Olaf Jäkel

‘Morning, Noon and Night’:
Denotational Incongruencies between English and German

Universität Duisburg-Essen
Olaf Jäkel

University of Flensburg (Germany)
(Formerly Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg)

‘Morning, Noon and Night’:
Denotational Incongruencies between English and German

Copyright by the author    Reproduced by LAUD
2000 (2., unveränderte Auflage 2006)    Linguistic Agency
Series A    University of Duisburg-Essen
General and Theoretical    FB Geisteswissenschaften
Paper No. 519    Universitätsstr. 12
                 D- 45117 Essen

Order LAUD-papers online: http://www.linse.uni-due.de/linse/laud/index.html
Or contact: laud@uni-due.de
1. Introduction

This study investigates the conceptual field of TIMES OF THE DAY and its lexical realizations in English and German. It is an application of the theory of semantic fields, or rather the field approach (cf. Lehrer 1974:x), which goes back to the German linguist Trier (1931), and was introduced into English linguistics and elaborated mainly by Lehrer (1974), Lyons (1977), and Lehrer & Kittay (1992). At the centre of this approach to lexical semantics is the structuralist tenet that "the single words determine each other's meaning by their number and position in the overall field" (Trier 1931:7, translated by the author). In the words of Lehrer & Kittay (1992:3f.), "the meanings of words must be understood, in part, in relation to other words that articulate a given content domain and that stand in the relation of affinity and contrast to the word(s) in question."

I hope to prove that "field theory is particularly helpful in the area of contrastive linguistics" (Lipka 1990:157). As "the boundaries between the meanings of what at first sight appear to be semantically equivalent words in different languages may be, and very often are, incongruent" (Lyons 1977:236), the main part of my investigation (in section 2) will focus on the denotational incongruencies between English and German that can be revealed by the field approach, and on the different types of incongruencies that may be distinguished (cf. Jäkel 2001).

For linguistic examples I have mainly drawn on recent, corpus-based monolingual dictionaries (see appendix B) as well as on Bill Bryson's (1995) Notes from a Small Island and its German translation (1997) Reif für die Insel, with the latter two also supplying the corpus material for a short treatment (in section 3) of some intricacies of translation resulting from the denotational incongruencies described in the main section. For descriptive purposes, sense

\footnote{This application is part of a larger project in which I am trying to bring together aspects of the field approach on the one hand, and Cognitive Semantics on the other hand (see Jäkel 2001). For a short history of the field approach from a Cognitive Semantic perspective, see Geeraerts et al. (1994:118-124).}
omponents or semantic features are employed at some stages during the investigation, but only as diagnostic components (Nida 1975:112) or distinctive features (Lipka 1990:115), without subscribing to any of the controversial tenets of componential analysis of the Katz/Fodor (1963) type.

As one of the problems of the field approach is that of determining the outer boundaries of a semantic field, of finding out which linguistic expressions ought to be included, and of distinguishing basic lexemes from peripheral expressions (cf. Lehrer 1974:10-12), I have conducted an empirical salience test using 20 German students of English as informants. The results of this pilot study (see appendix A) show that the most salient or basic terms in the field – mentioned by at least 50% of informants – are (1.) morning, (2.) afternoon, (3.) evening, (4.) night, (5.) midnight, and (6.) noon for English, and (1.) Abend(s), (2.) Mittag(s), (3.) Nachmittag(s), (4.) Morgen(s), (5.) Nacht(s), (6.) Mitternacht, and (7.) Vormittag(s) for German. These lexemes will be at the centre of attention in the following account.

2. Times of the Day: A Conceptual Field and its Lexicalization

The field of TIMES OF THE DAY constitutes a particularly good example of how the denotational boundaries of each lexeme are determined by its field neighbours. Thus, one way of explaining the meaning of a term (y) in the field is to first identify it as a member of the field (T) and then to locate it by way of referring to its closest neighbours (x and z):

\[
(1) \quad y: \ 'T \text{ between } x \text{ and } z', \text{ or:} \\
\quad \quad 'T \text{ from } x \text{ to } z'
\]

Examples adhering to one or the other version of this formula abound in dictionary explanations of meaning like the following (example 2 taken from the DCE, example 3 from the CED):

\[
(2) \quad \textit{afternoon}: 'the period of time between midday and sunset' \\
(3) \quad \textit{midday}: 'the middle part of the day, from late morning to early afternoon'
\]

The conceptual field of TIMES OF THE DAY is not about living organisms, artefacts, or any objects with spatial dimensions. It is a purely temporal field, and the various lexemes that languages employ in this field all denote periods or points in time. Thus, the most characteristic

\[2\quad \text{For a more comprehensive account of my research in progress, this pilot study will be complemented by another version of the same salience test using native speakers of English as informants.}\]
sense relation that structures the field as a whole is one of *temporal meronymy*, with *day/Tag* functioning as holonym (see figure 1).³

![Figure 1: Denotational equivalence](image)

A look at its immediate meronyms reveals that the same word appears a second time in the meronymic hierarchy, with *night/Nacht* as its co-meronym. The word *day* must be regarded as polysemous, with one of its senses (*day₁* denoting 'period of twenty-four hours' (DCE, example 4), and another sense (*day₂* 'time when it is light' (CED, example 5). The same applies to German *Tag* (cf. WDW).

(4) We spent three *days* in Paris then went south.
(5) a. The snack bar is open during the *day*.
    b. Owls usually sleep by *day* and hunt by *night*.

---

³ The technical term *meronymy* is only beginning to find its way into semantics textbooks like e.g. Saeed (1997:70) and linguistics encyclopedias like e.g. Malmkjær (1995:301). It was introduced, together with the terms *holonym, meronym, and co-meronym*, by Cruse (1986:159-162), who states (1986:173): "Entities with a temporal structure may also have parts." I call the sense relation between lexemes denoting parts and wholes within such temporal structures *temporal meronymy*. 
Figure 2: English day₁ vs. German Tag₁: the complete field
The lexeme *night*, denoting 'the dark part of each 24-hour period when the sun cannot be seen' (DCE), and its co-meronym *day₂* are incompatibles (see example 5b), distinguished by the sense component [± SUNLIGHT].

So far, there is no real difference in the structure of the lexical field between English and German. The two languages even share the fact that a polysemous holonym features as its own meronym. In this respect English and German display denotational equivalence.

However, as soon as we look at the complete lexical fields (see figure 2), we find some remarkable cases of denotational incongruency, which will be analyzed in the following.

2.1 Morning

In the English field, the lexeme *morning* has a wider denotational range than its closest German counterpart, *Morgen*. English dictionaries distinguish two senses, *morning₁*, 'the early part of the day, from when the sun rises until the middle of the day', and *morning₂*, 'the part of the day from midnight until the middle of the day' (DCE, cf. CED). And while *morning₁* (example 6a) naturally translates into German *Morgen* (6b), this is not necessarily the case with *morning₂* (example 7a), for which many speakers would prefer *Nacht* (7b).

(6)  a. I had a letter from George this *morning*.

(7)  a. The phone rang at three in the *morning*.
    b. Das Telefon klingelte um drei Uhr *nachts*.
    c. ? Das Telefon klingelte um drei Uhr *morgens*.

However, the "entrance boundary" of *Morgen* ('Tagesbeginn', WDW) is admittedly vague due to varying usage (represented by slanting lines in figures 2 and 3), and so it might be argued if we have a convincing case of overlapping incongruency (see Jäkel 2001) at this boundary or not.

Figure 2 is an attempt of presenting the complete field, as far as this is possible in a two-dimensional format. The lexical field in English is given on the left, and its German counterpart on the right, with both sides omitting the top level of the "super-holonym" *day₁/Tag₁*, but trying to capture all remaining lower levels of the meronymic hierarchy. The 24-hour-timeline in the middle is only meant to provide some rough orientation. With the exception of *noon* and *midnight/Mitternacht*, no part of the day is defined in terms of exact numerical time. Though even continuous lines represent a sort of idealized denotational boundaries, broken lines represent particularly vague boundaries, and slanting lines indicate overlapping extensions or areas of alternative usage.
But there is a clear case of overlapping incongruency at the "exit boundary", with the extension of *morning* overlapping that of *Morgen* considerably. While English *morning* lasts right until *noon*, German *Morgen* does not extend that far, as the German field hosts an additional lexeme *Vormittag*, ‘Zeitraum vom Morgen bis zum Mittag’ (WDW). The usual English collocation of *late morning* (cf. example 3 above) has its German equivalent not in *später Morgen*, but in *später Vormittag*. And a context like that of example (8a), too, requires a translation of *morning* into *Vormittag* (8b) instead of *Morgen* (8c). (See the discussion of actual translations in section 3 below.)

(8)  
   a. And so it went all *morning*.
   b. Und so ging das den ganzen *Vormittag*.
   c. ?? Und so ging das den ganzen *Morgen*.

The denotational incongruency between English and German displayed in this part of the field (see figure 3) can also be regarded as of the type *granularity differential* (see Jäkel 2001), as with the additional item *Vormittag* the German lexicon splits up the semantic field into smaller sections than the English lexicon, thereby allowing and requiring speakers to make more finegrained distinctions.
2.2 Noon

Another case of denotational incongruency can be seen in the unequal pair of English noon and German Mittag (cf. figure 2). Whereas noon clearly denotes not a period, but a significant point in time, namely 'twelve o'clock in the middle of the day' (CED, cf. DCE), its German counterpart appears to have two senses, with Mittag₁ denoting a particular point in time ('Zeitpunkt des höchsten Sonnenstandes', WDW), and Mittag₂ encompassing the period around that point in time ('die Stunden um diesen Zeitpunkt', WDW). This can be seen from the fact that English uses only the prepositional phrase at noon, while *in the noon is unacceptable. In German, on the other hand, there is more variety: am Mittag, mittags, über Mittag, zur / in der / während der / um die Mittagszeit, are all used, mirroring the point/period polysemy of Mittag.

The English lexical field features a term with a very similar denotation and polysemy to German Mittag: midday can denote both 'twelve o'clock in the middle of the day' and 'the middle part of the day, from late morning to early afternoon' (CED, cf. DCE). Only in its first sense is midday synonymous with noon, and it certainly is less usual than both its English field rival and its etymological relative and morphological twin in the German field, Mittag. So, in this sector of the conceptual field, the English lexicon surpasses the German one in terms of granularity differential.

2.3 Night

When we looked at the holonym day₁/Tag₁ and its immediate meronyms day₂/Tag₂ and night/Nacht (section 2 above), we were able to establish denotational equivalence between English and German. However, going down to the lower levels of the meronymic hierarchy reveals some remarkable denotational incongruencies between the two lexical fields. In fact, our initial treatment of the lexeme night has not told the whole story.

Whereas the denotation of German Nacht is simply 'die Zeit zwischen Ende der Abend- und Beginn der Morgendämmerung' (WDW), the English term night is polysemous. And while above we only considered its basic sense (night₁), 'the part of each day when the sun has set and it is dark outside, especially the time when people are sleeping' (CED, cf. DCE), found in examples such as (9), we disregarded the fact that the lexeme is also used (10) in another sense, night₂, 'the period of time between the end of the afternoon and the time that you go to bed, especially the time when you relax before going to bed' (CED, cf. DCE).

5 See the results of my salience tests in appendix A: Whereas all 20 informants included Mittag in their lists, and still 12 mentioned noon, only 6 out of 20 included midday, which also displayed relatively low rank weight.
a. They travelled by night and slept during the day.
b. I didn't sleep too well last night.

(10) a. Demiris took Catherine to dinner the following night.
b. Most nights we just stay at home and watch television.

Only night\textsubscript{1}, in examples like (9), translates as German Nacht. The translational equivalent of night\textsubscript{2}, on the other hand, is German Abend: "A night at the opera" must be rendered as "Ein Abend in der Oper".

Those lexicographical paraphrases of meaning quoted above, and in particular their additive remarks ("especially..."), might even suggest that night\textsubscript{1} and night\textsubscript{2} are incompatibles, distinguished by the sense component [± BEDTIME]. However, there will hardly be any plausible context in which the lexeme is used in both its "incompatible" senses at the same time; example (11a) is unacceptable, even if for stylistic rather than for logical reasons.

(11) a. ?? We spent an enjoyable night at the opera, but then had a sleepless night.
b. We spent an enjoyable evening at the opera, but then had a sleepless night.
c. Wir verbrachten einen angenehmen Abend in der Oper, hatten dann aber eine schlaflose Nacht.

As in its [- BEDTIME] sense (night\textsubscript{2}), the term is synonymous with another field member, evening, the latter can replace night\textsubscript{2} to create an acceptable syntagma (11b). A German translation would definitely use Abend as incompatible with Nacht (11c).

As in its [- BEDTIME] sense (night\textsubscript{2}), the term is synonymous with another field member, evening, the latter can replace night\textsubscript{2} to create an acceptable syntagma (11b). A German translation would definitely use Abend as incompatible with Nacht (11c).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sunset</td>
<td>Sonnenuntergang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening</td>
<td>Abend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night\textsubscript{2}</td>
<td>Nacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midnight</td>
<td>Mitternacht</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Overlapping incongruency between night and Nacht
In this sector of the conceptual field (see figure 4), English and German again display some overlapping incongruency, with the extension of *night* considerably overlapping that of *Nacht*. Yet another kind of denotational incongruency can be detected once we look at those partial incompatibles and partial synonyms, *evening* and *night*, as co-meronyms, and inquire about their immediate holonyms. Whereas German speakers would never classify *Abend* as part of *Nacht*, but as (the last) part of *Tag* (WDW provides the paraphrase 'Zeit um Sonnenuntergang bis um Mitternacht, Tagesende'), this seems to be different in English.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 5: Alternative classifications of evening and Abend*

The DCE paraphrase of the meaning of *evening* is clear enough: 'the early part of the night between the end of the day and the time you go to bed'. So *evening* is a meronym of *night*, starting only after the end of *day*. And while the CED paraphrase – 'the part of each day between the end of the afternoon and the time when you go to bed' – may sound different at first, it does not contradict the DCE, but simply evades the issue by referring not to *day*, but to the "super-holonym" *day* instead. This point can be proven by quoting the CED paraphrase of the compound *evening class*: 'a course for adults that is taught in the evening rather than during the day'. Here, reference is made to *day*, and *evening* is mentioned not as its meronym, but as incompatible.

What this amounts to is one more type of denotational incongruency in the conceptual field of TIMES OF THE DAY, namely *alternative classifications* (see Jäkel 2001), which will only show in the comparison of relatively complex lexical hierarchies of either the hyponymic or the meronymic type. While in German, *Abend* is classified as a meronym of *Tag*, English *evening*
is classified as a meronym of night\(_1\) (see figure 5)\(^6\). In this respect, the denotational boundary between day\(_2\) and night\(_1\) in the English field is incongruent with the denotational boundary between Tag\(_2\) and Nacht in the German field.

There is yet one last type of denotational incongruency to be found in the conceptual field under investigation. While the lack of an English equivalent to German Vormittag was analyzed as a case of granularity differential (section 2.1 above), there are even a few examples of lexical gaps (see Jäkel 2001) to be attested. The night sector of the English field (cf. figure 2) includes two idiomatic expressions, (the) dead of night, denoting 'the middle part of the night ..., when it is darkest' (CED, cf. DCE), and the small hours, denoting 'the early morning hours, between about one and four o'clock' (DCE). Neither of these have any lexical equivalent in German.

(12) a. I couldn't fly illegally into a country in the dead of night.
   b. Their meetings were held in secret at dead of night.

(13) Dread is what I feel when I wake in the small hours in a cold sweat.

Of course, sentences like (12) and (13) can be translated into German. But all possible translations, like (14) and (15), would have to circumscribe, specifying a particular part of Nacht for which there is no German lexicalization.

(14) a. Ich könnte nicht illegal in tiefster Nacht in ein Land fliegen.
   b. Ihre geheimen Treffen hielten sie in tiefster Nacht ab.

(15) Angst empfinde ich, wenn ich mitten in der Nacht schweißgebadet aufwache.

In fact, the two expressions, (the) dead of night and the small hours, constitute a fourth level in the meronymic hierarchy in English (see figure 6) that the lexical field in German lacks completely.

---

\(^6\) Figures 5 and 6 also show that, contrary to Cruse's (1986:190) opinion, times of the day form not just a "non-branching helical chain", but a "fully branching lexical hierarchy", and therefore, according to his own typology, classify as a proper "meronomy" (Cruse 1986:157).
Lipka would probably call this gap in the German lexicalization of the conceptual field a "specification gap" (1990:152), although he uses the term only in the context of hyponymic hierarchies. To be more specific, I prefer the term meronym-gap instead.

If we look at all of the lexical field members analyzed so far not as co-meronyms for a moment, but as co-hyponyms, maybe one could even see another lexical gap in the fact that English lacks a proper hyperonym to match the German compound noun Tageszeiten. Some native speakers I asked were really at a loss for an appropriate term. The expression used instead throughout this investigation, times of the day, is rather a complex noun phrase than a lexicalization of the missing "archilexeme" (Lipka 1990:144). So, in addition to the meronym-gaps established in the German field, we can attest a hyperonym-gap (or "generalization-gap", as Lipka 1990:152 calls it) in the English field.

As was shown, the main structural relation in the English and German lexicalizations of the conceptual field of TIMES OF THE DAY is that of temporal meronymy. But apart from the sense relations of meronymy and incompatibility, the field also displays some examples of synonymy, located in those vague boundary areas between day$_2$ and night$_1$. In English, the lexemes dawn and daybreak are synonymous, as well as the pair of sunset and sundown, and the triad of dusk, twilight, and nightfall. With Morgendämmerung and Morgengrauen, German has at least one pair of synonyms. Any semantic difference between terms like these will reside in the realm of connotation (style, variety, register), with no difference whatsoever in denotation. E.g., as compared to its denotational synonym sunset, the lexeme sundown can be characterized by the connotative features (cf. Lipka 1990:110ff.) [+ARCHAIC] (cf. DCE), and
[+ AMERICAN ENGLISH] (cf. CED). More detailed analysis of connotational aspects, however, is beyond the scope of the field approach pursued here, which focuses on matters of denotation.

3. Intricacies of Translation

Surely, the phenomenon of denotational incongruencies and its investigation by means of a comparative field approach are of theoretical interest for linguistic semantics and lexicology. But is there any potential for purposes of applied linguistics in it? The answer is yes, of course. Fields of possible application include language teaching, research into languages for specific purposes, and Critical Linguistics (see Jäkel 2001). Probably the most promising area of application, though, is that of translation, and this is what will be demonstrated shortly in this section.

For this, I have exploited the whole of Bill Bryson's (1995) Notes from a Small Island and its German translation (1997) Reif für die Insel as corpus material. The book of 350 pages is a sort of travelogue, reporting and ironically reflecting upon Bryson's tour of Britain. Due to its diary character, the text makes much use of expressions denoting times of the day. This and the fact that there is a German translation available are the main reasons for choosing it to study some intricacies of translation resulting from those denotational incongruencies analyzed and described in the main section above. In the following, I can only go through a limited number of examples, which should be enough to at least provide an idea of the practical implications of my theoretical investigation.

To start with, there is the non-equivalence between English morning and German Morgen (see above, section 2.1), of which the translator seems not to be aware. Thus, she keeps rendering morning as Morgen even in contexts which suggest a longer period of time, probably lasting right until noon (examples 16 and 17).

7 All linguistic examples in this section consist of a passage from the original text (a) followed by the corresponding passage from the translation (b).

(16) a. "I had big plans for the morning ..."
   b. "Für den nächsten Morgen hatte ich große Pläne."

(17) a. "I spent the morning doing touristy things ..."
   b. "Den Morgen machte ich einen auf Tourist ..."

The natural German translation of morning in examples like these is Vormittag. This is even more so in examples like the following (18 and 19), in which the phrase "all morning" in
English implies not only extended duration, but focuses rather on the "exit boundary" of that period of time.

(18) a. "And so it went all morning."
   b. "Und so ging das den ganzen Morgen."

(19) a. "It was no wonder that I hadn't passed a single pedestrian all morning."
   b. "Kein Wunder, daß mir den ganzen Morgen kein einziger Fußgänger begegnet war."

Other contexts, like those of examples (20) and (21), even provide exact times. And while – given the nature of the English field – 11.00 falls within the denotational boundaries of morning, the combination of that time with Morgen (20b) sounds decidedly odd in German. Again, Vormittag would be much better as translational equivalent.

(20) a. "By 11.00 the next morning ..."
   b. "... am nächsten Morgen um elf Uhr ...

(21) a "I spent the rest of the morning wandering alone around the ward ... . When it got to be one-thirty and no-one had told me to go to lunch, ...
   b. "Den Rest des Morgens lief ich allein auf der Station herum ... . Als es halb zwei wurde und mir immer noch niemand gesagt hatte, ich solle Mittagspause machen,..."

The extreme case of this unhappy "Morgen for morning" translation, however, is to be found in example (21b). Similarly to "all morning" in examples (18) and (19), "the rest of the morning" in the first sentence of (21a) focuses on the "exit boundary" of English morning. And what is more, the exact time mentioned in the immediate context is even later than in (20), namely 13:30 – a clear indicator that "rest of the morning" must be translated as "Rest des Vormittags".

To conclude this part of my critique, it should be stated that I did not detect one single use of Vormittag in the whole German translation of Bryson (1997). In the light of my comparative field study I can only interpret this as a lack of linguistic awareness concerning the lexical field structure of the target language, even if only in one minor respect. Probably it is the mistaken assumption of denotational equivalence between English morning and German Morgen – the two lexemes might even be called a subtle case of "false friendship" – that has blinded the translator to the lexical option of Vormittag, which she is most likely to have in her own active vocabulary. Things like these happen. Nevertheless it is deplorable that the finer granularity allowed and necessitated by the German field structure is not made use of.
The remaining passages of Bryson (1995) versus (1997) to be scrutinized for translational intricacies come from the night sector of the conceptual field of TIMES OF THE DAY, which was shown to be an area of overlapping incongruency, alternative classifications, and some lexical gaps in German (see section 2.3 above). All of these types of denotational incongruencies play a role in the following.

(22) a. "So unsafe was it, particularly after dark, that the police wouldn't let us out until the small hours, particularly on nights of big demos. [...] Some time between 11 p.m. and 1.30 ... the gates would be thrown open [...]. This worked well enough for several nights, but one evening we were sent on our way just as the pubs were shutting."

b. "Besonders wenn abends nach einer großen Demonstration die Dunkelheit eingesetzt hatte, war es so gefährlich, daß die Polizei uns oft erst in den frühen Morgenstunden hinausließ. [...] Irgendwann zwischen 23 Uhr und ein Uhr dreißig ... wurden die Tore aufgerissen [...]. Das klappte einige Abende auch hervorragend, aber einmal wurden wir losgeschickt, als gerade die Pubs zumachten."

It is good that (22b) starts by rendering the original (22a) "on nights of big demos" as "abends nach einer großen Demonstration", rightly interpreting it as night2 and acknowledging the overlap of English night into German Abend. The circumscription of "in den frühen Morgenstunden" to fill the lexical gap in the German field corresponding to the small hours is certainly acceptable. However, the simple alternative "nach Mitternacht" would be more to the point of the English original, as the context of the second sentence quoted specifies the period of time referred to as "between 11 p.m. and 1.30".

In the final sentence of example (22), the translation again renders the original (22a) "several nights" as "einige Abende", but this time wrongly. In the course of the passage, the meaning of night has shifted from night2 to night1, and "several nights" should therefore be translated as "einige Nächte". This choice would also solve the translator's problem, who reduces the original "one evening" (22a) to "einmal" ('once'), obviously trying to avoid the repetition of Abend. "Das klappte einige Nächte auch hervorragend, aber eines Abends wurden wir losgeschickt, als gerade die Pubs zumachten" is a more satisfying translation of the final sentence, with the expressions of time that are demanded by the preceding context, and without either repetition or loss.

The final example (23) highlights the practical relevance of the alternative classifications of English evening as a meronym of night1, and German Abend as a meronym of Tag2 that were established above (see section 2.3).
(23) a. "I arrived at five-thirty in the evening in a driving rain. Night had fallen heavily...."

b. "In strömendem Regen kam ich abends um halb sechs dort an. Aber es war schon finstere Nacht ...."

Due to the English classification, the two sentences of example (23a) combine perfectly well, without any contradiction whatsoever between the expressions of time. It can be "in the evening" – and at 17:30 this is even the early evening, – and after nightfall, without any semantic problem.

Apparently, the translator is aware of the problem with this pair of sentences (23b) caused by the different meronymic hierarchy in German, where Abend and Nacht are incompatibles. Therefore she chooses to link, or rather, separate the two sentences by means of the adversative conjunction aber ('but'). At first sight this might be appreciated as a conscious effort to solve a problem of semantics. On closer inspection, though, two points appear problematic with that translation (23b). First, the adversative conjunction somehow is too strong and gives much more prominence to the content of the second sentence than it has in the original. Secondly, and this is even more important here: The second sentence of example (23a) does not so much refer to a time of day, but comment on the lighting conditions.

It seems as if it was only the translator's disregard for this fact that led her to create an unwarranted contradiction problem for her translation. The alternative "Aber es war schon stockfinster ...." would be a more satisfying solution to the real problem involved, which is due to the denotational incongruency between the meronymic hierarchies in English and German.

4. Summary and Conclusion

It was shown that even in such a basic conceptual field as TIMES OF THE DAY, and even between such closely related languages like English and German, there are denotational incongruencies. The comparative investigation of the two lexical fields has come up with examples of four different types of denotational incongruencies: overlapping incongruency, granularity differential, alternative classifications, and lexical gaps.

With the exception of obvious incongruencies like the case of night versus Nacht, most of the semantic differences in lexicalization between English and German are quite subtle, and would hardly have been revealed without recourse to the field approach. While the investigation has thus proved that the comparative field approach is fruitful for descriptive purposes in semantics and lexicology, it does not end there.

The analysis of an actual translation has demonstrated the practical applicability of this research. Translations suffer from denotational incongruencies going unnoticed. Awareness
of the general types of denotational incongruency between source language and target language, and knowledge of the often subtle instances of these incongruencies in particular lexical fields, would both be desirable for translators. And maybe not only for them.

**Appendix A: Results of Salience Tests**

A group of 20 informants (students of English, with English L2) reacted to the stimulus: "Welche Tageszeiten kennen Sie im Englischen?" by individually writing down as many items as they could in 60 seconds. This produced 26 items in total, with between 5 and 12 items per informant, averaging 6.95 items per informant.

The following tables 1 and 2 rank items according to mentions in total (out of 20). The outside right column adds up points of "weight" given to each item according to the rank it held in the 20 individual lists (1st rank: 12 points, 2nd rank: 11 points, and so on, down to 12th rank: 1 point), the idea being that even this personal ranking in the spontaneous word retrieval task under time pressure would express some notion of salience. In cases of items with the same number of mentions in total, these "ranks weighted" decide the issue of overall ranking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mentions in total</th>
<th>Ranks weighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>morning</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>evening</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>night</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>midnight</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>noon</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>midnight</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>dawn</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>early morning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>breakfast (time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>sunset</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>dinner (time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>supper (time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>p.m.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>a.m.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>twilight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>late night</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>daybreak</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>sunrise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>dusk/dawn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>late morning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>early afternoon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>early evening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>late evening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Results of salience test for the English field

A group of 20 informants (students of English, with German L1) reacted to the stimulus: "Welche Tageszeiten kennen Sie im Deutschen?" by individually writing down as many items as they could in 30 seconds. This produced 18 items in total, with between 5 and 12 items per informant, averaging 7.40 items per informant.
### Table 2: Results of salience test for the German field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mentions in total</th>
<th>Ranks weighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Abend(s)</td>
<td>22(^8)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mittag(s)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nachmittag(s)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Morgen(s)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nacht(s)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mitternacht</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Vormittag(s)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Früh</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>später Abend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sonnenaufgang</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sonnenuntergang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>später Nachmittag</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Dämmerung</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>frühmorgens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>früher Abend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Vorabend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Morgengrauen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix B: Sources of linguistic data

Note: In the cases of Bryson (1995, 1997) and Lodge (1996), number of example is followed by page number of source text. Examples not listed in the following were devised by the author (e.g. as translations).

---

\(^8\) This score may need some explanation: Word forms like *Abend* and *abends* were added together, as most of the informants had either the one or the other in their lists. Two informants, though, included both *Abend* and *abends*; similarly, two informants mentioned both *Mittag* and *mittags*, one informant had both *Morgen* and *morgens*, one had both *Nachmittag* and *nachmittags*, and one had both *Nacht* and *nachts.*
References


