

Zeitschrift: SPELL : Swiss papers in English language and literature
Herausgeber: Swiss Association of University Teachers of English
Band: 17 (2005)

Artikel: Born to be wild : English in Swiss public space
Autor: Schaller-Schwaner, Iris / Tschichold, Cornelia
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-100031>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 03.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Born to be Wild¹: English in Swiss Public Space

Iris Schaller-Schwaneer and Cornelia Tschichold

English phrases have become an integral part of the landscape of signs and texts in Swiss public space. It is often assumed that this reflects an intra-national lingua franca function of English in a plurilingual country. On closer scrutiny, however, this is not always the case. The use of English in Swiss public space neither indicates that plurilingual Switzerland is turning into an English-speaking country nor that English is actually needed for communication in the transactional lingua franca sense. In fact, English is often used where it is *not* needed, for example in billboard advertisements. This paper discusses and illustrates the way English is used for public language display.

Introduction

Watching the flow of advertisement messages on Swiss billboards and the language(s) of the texts one cannot help noticing how the use of English in public space, in advertisement texts, slogans and brand names has been increasing and complexifying over the past few years. The use of English on Swiss billboards does not index, place-semiotically speaking (Scollon and Scollon 117ff), an English-speaking community, however. Switzerland is not turning into an English-speaking country, at least not in the sense that a large proportion of the Swiss population uses English as their first language, nor in the sense that the English language has an official or institutionalised function within Switzerland as a whole. English is basically learned as a foreign language in Switzerland (usually as the second or third foreign language at school – after one or two national languages – with changes to this pattern introduced

¹ The authors would like to thank WWF Switzerland for permission to reproduce one of its posters with the text that provided the inspiration for the title.

Die Bildrechte sind nicht freigegeben

Le droit à l'image n'est pas approuvé

The publication rights are not released

only recently in some German-speaking parts of Switzerland). English is not a national language and is not likely to become one in the foreseeable future (Watts and Murray). But the macroacquisition (Brutt-Griffler) of English, i.e. the fact that more and more people around the world are learning, using and appropriating L2 English for econocultural purposes alongside their other languages, has had an impact on the Swiss situation, too. The unprecedented spread of English as an international language has also changed the role of English in Switzerland: in contexts such as science, commerce and higher education it has become an inter- and often intra-nationally used lingua franca.²

The use of English is not limited, however, to contexts where it is needed, i.e. for communication between people who do not or prefer not to speak each others' languages. English has become an alternative mode of expression even where – strictly speaking – it is not needed. The genre of billboard advertisements itself constitutes one of the contexts in which English is used primarily in a symbolic, (interlingually) playful or socially strategic way.

Language display and English as a cultural symbol

Obviously, English does not lose its communicative potential when used as a cultural symbol in the sense of Cheshire and Moser, i.e. “not as a system of signs but as a sign in itself” (451). With the exception perhaps of some purely decorative cases, it continues to function as a system of signs on one level of interpretation, but it becomes a sign in itself on another. This is possible on the basis of *language display* as defined by Eastman and Stein, who describe it as a language-use strategy for laying claim to attributes associated with a language (modernity, youth, freedom, fun, social advance, being cosmopolitan, etc.). Neither fluency nor comprehension are necessary as “language display functions as an artefact of crossing linguistic boundaries without threatening social boundaries or as a reaction to social boundaries that cannot be crossed” (187).

Cheshire and Moser mainly distinguish three uses of English as a cultural symbol. English can relate to stereotypes of ENL countries; it can be associated with international professionalism; and it can function as a symbol of Swiss national identity as seen by outsiders. The common

² See Seidlhofer for a discussion of the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF) as opposed to English as a native language (ENL).

denominator is the mainstream prestigiousness of English. What we have found in terms of recently developed uses of English is based on covert prestige, however. It is the covert prestige of code-mixing, of plurilingual practises such as *Quersprachigkeit* (List and List), of subcultural affiliation (in Preisler's sense), or of cultural hybridity, all of which typically involve some sort of "English from below."³ In some cases these uses may reflect a sense of community among more or less globalised subcultures; in other cases, however, they convey age demarcation or local identity via deliberate "Swissification" of the English used.

The corpus of billboard advertisements

The corpus of advertisements referred to here was collected (non-systematically) mainly in the Western half of Switzerland, but in both French- and German-speaking areas in the months between spring 2002 and spring 2003. Whenever we saw instances of English – beyond isolated loan words – in advertisements in public space, we took photographs of the billboards in question. Our corpus consists of a total of 70 ads, displaying varying amounts and kinds of English. The appendix contains the texts of our whole corpus of billboard ads, sorted into product groups. As is always the case, a compilation of examples of a particular phenomenon will produce a more striking effect than individual examples encountered in their original contexts. And indeed billboard campaigns are often rather short-lived: there is a flood of posters on outdoor billboards for a few days, up to a maximum of two weeks, before the posters are replaced and the next campaign takes up the limited space available. However,

their effects can be long-standing and cumulative: they leave traces of themselves behind, which combine to form a body of messages about the culture [sic] that produced them. (Goddard 3f)

Along the lines of this argument, we hope that the concentration of examples in our opportunity-sampled corpus will not produce undue dis-

³ This may comprise non-standard forms of English and "instances of linguistic code that are independent of native speaker norms." As Kachru points out, "the pragmatic success of such codes is not determined by the attitude of the native speaker toward the code, but by the *effectiveness* of such codes within the contexts of use: stylistic effectiveness, emotional effectiveness, and effectiveness in terms of identity." (215)

tortions of the overall situation of English in Swiss public space. For comparison, Cheshire and Moser (1994), Piller (2001), and Strässler (2004) give figures on the percentage of English *vs.* the local language found in their respective corpora of advertisements.

Comprehensibility

We would first like to consider the question of comprehensibility. Are advertisements that use English actually understood by the Swiss public? Many Swiss people have at least rudimentary knowledge of English and thus may feel flattered when they (think they) understand the English they see in advertisements. The increased grammatical complexity in some of our examples as compared to data collected ten years ago (Cheshire and Moser), e.g. in the question forms that are now being used, seems to suggest a growing number of people with more than very basic knowledge of English. But there must also be a considerable part of the population that does not really understand English, that does not enter into what Goddard (5) calls a “fleeting conversation,” a “daily discourse” between the advertisement and its reader.

While constant exposure to English words may lead to familiarity, we doubt that it could afford something like subliminal acquisition. Exposure may reinforce learning, and we would agree that today’s amount of English in public space is both a reflection of and itself a factor in the spread of English “from below” (Preisler). But we would not claim that exposure to advertisements leads to language acquisition as such.

English for advertisement purposes – interpretations

In a plurilingual country a single language for national campaigns may seem very economical in saving the cost of translation. But would such campaigns appeal to local audiences? Not necessarily, which is why advertising agencies and brand-name consultants get paid enormous sums of money for copy adaptation, i.e. the adapting of texts and concepts to fit the culture of the targeted group. In this context, English is an attention-getting device, English is what is called “the hook,” either on an emotional level or increasingly on a cognitive level as a brain teaser. But on an even deeper level,

in order for an advert to work, it must tap into some thinking “out there” in the market place. [. . .] Advertising, as a very public form of discourse, is also part of the way we construct our ideas about the world around us. (Goddard 65)

Of course, reactions to advertisements are complex, subjective and indeterminate, but we believe that English is typically used to revamp the dry, boring, reliable or responsible images of traditional brands. Examples are: the WWF “slogo” (Cook) of our title, the *Nivea* slogo *Shower for new Power*, the new *Bodywear by Calida* brand and its slogo *Just feel*, the highly controversial 2003 *sloggi* campaign and the *Postfinance* campaigns. Within one product group, e.g. car advertisements (ranging from simple noun phrases to syntactically sophisticated questions and relative clauses), the attributes claimed via English can vary. They range from allusions to sex (*Night Fever, How can you dream of something that won't let you sleep?, The new Audi A3: Drive me!*) to fun in a now environmentally conscious British-Roaring-Sixties sense (*Less fuel. The only Diesel that is a Mini*). Even a French make of car is advertised in English, but with a slogan alluding to the stereotype of the French being passionate lovers (Peugeot 206 *Stop liking, start loving*).⁴

While the heavy-noun phrase advertisements for soft drinks openly address young people, alcohol advertisements use a strong connection to partying and loud music (cf. the *Heineken* slogans), a context in which English conveys age demarcation and in-group marking and thus indirectly addresses young customers. On another tier we can observe that beer advertisements constitute a group in which international brands such as *Heineken* and *Carlsberg* use English whereas local or national brands use national languages. In international campaigns the community of beer drinkers is addressed in lingua franca English: *Carlsberg is Probably the best beer in the world, not the best lager*. In contrast, Swiss breweries advertising in our area, e.g. *Feldschlössli* and *Cardinal*,⁵ signal their local roots by using French and German.

⁴ The slogan can be seen as an attempt to rekindle the perceived Frenchness of the UK-assembled Peugeot 206 to English-speaking customers. In the Swiss context the display function of English must have outweighed all other considerations.

⁵ Interestingly, the only exception to this rule was one poster in autumn 2003 that advertised a new type of alcoholic beverage as *Cardinal Lemon NEW and FRESH* as if it were a soft drink.

Mobile phones are an interesting case because the function of English as lingua franca for global communication seems to suggest English as the ideal language of advertising. In fact we only found one such case, the *Nokia* ad, which also alludes to English as young people's in-group language (*Can you keep a secret?— Sure I can. . .*).

Cigarette manufacturers are not likely to emphasise the information about their products, except when new packaging and colour codes for reduced nicotine-and-tar flavours are introduced (e.g. *Barclays* and *Parisienne*). English here is mainly a vehicle for promoting the brand image, and the only non-English text on cigarette ads is usually the legally required warning about the health risks of smoking. The connection to imagined worlds such as the American way of life, to adventure and even to sports, or to images of the smoker as a charming socialite or as particularly attractive to the other gender are much more relevant. Over the years there has been consistency in the use of English for cigarette advertisements. With the single exception of one *Gauloise* ad, which was in French, all the cigarette ads we came across during the period of observation are included in our corpus because they were all in English. One could say, therefore, that certain sub-genres now require English, that English has become the default language of cigarette advertisements in Switzerland. In some cases we would find it hard to explain why English is used at all, were it not for the general expectation that English is used for Swiss cigarette ads, for example in the *Parisienne* ads (1):

(1) NEWLY PAINTED. COMING SOON.

Even though Cheshire and Moser's (459) claim that "the nature of the product determines whether English is used" is only partially borne out by our data, let's sum up and illustrate to what extent their three distinguishable forms of English as a cultural symbol can still be observed. Are there uses of English (i) relating to stereotypes of ENL countries; (ii) associated with (technology-related) international uses of English; and, perhaps less obviously, (iii) symbolising Swiss national identity as seen by outsiders?

English is still used to evoke images of cultural stereotypes of (native) English-speaking countries, most notably the United States. Examples of this first type of use in our corpus are the following: the *Marlboro* slogan (2) when used together with a Grand Canyon background and, in

an even purer form without sports connotations, in the *Phillip Morris* slogan (3) with its New York City skyline and street scenes full of yellow cabs. A case in point may also be the use of blue denim, an emblem of US influence for a certain generation, as the background for the *Winston* slogan (4) and the pack of cigarettes with a few protruding cigarettes offered to the viewer. A strong case of US cultural-stereotype symbolism is the *Marlboro* ad. Various romantically transfigured cowboy images are used which promote *Marlboro* non-verbally (there is no writing except for the brand name and the health hazard footnote in three national languages) via the image of mythical mute male who communes only with (Wild West) nature.

- (2) EXPLORE FREEDOM – APPLY NOW – ADVENTURE TEAM
- (3) GET YOUR STUFF FROM THE STREET LIFE SELECTION
- (4) SOFT AND NEW WINSTON LIGHTS SOFT* *Light in Taste

English is also commonly associated with international communication among business professionals and in science and technology, which is why it lends itself to being used in the computers and IT sector, e.g. in the slogans of *tetrade* (5), *Apple* (6) and *Microsoft* (7).

- (5) “Was tun Sie?” – “We integrate IT.” Let’s talk about your business.
tetrade. we integrate IT
- (6) Less is more. More is more. The new 12” and 17” PowerBooks.
- (7) about.NET! Let’s talk

The *tetrade* case (5) is a particularly interesting instance of code-switching between one national language, German, and English. The poster shows two men in dark trousers and shirts, with rolled-up sleeves, and their backs turned to the viewer. They are standing side by side, smiling at each other over their respective urinal stands, having a casual conversation, reproduced in inverted commas on the tiled wall space between them. Read from left to right, the conversation seems to be initiated in Standard German, the reply is in English. In very small white print just below the English speaker’s back pocket it says, *Michael Liebi, CEO tetrade*. Here English is the Swiss businessman’s preferred language⁶ for promoting his company’s interests and image.

⁶ Some might argue that the switch to English is triggered by the use of Standard German. Dr. Claudio Nodari of the *Institut für Interkulturelle Kommunikation (Zurich)* was recently quoted as saying that in business contexts and at universities conversations in-

The third and less straightforward use of English identified by Cheshire and Moser is that of typically Swiss products such as watches advertised via English. Cheshire and Moser argued that the Swiss identify with the glossy tourist image of Switzerland as a beautiful, small, and quiet country free of any – especially linguistic – problems. In our corpus, this third type of cultural symbolism is again illustrated by watch advertisements for *Tissot* (8) and *Longines* (9), and is present, to some degree, in the campaigns by *Swiss* (airline) and *SBB-CFF* (Swiss railways), the latter cases overlapping with international uses of English in tourism and travel (10, 11).

(8) INNOVATORS by TRADITION by TISSOT - SWISS WATCHES SINCE 1853

(9) LONGINES

Elegance is an attitude

(10) You look great. Did you fly Swiss?

(11) RailAway SNOW'N'RAIL

As there is no one language that can function as a symbol of Swiss identity, English enables the target group to transcend Swiss reality and to identify with foreign tourists' generally positive view of Swiss people and Swiss products.

English for Swiss Purposes

There is a fourth, more recent trend that takes the use of English on billboards one step further into the direction of appropriation for Swiss purposes. The culturally symbolic function is related not to the mainstream prestigiousness of English, but to the covert prestige of code-mixing and interlingual puns. It also ties in with less linguistically conspicuous but perhaps equally subcultural uses of English in young people's linguistic repertoires and identities.

The best illustration of this type of cultural symbol is the 2002 joint-promotion campaign by *Postfinance* and *easyjet*, with its code-mixed texts including literal translations of French and German idioms, for example⁷ in (12, 13).

volving people who do not understand Swiss German dialect regularly switch to English (*wir eltern* 2/03:9). But see also Piller's claim that English is associated with "the young, cosmopolitan business elite" (180).

⁷ See the appendix for all eleven slogans.

- (12) J'ouvre un compte⁸ and I pull me.⁹
 (13) Konto auf¹⁰ and I whistle on you.¹¹

The aim of the *Postfinance* campaigns is to persuade teenagers to open an account by offering them a bait, in this case a reduced-rate *easyjet* flight to London.

As Schaller-Schwaner (2003) argues in her detailed analysis of this successful campaign, the code-mixed slogans for the German- and the French-speaking target groups make use of calquing, i.e. word-by-word translation or relexification of underlying French and (Swiss) German idioms, giving a Swiss feel to English while preserving its otherness. This is also what we referred to earlier as a deliberate Swissification of English, the identification of English that is code-mixed with French or German as a Swiss plurilingual register. While relexification is indeed a well-known learner strategy, the advertisement texts are in fact more than what they purport to be, i.e. “funny” instances of learner English. They also tap into L2 uses of English by young plurilingual speakers. This is not to say that they directly reflect mutually incomprehensible Englishes (anti-*lingua francas*) that really exist. After all, they are advertisement slogans invented and staged by copywriters for the purpose of homing in on two small, linguistically and generationally defined target groups, thus not saving costs for translation at all, and intended to appear as semantically opaque as other in-group languages¹². What the slogans do reflect is a change in the linguistic repertoire and identity-kit of some young Swiss who are both appropriating and displaying English. In the words of Eastman and Stein (188)

the displayers intention is not to negotiate a definition of self as a member of another speech community [. . .] The purpose is not to communicate linguistically across social boundaries but to impress socially within one's own linguistic territory.

⁸ 'I open an account.'

⁹ Literal translation of *Je me tire* (I'm off). The poster shows a young man pulling at his pullover, thus also contains a pun on the loanword *pull* from English *pullover*.

¹⁰ 'Open an account'

¹¹ Literal translation of *Ich pfeif auf dich* (I couldn't care less about you).

¹² This special quality is highlighted by the fact that the slogans for the Italian-speaking target group lack it. There is straightforward code-switching without calquing in that group, e.g. *Aprire il conto and see you later*.

English for Swiss Purposes (Schaller-Schwaner 2003) in the above sense is not an isolated phenomenon. As (often highly informal) English is also the language of fun and adventure sports and a whole host of English-medium subcultures such as rap, hip hop or heavy metal, the language becomes the carrier of a huge range of affiliations. The English vocabulary of such domains is used in and with local languages, inevitably leading to frequent code-switching by performers¹³ of a subculture. Using those technical terms alongside very informal English thus becomes an effective means of showing one's affiliation to a particular societal group or subgroup, which may in fact be unconnected to native speaker groups of English. What counts in our context of advertisements in Swiss public space, therefore, is that the advert evokes the right image, not that the English used is good, grammatical, native-speaker English. Looking beyond Swiss public space we see similar phenomena in plurilingual *Quersprachigkeit* (List and List) and other localised uses of English.

A particularly colourful example of language display with connotations of both subcultural association and cultural hybridity is the series of posters of the *metroboutique* campaign launched in May 2003. It featured the slogans (14a-g) in informal, idiomatic English accompanied by Chinese characters.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| (14 a) MAKE LOVE ... | MY-LINN POWERED BY METRO |
| b) FASHION SUCKS! | LUCIE POWERED BY METRO |
| c) WHAT'S COOKIN'? | GREG POWERED BY METRO |
| d) WHAT FASHION? | DAVID POWERED BY METRO |
| e) Kawoom | SOPHIA POWERED BY METRO |
| f) ARE YOU TALKING TO ME? | BLADIMIR POWERED BY METRO |
| g) POWERED BY METRO | THE ULTIMATE FASHION GANG |

According to Michael Hertig of *Hugofilm*, Zurich, who developed the campaign, the practical lingua franca aspect did play a role in the decision to use English in as far as there are *metroboutique* stores in both French- and German-speaking areas. The use of Swiss German was therefore ruled out and English was perceived as a "little bit of both," i.e. as serving both linguistic groups. The copywriter felt at ease with the language due to his linguistic biography, which included English since childhood. The communicative lingua franca value of the English mes-

¹³ Following Preisler, we assume that subcultures have performers, not members.

sages for Germanophone and Francophone youngsters was not, however, the main advantage of using English. This became clear from the fact that when vital content¹⁴ was to be communicated in on one additional poster (15), the preferred language for addressing the target group was French¹⁵, even though there could have been genuine motivation to use English as an intra-national lingua franca in the bilingual city of Fribourg/Freiburg.

(15) Réouverture Metroboutique Fribourg, Rue de Romont 23
 3 Jours 30% jeudi 22 à samedi 24 mai
 30% de ristourne sous forme d'un bon d'achat
 Exemple: vous payez le prix total (par exemple fr. 100.-) de votre achat
 et vous recevez en plus des articles achetés un bon de 30% [. .]

The parts of the slogans on the left in (14a-d, f, g) appeared in dynamic, ascending lines across the models' midriffs in glossy rainbow-coloured capitals. The right-hand parts were written in smaller, colourfully patterned capitals. When the first two posters with female models and slogans (14a, b) appeared, we were struck by the cultural hybridity of the combined use of English and Chinese characters. We learned from a Chinese native speaker informant that the meanings of the characters are *love* and *peace*, information that is not immediately available to the average viewer¹⁶. This corresponded to the peace symbol which appeared in two different posters, e.g. the first poster, in which the cultural mix was further complexified by the fact that the Asian model's name is Vietnamese and that she is wearing a stars-and-stripes top and holding a fan. There were four more posters (one more female and three male models) on the following days, with different slogans, all of them with the same *love* and *peace* characters on the posters. Rays or rings of bold orange, yellow and red or purple and green formed the background and there were flowers (different types in each poster) seemingly flying upwards from behind and around the models. The clue for the current interpretation of the kanji characters came with the penultimate poster: muscle man Bladimir, bathed in sweat, sporting black gym breeches, a

¹⁴ This corresponds to Piller's linking German with the boring facts (and English with the slogan/headline).

¹⁵ A huge ad with the German version of the text appeared in the *Freiburger Nachrichten*, the German-language regional newspaper.

¹⁶ We would like to thank Gabriele Thelen for confirming that the two-part he ping character(s) for "peace" are not in their usual position but rotated by 90 degrees.

white headscarf with a New York emblem and a necklace with a dragon pendant. It was *Dragon Ball*, *Sailor Moon* and other manga and anime productions, the fashionable Japanese cartoons,¹⁷ that were the intended background context to be triggered by the kanji characters and the flying flowers (which usually signal that the heroine or hero is undergoing a magical transition). The climactic appearance of all seven models in one large poster (14g) made it clear that the seven posters of the *metroboutique* campaign are an anime- und manga-inspired “fashion gang” comic strip that, according to Michael Hertig, draws its inspiration from the Japanese popular “culture of cute.”¹⁸

Conclusion

Swiss advertisements using English lay claim to attributes associated with this language, such as modernity, social mobility, a cosmopolitan world view, freedom and tolerance, youth, fun, etc. According to Eastman and Stein, fluency or even comprehension are not necessary for language display to work. Even in code-mixed cases in which most of the factual information content of the advertisement is in one of the national languages, the persuasive function seems to be fulfilled by English.

English in Swiss public space is not only used for its universal, but also for its specifically Swiss appeal, however. Cheshire and Moser posited that English is appropriated as a symbol of Swiss national identity through allowing the Swiss to construct a self-image that is consistent with the way they are seen by outsiders. We posit that self-ironical and playful appropriation of English linguistic forms can Swissify the feel of some of the English-using advertisements from within, as it were.

Swissification as attested in our corpus is rarely taken to extremes. L2 users of World English are agents in its spread and development, and this is leading to more and more divergence. But all those people around the globe learn English not just for projecting their identities, for

¹⁷ The first author would like to thank her children Viviane and Vinzenz, whose predelection for them prepared the ground for this interpretation.

¹⁸ In a telephone interview on 22 September 2003, Michael Hertig described the theme of this year's *metroboutique* campaigns as “Einordnung in verschiedene Ethnien.” In the spring, it was “die japanische Kitschwelt,” the autumn was going to be oriental in the allure-of-1001-Nights way. Due to the Iraq War, this plan was dropped in favour of an internationally transcended, Tyler-Brulé-citing Swiss Ethno theme.

idiosyncratic self-expression, but certainly also because English is a language, the language, of global currency. Therefore Brutt-Griffler's prediction that the divergence of newly developing varieties and register uses will be balanced out by convergence seems a likely outcome.

During our limited period of observation, we also saw that some companies or products seemed to swing back and forth between using very basic English and very sophisticated or complex advertisements (partially) in English. Whereas *Winston* used four different, idiomatically or grammatically challenging interrogatives in 2002, they displayed one very basic three-word slogan in the spring of 2003. Whereas *metroboutique* had a single *wh*-question (*Where's Sandy?*) on all their posters in 2002, they had seven different posters with seven different English slogans in the spring of 2003 alone.¹⁹ The most striking contrast is that between the 2002 and the 2003 *Postfinance* campaigns. While eleven different slogans and posters using code-mixed or lingua franca English were employed in 2002, the 2003 campaign should, strictly speaking, not have been included here at all. The posters do not make use of the English language at all, but show big letters in the Hollywood Hills, the name of a star on the Walk of Fame and the film title in an illuminated cinema announcement. The power of the cultural symbols of the US movie industry is so great that one experiences a kind of optical illusion, thinking that one is looking at English when in fact German, French or Italian is used. What this variation in strategies is due to is not entirely clear. It is possible that advertising agencies and their customers want to alternate between very basic and very sophisticated English in order to sell their products to both Preisler's *haves* and the *have-nots* with regard to English.

The interpretation of instances of English as serving either communicative or symbolic functions can fluctuate, also through evidence of reactions from members of the Swiss public. While the *sloggi* slogan *It's string time!* may have been meant symbolically, as a sophisticated pun conveying risqué fun, it triggered communicative use of English by one enraged passer-by at a Fribourg/Freiburg underpass, who reacted to the pornographic picture that went with the slogan in lingua franca English, writing "NO SEXISME. WOMAN DON'T BUY SLOGGI" (sic) right across the poster.

In our title we quote the WWF slogan *Born to be wild* to reflect both localised divergence and World English convergence. Plurilingual Swiss

¹⁹ Another six English phrases were used on six new posters in the autumn of 2003.

users of English (inside and outside advertising agencies) are confident and creative, and sometimes their English runs wild. But the fact that *Born to be wild* is a WWF slogo symbolises convergence. Users of World English in principle share the subjective knowledge that they are using a common language, that there is an international community, and the use of English by NGOs and NPOs constantly reminds us of this (Brutt-Griffler 179).

References

- Brutt-Griffler, Janina. *World English: A study of its development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2002.
- Cheshire, Jenny and Lise-Marie Moser. "English as a cultural symbol: the case of advertisements in French-speaking Switzerland." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 15/6 (1994): 451-469.
- Eastman, Carol M. and Roberta Stein. "Language display: authenticating claims to social identity." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 14/3 (1993): 187-202.
- Goddard, Angela. *The language of advertising. Written texts*. Second ed. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Kachru, Braj B. "World Englishes and Applied Linguistics." *Learning, keeping and using language*. Ed. Halliday, Gibbons and Nicholas. Vol II. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990. 203-229.
- List, Günther and Gundula List. "Register der Quersprachigkeit." *Quersprachigkeit. Zum transkulturellen Registergebrauch in Laut- und Gebärdensprachen*. Ed. List, Gundula and Günther List. Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2001. 9-19.
- Martin, Elizabeth. "Mixing English in French advertising." *World Englishes* 21/3 (2002) 375-402.
- Piller, Ingrid. "Identity Construction in multilingual advertising." *Language in Society* 30 (2001): 153-186.
- Preisler, Bent. "Functions and forms of English in a European EFL country." *Standard English: The widening debate*. Ed. T. Bex and R. Watts. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Schaller-Schwaner, Iris. "Unpacking before take-off: English for Swiss Purposes in code-mixed advertisement texts for 14-20-year-olds." *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée*. 77 (2003): 17-50.
- Scollon, Ron and Suzie Scollon Wong. *Discourses in place. Language in the material world*. London, New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara. "Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11, 2 (2001): 133-158.
- Strässler, Jürg. "English in Swiss Advertising." *Europa der Sprachen: Sprachkompetenz – Mehrsprachigkeit – Translation*. Ed. Lew N. Zybatow. Bern: Peter Lang, 2004: 93-100.
- Watts, Richard J. and Heather Murray, eds. *Die fünfte Landessprache? Englisch in der Schweiz*. Zurich: vdf, 2001.

Appendix

Opportunity-sampled advertisement texts in (code-mixed) English on Swiss billboards

(Spring 2002 to spring 2003)

Product	Brand name	Text/slogo
NPO	WWF	Born to be wild. www.wwf.ch Devenez membre du WWF
Cars	Ford	Night fever Nouvelle FordStreetka La technologie en mouvement
		Fever Nouvelle FordStreetka La technologie en mouvement
	Audi	The new Audi A3: Drive me!
	Peugeot	Stop liking, start loving. Peugeot 206
	Mini	Less fuel. The only Diesel that is a Mini.
	BMW	How can you dream of something that won't let you sleep?
Watches	TISSOT SWISS WATCHES SINCE 1853	1943 TISSOT MUSEUM COLLECTION 2003 INNOVATION PERPETUATED T-LORD Fr. 675.- 150 Years [pseudo-handwriting] INNOVATORS/TRADITION by TISSOT SWISS WATCHES SINCE 1853
	LONGINES	Longines DolceVita Elegance is an attitude [in pseudo-handwriting] photo of Aishwarya Rai (Miss World 1994, model, actress)
IT	Tetrade.	Conversation between two men in a urinal "Was tun Sie?"- "We integrate IT." Let's talk about your business. tetrade. we integrate IT

Computer	Apple	Less is more. More is more. The new 12" and 17" PowerBooks.
	Microsoft	about .NET! Let's talk
Telecom	Nokia 3650	[in speech balloon coming from five Nokia cell phones in different colours, imitating handwritten capitals] Can you keep a secret? -- Sure I can, Sure I can. Sure I can, Sure I can [plus another speech balloon coming from the NOKIA 3650 Picture/Video/Voice/-Text label (?)] We'll see NOKIA CONNECTING PEOPLE
Cigarettes	PHILLIP MORRIS 2003	GET YOUR STUFF FROM THE STREET LIFE SELECTION [busy NY street full of yellow cabs from the point of view of a bicycle boy !]
	Parisienne Extra Parisienne Ultra 2003	NEWLY PAINTED COMING SOON. Parisienne People
	Parisienne	The band Nr 4
	Winston Lights 2002	[1] Have you got a light? [2] Do I look like I need more? [3] Do I look like I get no satisfaction? [4] Do we look like we'd compromise on taste? (*Light in Taste)
	Winston Lights 2003	SOFT AND NEW WINSTON LIGHTS SOFT* *Light/Soft in Taste [soft pack of cigarettes on blue denim]
	BARCLAY	SAME PARTY. DIFFERENT TASTE.
	CAMEL	SLOW DOWN. PLEASURE UP.
	Marlboro	1 Marlboro 2 EXPLORE FREEDOM APPLY NOW ADVENTURE TEAM Marlboro CALL 0848 808010

	metro boutique 2002	Where's Sandy? www.metroboutique.ch
	metro boutique 2003	[1] MAKE LOVE ... MY-LINN POWERED BY METRO [2] FASHION SUCKS! LUCIE POWERED BY METRO [3] WHAT'S COOKIN? GREG POWERED BY METRO [4] WHAT FASHION? DAVID POWERED BY METRO [5] Kawoom SOPHIA POWERED BY METRO [6] ARE YOU TALKING TO ME? BLADIMIR POWERED BY METRO [7] POWERED BY METRO THE ULTIMATE FASHION GANG
	sloggi	It's string time! [pornified flower garden in the spring, "flowers" and "gardener" wearing strings]
	CALIDA	BODYWEAR BY CALIDA JUST FEEL
	Gallus since 1880 Denervaud	What a man wants [shoes]
Fashion	Lee Cooper 2002	Get your Lee Cooper Party Survival Kit! Come in & find out. Lee Cooper
Cosmetics	NIVEA	Shower for new Power Nouveau NIVEA Bath Care FOR MEN DOUCHE ISOTONIC NIVEA Bath Care ET L'EAU DEVIENT SOÏN.
Beer, alcohol	Heineken	1 Pump Up The Volume. 2 Love Me Tender. 3 Absolutely Everybody. 4 Hey Mr DJ. Sounds good. Heineken.

	Carlsberg St. Moritz 2003	TWO GOOD REASONS TO BELIEVE THERE IS ALIFE AFTER SKIING Carlsberg PROBABLY THE BEST AFTER-SKI IN THE WORLD
	Carlsberg	[from arts auction to beach bar] Probably the best beer in the world.
	Smirnoff	Serve extra chilled.
Soft drinks	POWERADE	NEW POWERADE LIQUID 8 SYSTEM ENDLESS POWER:
	Limelite	New Limelite sweet – great taste – low calories
Sweets	Mars	1 Only you! 2 True love!
Places/Events Travel	AQUA PARC LE BOUVERET (VS) 2002	Big Splash Sensation
	Gotthard	Human Zoo Tour 2003
	MANOR	sea & fun
	SWISS	You look great. Did you fly Swiss?
	Hotelplan	world wide weg
	SBB CFF FFS Winter 2002/03	RailAway SNOW'N'RAIL
(job)	Caring professions	Betagtenbetreuerin: "Ich bin Old School"

Bank account for young people	<p>Postfinance/DIE POST 2002 (joint promotion with easyjet: flight to Lon- don at 50.- reduction)</p>	<p>Konto auf and I make the fly. Konto auf and I show you the cold shoulder. Konto auf and I whistle on you. Konto auf and you can blow me in the shoes. J'ouvre un compte and I send you on the roses. J'ouvre un compte and you go to make you cook an egg. J'ouvre un compte and I pull me. J'ouvre un compte and I turn the heels. Aprire il conto and see you later. Aprire il conto and take it easy. Aprire il conto and let me fly higher.</p>
	<p>Postfinance/DIE POST 2003 (joint promotion with Sony; DVD player at half price)</p>	<p>Konto auf <i>or</i> Ouvre un compte <i>or</i> Aprire il conto [in big letters in the Hollywood Hills] [written as the name of a star on the Walk of Fame] [written as the film title on an illumi- nated cinema announcement] N.B.: actually no English at all, just the cultural symbols of US movie industry</p>