

GEOFFREY PERRIN *Bundesministerium der Justiz, Bonn*

German in the office – the notion of “copy”

R. B. Farrell acknowledges in the preface to his *Dictionary of German Synonyms* that he was largely motivated to compile the work by the problems which arose out of a major structural difference between the vocabularies of English and German — namely, the German preference for specific terms as against the English inclination towards general terms of wider application (“take”, “way”, “power”, etc.). Anyone who has taught commercial German has no doubt very quickly come across one particular problem caused for the English learner of German by the polysemy of his mother tongue, and not covered by Farrell (although in all fairness to the latter, he does point out in his preface, too, that his book treats the names of concrete objects only “rarely”!). I am referring to the concept of “copy” in its sense of “further specimen of a document”.

Although some of the more recent English-German dictionaries make quite a reasonable shot at giving the learner some guidance here (see for example the Collins-Klett dictionary), considerations of space often impose a selective approach even on the more ambitious dictionary-makers. The following, then, is an attempt to provide what I hope is a reasonably full description of the various German terms which, in different contexts, would convey the English notion of “copy”. My basic approach is the simple one of alphabetical listing, though I have broken with this to handle certain terms together (e.g. *Doppel/Zweitschrift*) where this seemed the most sensible course of action.

Abdruck

Like *Abzug* (q.v.), used to refer to the printed sheets produced by off-set lithography and related processes. *Abdruck* is not normally found as a designation for more sophisticated printed works, such as books. Here, however, we must distinguish between product and process: thus it would be used in a context such as *der Abdruck eines Romans in einer Zeitschrift*, where of course we would be rendering an English notion such as “serialisation” rather than copy, and thinking of the novel more as a story than the concrete entity “book”.

This is also the word used on memos and suchlike in the German civil service to indicate that a copy of the document in question (nowadays, of course, usually a photocopy) has been seen by someone who needs to remain informed of the matter, but is not required to sign the original (as he is not directly involved in the decision-making process). This appears as the standard endorsement: *Herr . . . hat Abdruck erhalten*.

In the foregoing senses, *Abdruck* forms its plural without “Umlaut”.

Ablichtung

The formal term for a photocopy — colloquially replaced by *Fotokopie* or just *Kopie*. An *Arbeitskopie* is a working draft — i.e. the copy of a document on which members of a committee make notes and alterations during their discussions. (Other compounds of *Kopie* are dealt with at the end of this article under *Telefax*.)

Abschrift

Most often employed where authenticated copies of documents are being referred to, i.e. in the phrase *beglaubigte Abschriften (von Zeugnissen, etc.)*. The actual process leading to the copy is therefore of secondary importance, though naturally it is photocopies which will normally be involved, not handwritten ones as the derivation of the word might lead one to expect.

Abzug

A sheet produced by a spirit duplicator — now no doubt a fast-dying breed! — and also by off-set lithography and related techniques. In the compound *Korrekturabzüge*, it means the proofs sent by the printers to the author of a book or article for correction before publication. A synonym here is *Druckfahnen*.

Ausdruck

The printout from a word processor, also known as “hard copy” in English (forms its plural without “Umlaut”). I have come across one example of *Hardcopy* used as a “Fremdwort” in German, but this was in an information booklet produced by an organisation in the translation and language-teaching business. In other words, the text was written by someone with a high degree of linguistic sophistication, and I would therefore wish to collect other examples of use before pronouncing firmly on the established status of *Hardcopy* as a “Fremdwort”.

The notion of “soft copy” can be expressed by either *Bildschirmanzeige* or *Bildschirm-inhalt*. *Bildschirmtext*, though no doubt unambiguous in its reference to a particular instance of soft copy if preceded by the definite article, is actually the official name of a service (abbreviation: *Btx*) provided by the Bundespost and equivalent to Prestel in Britain. So far, I have not met “Softcopy” as a “Fremdwort”.

Ausfertigung

A synonym of *Exemplar* (q.v.) when referring to documents (papers) rather than books. Thus an author submitting a contribution to a learned journal might write in the covering letter: *Anbei übersende ich Ihnen in dreifacher Ausfertigung den Beitrag, den ich bereits telefonisch mit Ihnen kurz besprochen hatte*.

The status of the *Ausfertigungen* is left open: thus it might be a typewritten original plus two photocopies, for example, or three photocopies (with the author retaining the original himself).

Auszug

Renders the English notion of “copy” in a specialised sense — a copy of an entry in a register or other official record (i.e. an “extract”): e.g. *ein Auszug aus dem Handelsregister*.

As what is involved here is usually an authenticated copy, it is more or less synonymous with *Abschrift* in this particular usage. So one might equally well say: *eine Abschrift aus dem Handelsregister* or *eine Abschrift der Eintragung im Handelsregister*.

Doppel

Strictly speaking, I suppose, this should only be employed where it is literally two copies of anything which is involved. However, even in official business letters I have come across expressions like *zwei beglaubigte Doppel*, thus making a total of three copies when the original is included. In short, the word is clearly felt today by most native speakers as a straightforward synonym for *Kopie*, *Abschrift*, etc. In the case of letter-type communications a *Doppel* will usually be a reproduction (a carbon copy or a photocopy) of an original, whilst in relation to brochures and leaflets, etc. it will enjoy parity of status with the other copy it accompanies: e.g. *Ein Doppel des Konferenzprogramms ist für Ihre Außenstelle in München beigelegt*.

A synonym in certain contexts will be *Zweitschrift*. It seems to occur mainly in connection with fairly short texts (e.g. letters), and is less likely to be followed by a dependent genitive construction. An example of its use would be: *Ein entsprechendes Schreiben an das dortige Wirtschaftsministerium ist anzufertigen, mit Zweitschrift für unsere Vertretung in Mailand*.

Durchschrift/Durchschlag

A copy resulting from the use of carbon paper or self-duplicating paper. To be precise, a *Durchschrift* is produced by hand and a *Durchschlag* by typewriter, although nowadays this distinction is blurred. A further synonym is *Durchdruck*.

Exemplar

Synonym of both *Abdruck* and *Ausfertigung* in referring to a less substantial, hand-out type of document. At the same time it is also the word to use when it is a copy of a book which is meant.

In both senses it is often replaced by the simple word *Stück* which is by no means confined to colloquial usage. One often comes across it in formal business letters, for instance, especially in the compound *Überstück* (which receives further treatment below), e.g. *Ich wäre Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn Sie mir weitere 30 Stücke/30 Überstücke mir des Berichts zusenden könnten.*

Colloquially, where there is no noun following in a dependent genitive construction, the plural *e* is not added to *Stück*. Thus someone handing a document to the head of a firm's reprographics section would say: *Davon hätte ich gerne 30 Stück bis heute Dienstschluß.*

Like a well-known type of credit card, *Stück* deserves the accolade of "your flexible friend": easy to remember, it also has the highly desirable virtue from the foreign learner's point of view of being usable in a wide variety of contexts!

Both *Exemplar* and *Stück* occur in a fair number of compounds, of which the most important are probably *Handexemplar/Handstück* (the copy of a book which a university lecturer or Ministry official is allowed to keep in his room for his own personal use, as opposed to the copy kept centrally in the library for general use); *Prüfexemplar/Prüfstück* (inspection copy of a textbook sent to a teacher); and *Rezensiensexemplar/Rezensionsstück* (review copy of a book sent to a critic).

Mehrfertigung

An elusive term (try tracking it down even in the better single-language German dictionaries!), it also has an unmistakable ring of *Papierdeutsch* or *Amtsdeutsch* about it – I cannot recall ever having heard it used in the spoken language.

It can be employed in virtually any context where a document's existence is not restricted to the original, and can also be qualified by numbers: e.g. *10 Mehrfertigungen anbei*. Occurs, too, without the *Mehr-* prefix (i.e. just as *Fertigung*).

Reinschrift

The fair copy produced by a secretary from the rough copy (*Entwurf, Konzept*) handed to her by her boss. Strictly speaking, one can distinguish still further between *Entwurf* and *Konzept*: the former is a preliminary draft (*vorläufiger Entwurf*), whilst the latter is the final revised one (*Endfassung*) from which the secretary produces her fair copy.

Among translators in Germany, one also hears the terms *Manuskript* and *Kladde* used to refer to the stages of a translation preceding the final version. *Manuskript* I have seen in the translation literature (sometimes in conjunction with *Niederschrift*: *die erste Niederschrift eines Manuskriptes*); *Kladde* I know only from the spoken language.

Überstück

An extra copy of something. I have come across the word used by lawyers on written pleadings submitted to a court, where they have to be read by all the judges of a division or panel more or less simultaneously before the case is heard (i.e. where considerations of time do not permit the pleadings to be circulated in a single copy). At the head of such documents one typically finds the following: *Anlagen: – 6 – und 5 Überstücke*. This pleading or whatever would thus have a total of eleven annexes, five of them being copies (photocopies or printouts) of the pleading itself.

There are also one or two other senses in which the word "copy" is sometimes used in an office environment, and we can consider them briefly here, just to complete the picture. Ian Halliwell, for example, in his book, *Modern Secretarial Practice* (Pan Breakthrough Books

1985, p. 139), talks of “urgent copy”, defining this as any “document, drawing, or photograph”. In this very wide sense, “copy” is probably best rendered as *Aufzeichnungen*. More usually, I think, “copy” in this kind of context is taken to indicate something in written form as opposed to drawings, photographs, or diagrams, etc., and as such, can simply be conveyed by *Text*.

Finally, as we made a short excursion into the area of high tech. when considering *Bildschirmtext*, we can round off this survey by looking at three other copy-transmission facilities provided by the Deutsche Bundespost:

Telex

One particular instance of this is known as *ein Telex* or *ein Fernschreiben*.

Teletex

Described by the Bundespost itself as *die elektronische Korrespondenz*, this is the successor to *Telex*. Specific instances of *Teletex* are referred to in the literature of the German post office in a variety of ways: thus one finds *eine Mitteilung per Teletex*, *die Übertragungskosten für ein Dokument per Teletex*, etc. The word “Teletext” is avoided, perhaps because it is felt that this might create the erroneous impression that *Teletex* has a monopoly as regards the transmission of text. A *Teletexbrief* is a *Teletex* communication which is delivered as a telegram to a firm not linked to this particular facility.

Telefax

Particular instances of this are referred to in the informational literature as *eine Fernkopie*. The term *Telekopie* is also in use, however, at least outside of the post office! (*Telefax*, on the other hand, seems less common as a means of specific reference.) A faxed document received by a post office and then delivered to the recipient in a sealed envelope is known as a *Telebrief*.

Having now considered the various possible German renderings of the concept of “copy”, we are left with two final, intriguing questions. Firstly – to satisfy the English need for a general word! – is there in fact an umbrella term in German which will serve in most, if not all contexts? I have already drawn attention to *Mehrfertigung* in this respect: alongside it we could also set *Vervielfältigung* or *Vervielfältigungsstück*, and – perhaps still rather “Papierdeutsch” in tone – the word *Wiedergabe*. This brings us to the second question, which is related to the first: since German appears so vulnerable to English influence in so many areas nowadays, is it not reasonable to assume that *Kopie*, too, is now in the process of becoming an all-round word in German? Perhaps I can offer my own reply here in the form of a brief – but true! – anecdote. Not so very long ago, I phoned the appropriate section of the Stadtverwaltung in Bonn to ask for details of the cultural events on offer in the month ahead. My enquiry: “Könnten Sie mir bitte eine Kopie des Programms für Mai schicken?”, first drew from the young lady at the other end of the line a moment’s silence, followed by the observation: “Eine Kopie? Nein – Sie meinen ein Stück!”

It should go without saying that no compilation of this kind can be seriously undertaken without consulting native speakers to see whether their intuitions confirm one’s own impressions. In this respect, I would like to say a warm word of thanks to various colleagues at the Federal Ministry of Justice in Bonn, and especially to my wife, Traude Perrin. Even among native speakers, of course, there are often differences of opinion and personal preferences in matters of this kind, and to some the demarcations I have attempted to establish will perhaps appear arbitrary in certain cases, and my comments even off-target. To this extent, then, the present article may be regarded as an *Arbeitskopie* – readers’ observations and criticism are welcomed, and suggestions for extending the list guaranteed a delighted reception!