fußball-WM nach Mitternacht in Berlin nicht genehmigen.

"Public viewings" in Berlin of the World Cup soccer matches only with restrictions. Nighttime peace and quiet takes precedence. The city administration won't allow the broadcast of World-Cup games in Berlin after midnight.

As many of the previous examples show, **borrowings are normally adapted to German principles of word-formation**:

Not just "Computer" and "Beamer", but other English (or pseudo-English) words with the same pattern of adding the suffix "-er" to verbs, take their plurals from the German pattern: "der Player, die Player".

Tim Ferriss, der Fitness-Freak

Seine Diät-Tipps sind radikal. Das Training scheint den Naturgesetzen zu widersprechen. Tim Ferriss bringt seinen Körper mit ungewöhnlichen Methoden in Topform.

His diet-tips are radical. The training seems to contradict the laws of nature. Tim Ferriss brings his body into top form using unusual methods.

Again, as mentioned above, English nouns (or pseudo-nouns) ending in "-y" simple take an "-s" in their German plural: "Handys", "Partys", "Hobbys".

English noun chains often - but not always - appear as one word: "Departmentstore".

Imported verbs usually take on regular German conjugations (although the informal nature of these words tends to mean that they do not often appear in the simple past): "checken checkte, gecheckt"; "fighten, fightete, gefightet"; "grillen, grillte, gegrillt" (*to barbecue*); "printen, printete, geprintet"; "surfen, surfte, gesurft".

The "down" of "downloaden" is normally not considered separable ("downloadete, gedownloadet"), although "downgeloadet" can be encountered. On the other hand, when equivalent German separable prefixes are added to the English stem, they take on the German form: "abrippen, rippte ab, abgerippt" (*to rip off; to steal*); "ausflippen, flippte aus, ausgeflippt" (*to flip out; to lose one's sanity or self-control*); "auschillen, chillte aus, ausgechillt" (*to chill out; to relax [with friends]*).

Exploiting the potentials of German constructions can also open up possibilities that are not available in the original language of the borrowed elements: "sich fitboxen" means *to box oneself into shape*.

Box dich fit! Der neue Studio-Hype

But in many cases, especially in advertising, Germans create expressions that pretend to be English, but aren't really: "Fit for Fun", "Go Jeans!"

---

[1] When faced with a foreign word that has a stressed schwa (e.g. "love"), a German substitutes a short "a" (Thus someone with a German accent will turn "puppy" into "poppy" or "love" into "laff" - in this case, the "v" of "love" also becomes the voiceless "f", since Germans cannot end words with a voiced consonant).