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The Status of English in multilingual Switzerland

Switzerland is a linguistic area that has long fascinated outsiders. The fact that in this small Alpine country in the heart of Europe four different languages (one Germanic, three Romance) are spoken may in itself be a cause for marvelling; greater astonishment, however, is caused by the observation that the four different language groups seem to be able to live next to each other and with one another without apparent problems arising.

Since 1848 German, French, and Italian have equally enjoyed the status of official and national languages. And since 1938 Raeto-Romance (or Romantch) has been recognized as a fourth national language. In the 1980 census 65.0 percent of the Swiss population indicated German as their mother-tongue, 18.4 percent French, 9.8 percent Italian, and 0.8 percent Raeto-Romance. As these figures show, German is the language with the largest number of speakers. There is indeed a heavy imbalance between German (two thirds) and the three Romance languages (together one third). Since German also commands the largest territory, it might be expected to exercise linguistic dominance on the other three languages. Nevertheless, the multilingual status of Switzerland has not been weakened fundamentally in the past 100 years. SONDEREGGER (1982) saw the future of multilingual Switzerland as dependent on the following eight factors:

- 1) federalism
- 2) territorial stability
- 3) demographic equilibrium
- 4) degree of bilingualism
- 5) the understanding of one language community for the culture of another community
- 6) the respect of the majority language group for the minority language groups
- 7) continuous prestige of the various languages, and
- 8) relativization of linguistic ethnocentrism

According to this list one might get the impression that the multilingual stability of Switzerland is dependent only on factors that can be controlled within the country itself. No mention is made of factors that might have their origin abroad. Specifically, Sonderegger made no mention of English, that language that has become the most important additional language in Switzerland. The question whether the spread of English in multilingual Switzerland might endanger the native languages or, on the other hand, might strengthen them, this question has now entered public awareness and ought to be taken up by sociolinguists as well.

English as an additional language

In recent years, research on the sociolinguistics of English has centered around English as a language of wider communication (FISHMAN 1977, SMITH 1981) and English as a language for international and intranational communication (KACHRU 1982, BAILEY & GÖRLACH 1982). The focus of this research activity seems to be on the implications the worldwide spread of English is having on non-English speaking communities, especially on the effects the increasing use of English as a language of cross-cultural and cross-national understanding is having in non-Anglophone countries.

World-wide the spread of English has acquired dramatic proportions. David CRYSTAL comments on the statistics in *English Today*, 1, pp. 7–9 (January 1985): In 1962 Randolph QUIRK estimated that 250 million had English as a mother-tongue, with a further 100 million using it as a second or foreign language. In 1977 Joshua FISHMAN cited 300 million as users of English as an additional language. In 1984 QUIRK upgraded his estimate from his former total of 350 million to double that, a new total of 700 million. But he did not know of GUNNEMARK and KENRICK's statistics published in 1983 which went up to 1400 million. At the beginning of 1985 CRYSTAL was not too sure about what to think of these figures: if one is highly conscious of international standards of English, the number of speakers of English in the world is probably below 1 billion; on the other hand, if one also includes people whose competence of English is only marginal one can easily come up to two billion and that is about a third of the current world population!

With these figures in mind, sociolinguists have begun to ask questions like these:

- Which is the position of English in the glotto-political and socio-political context of those countries in which English is being used without being a native language?
- Which factors are responsible in the countries of the Third World, for the retention of English even after the end of the colonial period?
- Which factors, on the other hand, are responsible for the spread of English even in those countries that have never been under English or U.S. domination?
- Which are the functional and pragmatic frame conditions within which the newly developed varieties of English are being used?
- Which is the sociolinguistic profile of each of these new varieties of English, and to what extent does it contribute to the emergence of even further (sub)varieties?

- Which are the linguistic and contextual parameters which lead to the nativization of English and to the development of interference varieties?
- Which is the relationship between an English for international purposes and an English for intranational purposes in the various non English-speaking countries?
- Which are the exact shapes of those new varieties of English and in which points do they differ from British or American Standard English on the one hand and from each other on the other?
- Which are the attitudes of non-English speakers to English especially if compared to the attitudes they have towards their own native tongues and other national languages?
- Which, finally, are the attitudes of native English speakers towards the increasing number of speakers of English as a foreign language?

Some of these questions were also the basis for the directions of research indicated by the East-West Center in Honolulu in 1978. Basic research was pleaded for, above all, descriptive and empirical studies of English as it occurs in the various countries concerned, data finding and presentation of data in informative statistics, correlation of the data with communicative functions, purposes and goals, with speaker attitudes and expectations.

Although the East-West Center did not mention Switzerland as one of the countries where that kind of research should be conducted, it seems to be clear nevertheless that multilingual Switzerland should also be included in the list of countries surveyed. It is the Swiss sociolinguists that are called upon to do their share of work within that vast international research project. It is their task to collect the Swiss data and to try to describe the spread, function, status and form of English in Switzerland. Of particular interest for Swiss language policy is that kind of research that looks into the ways in which the increasing use of English affects the bilingual and multilingual stability of Switzerland.

The folk take note of English

That English has spread throughout Switzerland quite noticeably cannot be denied. On several occasions language purists have felt called upon to fight the increasing anglicification of Swiss culture. In letters to the editor readers complain about trendy English terms being used and in separate bulletins societies founded for the protection of the native language(s) attack what they consider a destructive influence of English.¹ The phenome-

¹ See, e.g., the book review by Arthur BAUR, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 17–18, 1982, p. 27, on a book entitled «I like Deutsch», a book «against the anglicification of the German language», or bulletin Nr. 5 (1982) of the Berne «Bubenbergs Gesellschaft».

non and the complaints that accompany it are so well-known that already parody is possible:²

Ode an die deutsche Sprache

You keep fit and you are trim –
are you jogging to stay in?
Shopping center – open house,
face lifting and Mickey Mouse.
Is there anything you miss?
Do-it-yourself or self-service!
Cowboy, girlfriend, baby sitter,
have a drink (with lemon bitter)!
T-shirt, soft-ice, popcorn, brunch,
have a sandwich, eat your lunch.
Pudding, grapefruit, crackers, cheese
– fasten belts – no smoking please!
Nightclub, live-show, disco joint,
hot pants, blue jeans! get the point?
Meetings, training, video.
Television – stereo.
Go go, hairspray, deo stick,
Such is German: very sick!

The same discussion is also conducted in French speaking Switzerland. On October 5, 1984, the *Journal de Genève* wondered: «L’anglais (ou plutôt l’américain) nous envahit-il vraiment?» And in the same year l’*HEBDO* ran a whole report on the language situation in French-speaking Switzerland, specifically noting the intrusion of English.

The folk voices the complaints not only in Switzerland, but in so many other countries of Europe and other parts of the world as well. The folk also come up with word lists and claims and as to their statistical interpretation. Work on folk linguistics is fascinating – and the folk’s own observations and interpretations should not be ignored – but the data offered by the folk remain impressionistic. It is the task of sociolinguists to check the data offered and to validate them statistically and then to check them against

2 The «Ode to the German language» appeared in «Personalzeitschrift der Escher-Wyss AG», 1983. In a «manual of journalese» entitled «Deutsch for Profis» (Wolf SCHNEIDER, author, Gruner & Jahr, Hamburg 1984, p. 63) the following parody appeared:

Ik liebe meine Muttasprache, det sarick euch ganz COOL. Die deutsche Sprache, wa, ob ickse nu LIVE hör oda vonne SINGLE oda LP, wa, oda ob ickse uffn PAPERBACK lesen tu, also die deutsche Sprache, die is OKAY. Die is so’n richtja OLDIE, aba jade, weilse so’n OLDIE is, is se echt. Die hat so’n irren TOUCH, die machma HIGH!

It is interesting to note that this text did not originate in Western Germany, but in Eastern Germany, where, supposedly, the influence of anglophile Western culture is less permeating.

data found through recognized scholarly fieldwork. Case studies like those pioneered by FISHMAN and his collaborators in Israel (FISHMAN 1977) are called for. Only then can we determine whether and to what extent English actually permeates our streets and in which sociolinguistic domains this is so. And only if some segments of the population are interviewed can we determine whether the Anglo-American elements are judged negatively or positively and whether the cultural stability of multilingual countries is being shaken.

Although the popularity of English as a vehicle for mass pop culture, scientific writings and lingua franca usage is an international phenomenon and has repeatedly been noted and reported, a sociolinguistic study of the spread, status and function of English in multilingual Switzerland seems to be justified and surely can add to the studies done on English in India, Israel, and West Africa (among many more), because (1) Switzerland is not a former anglophone country, because (2) English is never the second language in Switzerland, but can be learnt as the third language only, at the earliest, and because (3) the multilingual build-up of Switzerland offers an opportunity to study in a comparative way how English affects the different languages and the attitudes of their speakers to the various languages making up their speech repertoires.

Factors for the spread of English in Switzerland

Language spread has been attributed to various factors: military imposition, duration of foreign domination, linguistic diversity, material incentives and, more recently, also to additional promotional factors like urbanization, economic development, educational development, religious composition, and political affiliation (FISHMAN, COOPER and ROSENBAUM, 1977). In the case of Switzerland we can exclude from the catalog (a) military imposition, (b) duration of foreign domination, (c) religious composition, and (d) political affiliation. I forward the hypothesis that the expansion of English in Switzerland can be related to these factors above all:

- (1) linguistic diversity
- (2) material incentives
- and (3) cultural affiliation.³

3 «Cultural Affiliation» is a factor not discussed by the sociologists of language. It is introduced here because it seems to fit the Swiss situation.

1. Linguistic Diversity

Clearly, the recent spread of English has upset the traditional situation of Swiss plurilingualism. At the beginning of April 1985, the Zurich-based *Weltwoche* interpreted the fact that as from 1986 Swiss passports will be worded not only in German, French, and Italian, but also in English, as the quasi-official acknowledgement that English is on its way to becoming the one language used for intranational communication. I quote from my translation of the text (*Weltwoche*, Nr. 14, 1985, p. 39):

The new passport makes evident what knowledgeable people have long known: We are on the way to that language which can be understood in all parts of the country. So far it hasn't been acknowledged officially. But now, our national language of conversation is no longer kept secret; a clear majority of us speak German, hardly ever Romantch; but for the remaining part we speak English.

The author then mentions that already years ago a top military meeting in which participated officers from all parts of the country was conducted in English. And after listing further examples for the use of English inside Switzerland, he concludes that the new passport, by accepting English within its red covers, has not created a new situation but simply acknowledged an already existing one.

If business corporations working in different linguistic parts of Switzerland declare English their language and offer their personnel English language courses – like Suchard-Tobler in 1982 – that is one thing. But if federal authorities begin to use English, this is quite something different. The position of official Switzerland with regard to English is not without ambiguity: On the one hand English has been okayed for the official timetable edited by the Swiss Federal Railways and for something as nationalistic as the Swiss passport; on the other hand, however, the federal council declined the wish of Swiss trade school students to be allowed to *learn* English in place of a second Swiss language (1982).⁴

FISHMAN, COOPER and ROSENBAUM (1977) found that «linguistic diversity appeared to be related to the use of English as a medium in the schools, particularly primary schools, independent of former anglophone status.» (89) While this may apply to Israel, whose case the authors are discussing here, the statement does not apply to Switzerland. For, except for some private schools serving mainly non-Swiss students, and except for scientific univer-

4 On the cantonal level, English is being used, too: The Office for Economic Development in Liestal (BL) produced a booklet on industrial sites both in German and English, but not in French or Italian (1983).

sity-level colloquia, English is not a medium of instruction in Switzerland. It is only on the secondary school-level, where English is also a subject of instruction, that English may be used as the medium of instruction as well.

In COOPER and FISHMAN's country-by-country estimates of students in primary and secondary English classes (1977:22), Switzerland shows a percentage of 24.2 for primary education, and 81.4 for secondary education (in 1971). Although the calculation of these UNESCO figures might be doubted, they do show a significant difference if compared to the figures available for Western Germany. The 81.4 percent for English in Swiss secondary schools is much higher than the comparable 33.3 percent for German secondary education. The surprise effect, however, is felt only if one takes into account that in Western Germany English may be learnt as a second language, while in multilingual Switzerland it can be taken up in third position, i.e. after a second Swiss language only.

These figures make one wonder whether English as it is used in multilingual Switzerland might not have additional functions to the one it has in Western Germany, in particular whether English might not only be used as a language for international communication and specific profession-related purposes, but also as a language for intranational communication. Swiss language policy aims at establishing within multilingual Switzerland language repertoires for native speakers that consist of (a) their native language, and (b) one of the other national languages of Switzerland, minimally. Repertoires might look like these:

	L1	L2	L3	L4
German speaker	(Swiss) German	French	English	Italian
	(Swiss) German	French	Italian	English
French speaker	French	German	English	Italian
	French	German	Italian	English
Italian speaker	Italian	German	English	French
	Italian	French	English	German
	Italian	German	French	English
Romantch speaker	Romantch	German	Italian	English
	Romantch	Italian	German	English
	Romantch	German	French	English
	Romantch	German	English	Italian

Not all the possible combinations are listed in this table. But it is obvious nevertheless that, at least theoretically, whenever two Swiss citizens from different language areas come together they do have one of the Swiss languages in common, even if their speech repertoire comprises only two languages. In practice, however, this is not always so. Indeed, it is precisely the increasing presence of English that seems to have caused certain fears

among Swiss cultural and political leaders that Swiss citizens might become more fluent in English than in a second Swiss language. Statements like the following are typical: «I don't like a French-speaking Swiss and a German-speaking Swiss to talk business in English.»⁵

The folk on the other hand do not seem to mind the intrusion of English into their speech repertoires. While, as mentioned, the language purists are trying to stop the intrusion of English into Swiss life and culture, a clear majority of the public do not mind the presence of English in their everyday lives. This attitude is shared by all the age groups, though it is the elder generation that mind the presence of English most (see Table 1).

Table 1: Attitudes to English

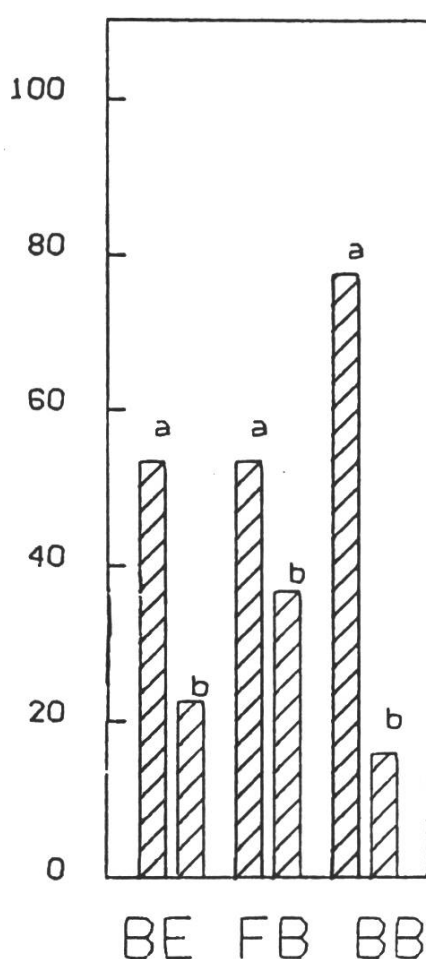


Table 1.1: Overall percentage of people who do not mind (a) or do mind (b) the presence of English in public life⁶ in the cities of Bern (BE), Fribourg (FB) and Biel-Bienne (BB).

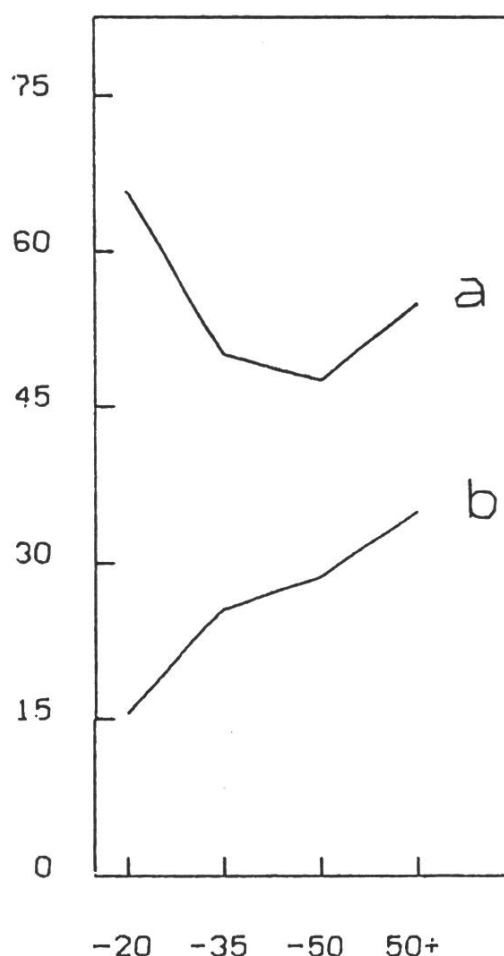


Table 1.2: Percentage of people who do not mind (a) or do mind (b) the presence of English in public life according to age groups.

5 «Mich stört's, wenn die Welschen und die Deutschschweizer geschäftlich Englisch miteinander reden.» Josi MEIER, Swiss Ständerat for the Canton of Lucerne, quoted in *Brückenbauer*, 3/30/83, «Sayings of the Week».

It is particularly the young who favor English over other Swiss languages. In a survey of Berne highschoolers (1982/83)⁷ whose mother-tongue is German (Swiss German) 55.1 percent preferred English over French (32 percent) in case either language could be chosen in conversation with someone who does not speak German. And in surveys conducted in 1984⁶ in the cities of Berne, Fribourg and Biel-Bienne (the latter two are traditionally bilingual French and German) between 23 and 30 percent of the population indicated that they would prefer speaking English to speaking their second language (German or French) in case they could not use their native language (French or German). See Table 2.

Table 2: Preference of English over other languages (percent)

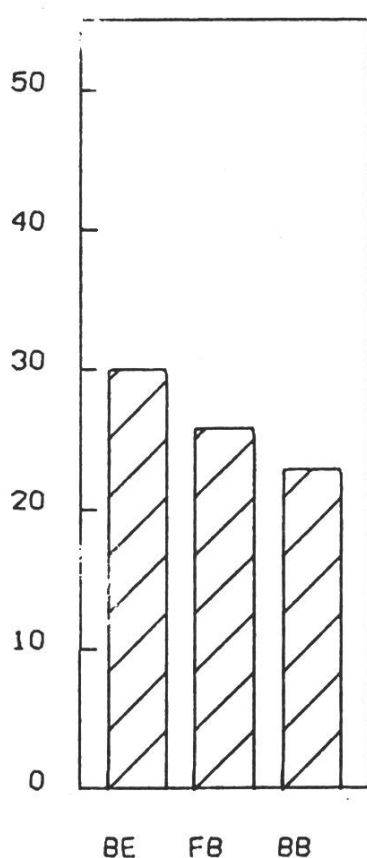


Table 2.1: Preference of English over other languages in the cities of Bern (BE), Fribourg (FB) and Biel-Bienne (BB).

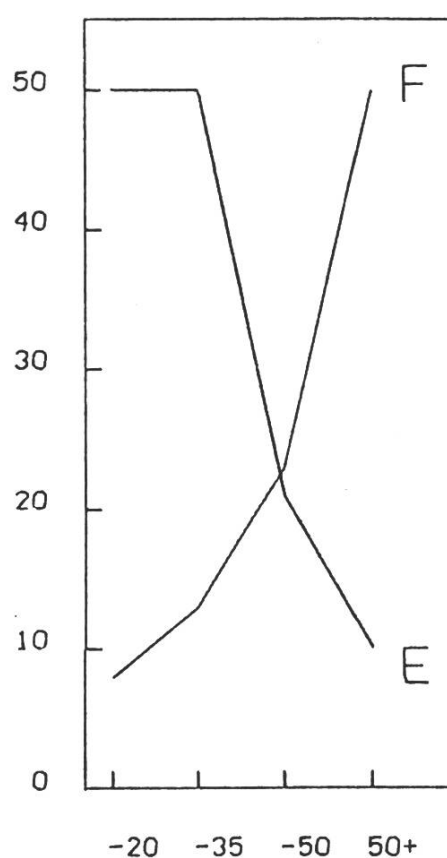


Table 2.2: Comparative Preference of English and French (Bern city) according to age groups.

6 Inner-city street interviews of 100 persons were conducted by a research team of the English Seminar, University of Berne, in 1984. The population was scanned according to the chance-and-quota method of social statistics. Thus the group was able to obtain information not only about the population as a whole, but also about segments of that population, especially age and sex groups.

7 A questionnaire was handed out to 100 students at the Gymnasium Neufeld in Bern during the winter term 1982/83. 78 of these were returned; these were used to calculate the percentage.

That is to say, a good quarter of the population suggest that they have a repertoire of three languages: their native language, a second Swiss national language, and English. If one considers age groups, it becomes obvious again that English is favored most by the young. The Berne data (Table 2.2) show that 50 percent of the younger generation prefer English to French in the situation sketched, while among those 50 and above there are only 10 percent who favor English. Conversely, the older citizens show the highest percentage of French preference (50 percent), while the young ones show the lowest (8 percent).

For French-speaking Switzerland the same tendency showed in an enquête published in *HEBDO* (II, 1984): 16 percent of the young (age group 15–34), but only 2 percent of those aged 55–74 would favor English over German in a situation where they had to enter a conversation with a German-speaking Swiss who did not (want to) speak French.

A similar question was also asked of the military recruits from German-speaking Switzerland.⁸ 53.9% answered that they would use French in a conversation with a French-speaking Swiss not speaking German or Swiss German, 22.3% indicated English as their language of choice, 3.3% thought they would try Italian, and 20.6% found themselves at a loss. In the case of a conversation with an Italian-speaking Swiss not speaking German or Swiss German, English came up to 27%, like Italian; 18% would still try French, and another 27% found themselves at a loss. All these data show that English has obviously become a language that can be selected for intranational communication.

Since English has become easily available in Swiss schools, it appears that many citizens now make use of that language to ensure intranational communication. The linguistic diversity of multilingual Switzerland is no doubt a considerable factor encouraging the spread of English. And since it is the members of the younger generations that have begun to favor the use of English over that of other additional Swiss languages – although they have to learn English with an extra effort in third place – one might predict that the Swiss language repertoires will have a much simplified shape, if, that is, the other factors encouraging the spread of English continue to operate, and if in Swiss language policy no additional measures are taken to ensure the continuation of all-Swiss types of bilingualism. Those simplified repertoires will look like this:

8 Data from Pedagogical Recruit Exams 1985 «Languages in Switzerland». Statistics based on answers from 1982 males, aged about 20, from German speaking Switzerland.

	L1	L2
German speaker	(Swiss) German	English
French speaker	French	English
Italian speaker	Italian	English
Romantch speaker	Romantch	English

English would thus receive a position it already has in other multilingual countries, in India, Nigeria, Fiji, etc., namely that of functioning as the one national language accessible to all the citizens.

Since one would assume that the all-Swiss types of bilingualism will be replaced by types that include English as their second language, there is a widespread fear that Swiss citizens that do not speak the language of another part of Switzerland any more will not understand the culture and mentality of their compatriots.

Whether, however, the cultural heritage of multilingual Switzerland would be endangered if people went on using English instead of the national languages of Switzerland when conversing with citizens from different language areas is not at all clear. The cultural diversity of multilingual Switzerland may not necessarily suffer from the increasing use of English, but the understanding of one population group for the culture of another population group – at least to the extent it is expressed in language – might indeed become weakened. The main factor at work here, however, is what I call «cultural affiliation», and that is not so easily controlled by measures in language policy.

No one, however, seriously thinks that English should officially be installed as the one language ensuring inner-Swiss communication. Quite on the contrary: efforts in language policy all aim at keeping up the traditional bilingual types of communication (see above).

The folk, if pressed on the question, are not prepared to welcome English officially in Switzerland. Although the military recruits⁸ demanded more instruction in English and wanted English to be taught in schools as their first foreign language – thus replacing French in German-speaking Switzerland – they were clearly against English becoming an official language in Switzerland: 40% against, 10% pro. For 50% the question was not important enough to answer one way or the other.

2. Material Incentives

The second factor promoting the spread of English in Switzerland is the same that has been recognized in other countries as well; it has been said to

have to do with material incentives. As COOPER and SECKBACH say (1977:212), «Bread-and-butter considerations can provide a powerful incentive to learn a language.» Since Switzerland's economy depends to a large extent on tourism, exports and technological transfer, it is not surprising that English appears quite frequently as a job requirement in help-wanted ads.

A significant statistical index for the prestige enjoyed by English and the values that go along with English are the number of post-graduate students that go to study abroad on grants from the Swiss National Science Foundation. Thus, in the 1978–1980 period, 515 out of 678 applicants (or almost 80 percent) wanted to spend their time in an English-speaking country. It can be predicted that a similar trend will show if the commercial and industrial sectors are investigated. All these people, whether scholars, bankers or engineers, on their return home will strengthen the tendency to spread the use of English inside Switzerland. Certainly, they encourage the emergence of specific profession and activity-related varieties of English in Switzerland.

Material incentives as a factor promoting the spread of English is thus related to the use of English for specific purposes and in the shape of special varieties. The English requirements in job advertisements and job interviews can make this clear: It is the knowledge of English in a particular field that is required above all, e.g. the English of aviation, the English of data processing, the English of show business, etc.

In the summer term of 1984 a small team of students checked the languages used in the faculties of natural science and medicine at Berne University. In various courses and upper-level seminars, English expressions were used a lot; the basic text, however, remained German. We were astonished, however, at learning that English was being used exclusively in one lecture series (on «Very dense states of matter in particle physics»; L. van Howe) and that all the questions asked by students were in English as well. In medicine we found a post-doc colloquium that was exclusively conducted in English (Immunology, A. de Weck) even though on some days it was attended only by German-speaking physicians. Even in popular awareness the link between English and certain domains seems to be established now. In the 1982 musical «Hopp Hueber!!», whose basic language is Swiss German, the representative of show business and entertainment (acted by Zurich comedian Max Rüeger) mostly spoke English.

In the 1984 street interviews⁶ people were asked what they used English for – if at all. They indicated that they make use of English quite frequently when on vacation abroad (59 percent in Bern); but they also indicated quite clearly that they used English professionally (Bern 33 percent, Fribourg 24 percent). Asked why they preferred English over either German or

French – in those cases where they had indicated some such preference – people in the bilingual city of Fribourg labelled English «more practical and useful, universal and international, and more important» while no such utilitarian labels were given to French, German or Italian.

The Berne highschoolers⁷ seemed to have mainly utilitarian motives for studying English as the following table shows:

Table 3: Motivation for learning English as a foreign language (percent)

Rank	Motivation	%
1	English can be used all over the world	97.4
2	English is the language of business	65.4
3	English is the language of tourism	60.2
4	Knowledge of English increases job opportunities	55.1
5	English is the language of science	51.3
6	English is the language of entertainment	25.6
7	They want to learn about the USA	17.9
8	They want to read Anglo-American literature	12.9
9	They want to learn about England	10.3

The percentage decreases sharply for positions 6 to 9. It seems to be the chance that English can be used actively in other countries of the world, that it can be used for business, tourism and science, and that, because of this, mastery of English increases job opportunities even inside Switzerland that students are willing to take up English in education. It is not because they would have a keen interest in literature written in English. The fact that entertainment ranks far below science or business may also point out that students' motivation to learn English is indeed more strictly utilitarian.

Answering the question which foreign language seemed to be most important for their present or future occupation, the military recruits⁸ also put English into first place:

Table 4: Importance of foreign languages for jobs

Rank	Language	%
1	English	65.0
2	French	47.2
3	Italian	25.5
4	Spanish	9.6

The recruits also indicated that they would appreciate more English instruction (71.8%), and that they would like English to be taught as their first foreign language in schools. For English voted 65.3% while only 29.4% expressed that they would like to stick with French, and 3.4% would like to see Italian in first position.

In the summer of 1983 the Zurich *Tages-Anzeiger* published a sondage on language learning, specifically on the place of English in the repertoire of languages studied. A majority of the Zurich students interviewed estimated that English should be given the first place among additional languages or at least be put on an equal plane with French. While English was labeled useful, French was only called decorative. In Schaffhausen some secondary school teachers have spoken out against French on the grounds that it did not serve any needs, needs again that would well be served by English. In French speaking Switzerland the *HEBDO* sondage of 1984 found 20 percent of the population that would give absolute priority to English in the schools, again because English can serve clearly definable needs. And according to a poll (reported in *Der Bund*, September 28, 1983, p. 7), 11 percent of the men and 18 percent of the women indicated an interest to learn a foreign language even after their years at school. By far the greatest interest was for English (59 percent); for Italian opted 15 percent, for French 13 percent. When asked what/where that additional language could be used (for), vacation was named most (54 percent), profession was indicated by 36 percent and interpersonal contacts by 29 percent.

It is worth noting that of the languages used professionally by the 1985 military recruits, either orally or in written form, English comes close to French. This appears to be a significant indicator for the spread of English since the recruits interviewed represent a cross-section of the young Swiss male population, being occupied in all kinds of workplaces. These data make one understand the wish of the young for more and earlier education in English.

Table 5: Use of languages in the workplace or professional domain⁸

Table 5.1: Oral use

Language	Used (%)	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
Swiss German	99.2	95.7	3.5	.8
German German	82.7	25.1	57.6	17.3
French	50.9	9.5	41.4	49.1
English	44.3	11.4	32.9	55.7
Italian	28.2	4.9	23.3	73.8

Table 5.2: Written use

Language	Used (%)	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
German	94.7	64.3	29.7	5.3
French	36.6	7.2	29.4	63.4
English	35.0	9.3	25.8	65.0
Italian	10.2	.8	9.4	89.8

3. Cultural Affiliation

The most important factor for the spread of English, however, is yet another one, is what I call «cultural affiliation». While in other countries language spread may be due to political affiliation, this is surely not the case in Switzerland. But while neutral Switzerland is not part of US-dominated NATO, there is no denying that the country is at least economically and culturally affiliated with the Western world, especially the English-speaking United States. In spite of the fact that Switzerland has her own territorial and language related cultures, all of century-old standing, she has readily embraced modern American culture in the course of the 20th century. The phenomenon is well-known: It is not only the specialized fields of technology and science that have been Americanized, not only the business sectors and the mass media, but also essentials of everyday life: Swiss people too wear sneakers, jeans, and university T-shirts; they drink coke and sprite, eat hamburgers and hot dogs, smoke marlboro or weed, and use quite a few four-letter words.

One only has to take a walk through a Swiss city and one will discover that Americana are to be found everywhere. They are visible in window displays, on posters of all kinds, and on murals; the discos, many boutiques, and a few restaurants imitate trendy American style.

During the winter season 1985/86 affiliation to American culture could be experienced in the city of Bern as follows. Not far from «City West», in the newly opened «Café Americano», Uncle Sam greets patrons in English: «Welcome we're open.» In a corner the statue of liberty can be seen, on the walls there are pictures of Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. The clothes you are expected to wear in this place you buy almost nextdoor in a boutique named «Broadway», or a bit further away in the «California» superstore or in the «USA Western and Army Shop». In the window there you can read «God bless our nation» and every customer knows that it is not Switzerland that is spoken of. After all, he is also told to «buy American». the music is US rock, the drinks Coke. Total cultural affiliation, that is also what one finds in Bern's latest Disco «Hollywood East»: American high tech design, American video clips on several monitors, hard US rock music over the speakers; young customers in what they consider to be the latest fashion from New York.

The impression gained from such experiences is that cultural affiliation to English-speaking countries is stronger than that to Romance-speaking countries like France, Italy or Spain, which traditionally have had some influence on Swiss lifestyle. Already there are more English language books published in Switzerland than there are books in Italian and Romantch

together. The statistics of the Swiss «Buchhändler- und Verlegerverband» for 1983 show the following figures:

Table 6: Books published according to languages

Language	Number of books published
German	4918
French	2024
English	579
Italian	149
Romantch	39

It is not surprising then that English appears side by side with French among the foreign language books read by the military recruits:⁸ English: 29.9%, French: 29.4%.

One domain in which English is conspicuously present is the cinema. Most of the films are again of American provenience. In 1984 58 percent of all the tickets sold in Switzerland were for American movies, which was a 7 percent increase from 1983. If one checks countries of origin, 40 percent of all the films shown were American (a 4 percent increase from 1983). Together with the 12 percent for British movies, a clear majority of all the films shown in Switzerland show characters speaking English. (French is second with 17 percent in 1984.)

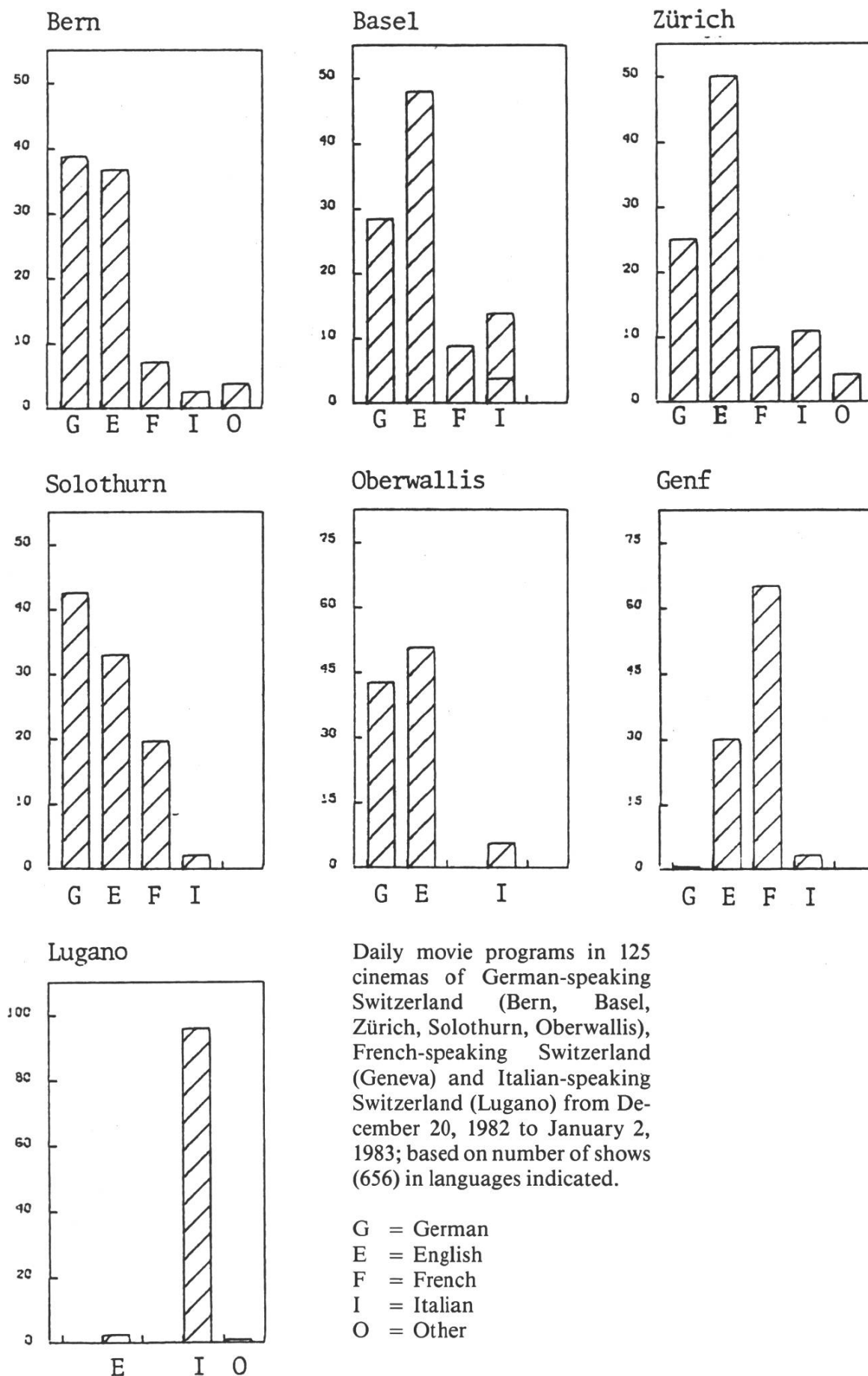
It is hardly surprising therefore that dubbing is less often required for English language movies than for films in other languages, including French. Among the military recruits asked the relevant question⁸ there was a slight majority indicating they could do without dubbing in the case of English-spoken films, while more of them favored dubbing in the case of French or Italian films:

Table 7: Requirements of dubbing for foreign language films

Film language	dubbing required (%)	dubbing not required (%)
English	44.9	55.1
French	60.5	39.5
Italian	71.4	28.6

In 1982/1983 a study of the languages used in movie dialogues in multilingual Switzerland (English Seminar, University of Bern) produced the following results: A significant difference emerged between German-speaking Switzerland on the one hand and French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland on the other hand. While English is the overall winner in Ger-

Table 8: Percentage of film shows according to languages



man-speaking Switzerland, the local native tongues were clearly favored in Geneva and Lugano. That is to say, dubbing of American and British films is much more common in French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland than it is in German-speaking Switzerland. A conclusion one might draw from these data is that the acceptability of English is greater in the German-speaking part than in the rest of Switzerland. (See Table 8.)

In the music programs that are habitually listened to by the young English is again conspicuously present. But here there seem to be no important differences between the language areas of Switzerland. An inventory of the music titles used in key radio music programs made in 1983 shows clearly what has been suspected for long: between 75 percent and 96 percent of these music titles are English; the ratio is slightly higher in French-speaking Switzerland than in German-speaking Switzerland, as the statistics show:

Table 9: English language music on the Swiss radio (titles)

Music Titles in Music Radio Programs of German-speaking Switzerland

1. «Sounds» (Radio der Deutschen und Rätoromanischen Schweiz, II, 18.05–18.45 h)

Date	E	SG	F	G	I	Other	Total
3 February 1983	6	1	–	–	–	–	7
4 February 1983	7	1	–	–	–	–	8
5 February 1983	8	1	1	1	–	–	11
10 February 1983	9	1	1	–	–	–	11
11 February 1983	8	–	–	–	–	–	8
18 February 1983	11	–	–	–	–	–	11
19 February 1983	9	–	1	–	–	1	11
21 February 1983	5	2	2	2	–	–	11
Total	63	6	5	3	–	1	78
Ø	8	0.7	0.5	0.4			
%	80.8	7.7	6.4	3.8		1.2	

2. «Hitparade» (Radio der Deutschen und Rätoromanischen Schweiz)

Date	E	SG	F	G	I	Total
13 February 1983	14	–	–	1	–	15
20 February 1983	11	1	–	2	1	15
27 February 1983	10	1	–	2	2	15
6 March 1983	11	–	–	1	3	15
13 March 1983	12	–	–	1	2	15
20 March 1983	12	–	–	1	2	15
27 March 1983	10	–	1	2	2	15
1 April 1983	10	–	1	2	2	15
Total	90	2	2	12	14	120
Ø	11.25	0.25	0.25	1.5	1.75	15
%	75	1.6	1.6	10	11.6	

Music Titles in Music Radio Programs of French-speaking Switzerland

1. «Couleur 3» (Radio Suisse Romande, III, 18.05–18.50 h)

Date	E	G	F	I	Other	Total
5/27/83	12	1	0	0	0	13
6/1/83	13	0	1	0	0	14
6/6/83	14	0	0	0	0	14
6/10/83	9	0	0	0	0	9
Total	48	1	1	0	0	50
Ø	12	0.25	0.25	0	0	
%	96	2	2	0	0	

2. «Rockline» (Radio Suisse Romande, II, 17.05–18.00 h)

Date	E	G	F	I	Other	Total
5/11/83	7	0	1	0	1	9
5/18/83	9	0	0	0	0	9
5/20/83	12	0	0	0	0	12
Total	28	0	1	0	1	30
Ø	9.3	0	0.3	0	0.3	
%	93.3	0	3.3	0	3.3	

E = English; SG = Swiss German; F = French; G = German; I = Italian

In order to learn more about the spread of English through these musical channels on the radio programs, the whole texts of presentation in a weekly music program of the national radio of German-speaking Switzerland and in two weekly programs of the national radio of French-speaking Switzerland were transcribed (again in 1983). The language of presentation was German (Swiss German) in the one case and French in the other. But in German-speaking Switzerland 2106 or 20.46 percent out of a total of 10.058 words were English; and in French-speaking Switzerland the figures were 1130 or 13.79 percent out of a total of 9.563 words. That is to say, between $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of what passes as a native Swiss text is not in Swiss German or French, but in English – and not simply in the shape of single terms, but in that of whole phrases and sentences, even textual passages delivered by the speaker in intonationally correct English.

The intake of English via the pop and rock music programs can thus be quite considerable. Not only is most of the music language English, but much of it seeps over into the language of the disc jockeys, and – it can be assumed – into the language of the listeners. For the average Swiss adolescent it was calculated that they are (voluntarily) exposed to 108 Minutes of English language music per day (MURPHY 1984). Translation of this flood of English does not seem to be required. When the 1985 recruits were asked

Table 10: Language of presentation in Swiss radio music programs

English Vocabulary in the texts of presentation in the music program «Sounds» (Radio der Deutschen und Rätoromanischen Schweiz, II, 18.05–18.45 h) in comparison with native-language items (Swiss-German)

Date	Total	German	%	English	%	Other	%
2/3/83	1550	1288	83.0	262	17.0	0	0
2/4/83	1688	1421	84.2	267	15.5	9	0.5
2/5/83	1050	836	79.0	218	21.0	0	0
2/10/83	1523	792	52.0	723	47.5	8	0.5
2/11/83	1146	1001	87.49	144	12.4	1	0.01
2/18/83	1123	909	81.0	196	17.5	18	1.5
2/19/83	877	613	70.0	240	27.4	24	2.6
2/21/83	1101	1043	94.6	56	5.3	2	0.1
T/ Ø	10058	7903	78.9	2106	20.46	62	0.65

English Vocabulary items in the texts of presentation in the music programs «Rockline» (Radio Suisse Romande, II, 17.05–18.00 h) and «Couleur 3» (Radio Suisse Romande, III, 18.05–18.50 h)

Date	Total	German	%	English	%	French	%	Other	%
5/11/83	2277	13	0.57	139	6.1	2123	93.23	2	0.08
5/18/83	4002	7	0.17	474	11.84	3521	87.98	0	0
5/20/83	1399	0	0	195	13.9	1204	87.0	0	0
Total/ Ø «Rockline»	7678	20	0.28	808	10.52	6848	89.18	2	0.02
5/27/83	467	0	0	84	17.9	383	82.1	0	0
6/1/83	521	0	0	71	13.5	450	86.5	0	0
6/6/83	588	0	0	99	16.8	489	83.2	0	0
6/10/83	311	0	0	68	21.9	241	76.5	2	0.6
Total/ Ø «Coul. 3»	1887	0	0	322	17.6	1563	82.82	2	0.12
Total/ Ø «Rl.» + «C3»	9563	20	0.14	1130	13.79	8411	86.0	4	0.06

whether foreign language songs – i.e. mainly English language pop songs – should be translated into their mother tongues, 90% answered negatively.⁸

Of course, cultural affiliation can also be noted in other fields, in the arts, in fashion, in lifestyle, for example. And apart from cultural affiliation, material incentives and linguistic diversity, one ought to discuss factors like urbanization, technological and scientific progress, international trading and diplomacy, etc. as well. Together these factors have favored the spread of English in Switzerland and given it the status of the preferred additional language.

English education

Regarding educational development we ought to state again that English is not an official language in Switzerland. Nevertheless, it is used in many official and quasi-official documents. In terms of FISHERMAN & FISHMAN (1975: 497–498), English can be regarded an official language if «used by the government for its own internal operations and promoted through the power of the state.» This definition clearly does not apply to the Swiss case. The languages used by the government «for its own internal operations» are German, French, Italian, and – with heavy restrictions – Raeto-Romantch. These are also the languages «promoted through the power of the state». It is the official languages that are enforced in schools, not English. English is always selected additionally and optionally, in third rank, after (1) mother tongue and (2) at least one second national language.

Nevertheless, English is a highly popular subject in state and private educational institutions. A large number of English language courses is offered by all kinds of schools. Whether one checks extramural studies («Volkshochschule»), leisure-time institutions like «Klubschule» or «Freizeitwerk», private language schools like «inlingua» or «Berlitz», or individual private lessons, the result is always the same: English is the clear favorite.

Although English is not enforced in schools, 83.4 percent of the 1985 recruits⁸ indicated that they had learnt some English at school and that they had taken up English relatively late, 63 percent at age 13 or later.

Table 11: Foreign languages learnt by Swiss males (age +/– 20) from German-speaking Switzerland

Language	– 2 years	2–4 years	Time studied	Total
			4 + years	
French	9.8%	48%	39.8%	97.8%
Italian	18	9	2.3	29.3
English	27	28.4	28.1	83.4
Spanish	4.4	1.7	0.5	6.6
Latin	6.1	4.1	12.2	22.4

Table 12: Age at which foreign language study is taken up⁸

Language	Age 10/11	12/13	13 +
French	15.9%	55.1%	25.9%
English	1.8	18.7	63.5

In the bilingual city of Biel-Bienne⁶ most of the people interviewed had learnt their English in secondary schools (32 percent), 10 percent indicated evening classes, and another 10% an English-speaking country in which they went to work or study. Evening courses were also indicated in the Berne city survey⁶, where 66 percent appeared to have learnt their English in day schools, and 25 percent in evening classes. Evening classes are attended mainly by those aged 40–65.

Apparently people like to study English. When asked whether it was fun to learn any particular language, the 1985 recruit, found that this was above all the case for English. English also came first as the «finest» language.⁸

Table 13: Appreciation of language learning

Question: Which language is it fun to learn?

Answers:	English	30.5%
	French	14.1%
	German	11.0%
	Italian	6.9%

Question: Which is the finest language?

Answers:	English	52.2%
	French	18.4%
	German	16.7%
	Italian	9.8%

Like the students at the Gymnasiums (see Table 3), the recruits, too, think that it is useful to learn a foreign language, particularly English. That is why they indicate that they would like to get more instruction above all in English:

Table 14: Desire for more foreign language instruction⁸

French	45.3%
English	71.8%

Not surprisingly, they would like English to be taught as their first foreign language in schools – English thus replacing French in German-speaking Switzerland.

Table 15: Selection of second language in German-speaking Switzerland

English	65.3%
French	29.4%
Italian	3.4%

The self-report data on the competence in English indicate that quite a large number of people in Switzerland think that they have learnt English to a satisfactory degree, in spite of the fact that they had to make some special effort to study English – often as an optional language in day school or in their spare time (evening classes). The 1984 inner-city interviews show an average total of 71 percent of the population indicating that they do know some English. The Fribourg data show that English language competence is highest in the population group of those aged 20 to 40 (75 percent), followed by those aged 15–20 (65 percent) and those aged 40 to 65 (64 percent); those in the age group 65 +, however, only have a competence of 29 percent. That is to say, a clear majority of those who are preparing themselves for their professional lives and those who are professionally active know some English. That they have a good knowledge of English, however, is claimed only by 10% of the population in Fribourg and 14% in both Biel-Bienne and Berne (cp. tables below).

Table 16: English language competence⁶

<i>Competence Rating in %</i>					
	none	bad	mid	good	some
Fribourg	34	33	23	10	66
Biel-Bienne	38	28	20	14	62
Berne	25	36	25	14	75

<i>Competence by age in % (Fribourg only)</i>	
age group	Some competence in English
–20	65%
21–40	75%
41–65	64%
65 +	29%

Not all of this English language competence is acquired in school programs. English today can also be picked outside schools informally. Of the 1985 recruits 29.6% had acquired some English at their workplace and 27.6% by listening to movie dialogues or song texts.⁸

Interest in English is high, and lots of people would like to practice the language outside the schoolroom. In this context one may point to the large number of clubs that take their names from their affiliation with British or US culture or clubs that put their interest in the English language even before their interest in any particular English-speaking country. In August 1983 a «society for the advancement of English language culture in Switzerland» was founded in Bern. The long-term intention of that society is to

promote English language culture throughout Switzerland in various ways, with no restrictions concerning nationality or mother tongue.

This is a new development among the English clubs. While formerly such clubs were formed by and for expatriates in Switzerland and joined by friends of these first members or Swiss friends of the countries in question, the new tendency is to form these clubs by Swiss for Swiss people who take an interest in the English language. Or as the society mentioned puts it: «Under no circumstances should (our) Society develop into a club for English speaking expatriates in Switzerland.» (SAELS leaflet July 1983).

That is to say, if English is becoming an additional language in multilingual Switzerland, then, at least for some segments of the population, this process seems to be independent already from any clear affiliation with either Great Britain or the USA. So, while many, especially of the young ones, come into contact with English because they subjugate themselves to American-dominated Western culture, others seem to be interested in an English devoid of any cultural values; what they are interested in is English, the interlanguage of the modern world.

English as interlanguage and emblem of ethnicity

Even in Switzerland, then, English is not a homogeneous whole, but a bundle of different varieties serving different functions. At first sight it would seem that the situation in Switzerland is clearly different from that of former anglophone countries, like Singapore, Nigeria, Ceylon, etc. In these countries the process of cultural affiliation has been countered by a linguistic process that has been described as «indigenization», «nativization» or «localization». That is to say, in former anglophone countries where English is now an officially recognized additional language, so-called indigenized varieties of English have emerged and now serve as vehicles even for a part of the local literature. Switzerland, however, has never been under Anglo rule, there has never been a possibility for an English-speaking community to emerge and to be established. There are no first-language speakers of English in Switzerland, except for the odd foreigner who has bought himself into Swiss citizenship. Therefore, one would not expect any linguistic self-consciousness to be expressed in English, and one would not expect any kind of indigenous Swiss literature to be written in English.

However, there are quite a lot of Swiss texts written in English. Scientists, politicians, businessmen write articles in English directly, i.e. without first drafting them in their native Swiss language, and then having them trans-

lated into English; this we understand and probably accept quite easily: they make use of specialized varieties of English that are, at least in their written form, the same all over the world; they use ESP varieties of Standard English for international communication and, because of Swiss multilingualism, also for intranational communication.

Yet, there are also English texts that speak a much more personal language: There are novels and other books written in English by authors who do not speak English natively; there are English language lyrics composed in Switzerland for a Swiss audience. Of the 200 recruits who cared to answer the relevant question, 150 said that they had already tried their hand at English and made creative use of it;⁸ and 76 percent of the Bern highschoolers⁷ reported that they had used English for writing outside school. A Zürich study carried out between 1976 and 1982 (LÄDERACH & MANI, 1983) found that English has become a feature of the so-called scene. 84 English words were identified that seemed to be central to the Zürich scene – and these did not include words that are generally current or music words. In my reading, the important point about this study is that apparently a segment of the Swiss population – the characteristic representatives of the anarchistic scene – make use of the English language for self-identification. Even inside Switzerland, English functions as an emblem of ethnicity.

English therefore does not only function as an interlanguage in Switzerland but can also serve the purposes of self-identification and emotional expression. If one speaks of interlanguage one has in mind primarily the possibilities that language offers to ensure communication between partners of different linguistic and cultural background. One does not think of the affective component of language, not of the possibilities that language offers for emotional expression. In the realms of science, technology and commerce English seems to work well as an interlanguage but in the so-called subcultural domains English has also acquired symbolic value. This is confirmed by the list of expressions used by the Berne highschoolers⁷, which is headed by «formulas of communication» and contains greetings, wishes, curses, invectives used in everyday situations:

Table 17: Usage of English vocabulary by Berne highschoolers
Fields ranked according to number of different items listed

Rank	Field	Number of items
1	Formulas of communication	79
2	Food and Drink	79
3	Music	72
4	Entertainment (films, TV, reading, games)	48
5	Sports	44
6	Locations	38
7	Fashion	36
8	Technology	32
9	Business	28
10	People	27
11	Drug Scene	24
12	Transportation	24
13	Cosmetics	22
14	Education	16
15	Household	13
16	Professions	11
17	Data Processing	9

The use of English in the subcultural domain is also illustrated in the following «Autkaschtbluus» («Outcast Blues») which is crammed with English expressions transcribed into Swiss German (*WOZ*, 4, 1984, p. 10).

Finally, English can also be documented if the mural sprayscripts of Swiss cities are inventorised (see Table 18).

The data were inventorized in the summer of 1983 and again in the spring of 1984 in clearly defined inner-city areas in Fribourg, Biel-Bienne, Berne and Lucerne. The data show that English is conspicuously present in the cities of German-speaking Switzerland: in Berne 27 percent English, but only 1 percent French and 3 percent Italian, in Lucerne even 46 percent English, but only 4 percent French and 4 percent Italian. While in Berne the native language, German, tops easily (68 percent), in Lucerne German does not reach higher than English; and in the bilingual city of Biel-Bienne English is even the leader (43 percent); it is only if the two native languages, German and French, are combined that they reach the same level as English (43 percent) again. The case is different again for Fribourg, another city that is considered bilingual: here French is the clear leader (74 percent), English is down to 4 percent. More important than the ratio of English used in Swiss mural sprayscripts (average total: 30 percent) are the pragmatic functions the English examples have. As I report elsewhere (DÜRMÜLLER 1986), English can be used for curses, invectives and exclamations, for personal messages and self-assertion, for naming groups and ironical comment, and often to address others on political matters. Interdisciplinary

E langsamän Autkaschtbluus

wänn i etz da die pigtschers gseh,
dänn lauf i mit de filings tilt,
daun änd aut, bäd wäips,
verschtaasch?
son bullsshit echthe!
amerikän wey of läiv änd däf
das horror-geim für pigs
und grossschtadt-zombis:
zum chortzä.

s'isch hävy birrlischüttler-täim
und was no läbt, isch uf em töörki:
öis fääled doch d'konnektschens
für di wüerkli groosse diils:
big bisness, mään:
nou tschäns für öis.
faarsch in schtollen ii,
tschobsch oder nöd,
ziesch dini häng-öps durä:
nüt töörnt me aa.

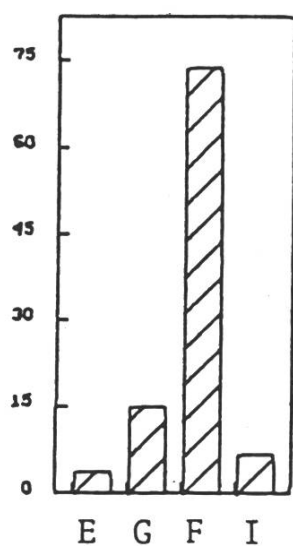
und wänn i z'aabig on se roud
die fastfuudfritze gseh
die kuulä gäiä mitm goggi i dr hand
di gäilä tschicks
di totälly häissä hös:
äi äinzigi oupeneerperformenz.
häiligä sankt oldsmobil,
dänn flippts mi böös:
«mään, etz gang i kreisi!
how up, gschtäiltä amifriik,
susch häsch hevy lämpä,
tröbels bis an river abä,
digsches?»

ja, mängisch faarts mer ii:
kä pauer me, kä pöntschi, kä äkschen:
ab und zue bröntschi mit de frends
vom kommittee (juhee):
geim ouver, bröders änd sisters:
fertig iisi going, tscheggsch's?
und schpöter, lounly ggoboi,
nimm i d'sabwey:
zienen über de hödsen häi,
eläi.

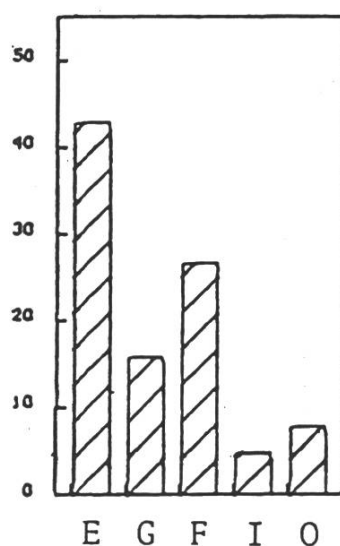
«nur no mi siin
isch kliin»,
jodlet de schmier
vom chileturm:
tätts it

Table 18: Use of languages in Swiss city graffiti

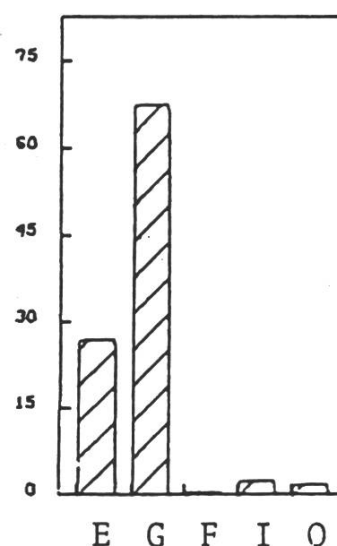
FRIBOURG 4/84
27 items



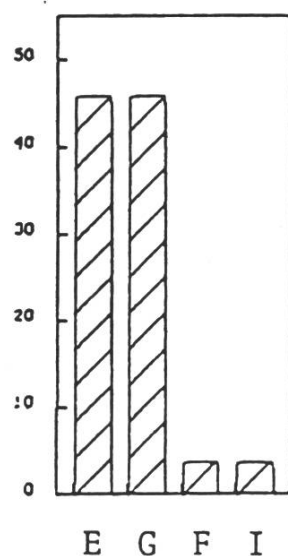
BIEL-BIENNE 2/84
107 items



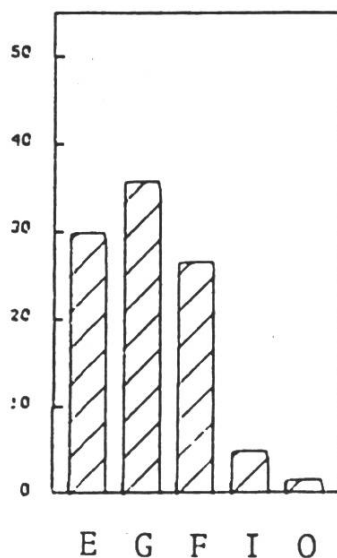
BERN 6/83
218 items



LUCERNE 2/84
46 items



AVERAGE TOTAL



E = English
G = German, incl. Swiss-German
F = French
I = Italian
O = Other

research is needed here to sort out definitely the pragmatic functions of the various languages in the plurilinguistic mix of Swiss murals.

English language teaching

I have made an effort to document the use of English in these «subcultural» domains because I wanted to make it clear that English in multilingual Switzerland cannot be classified as an interlanguage only. And this point, I think relevant also for ELT, because teachers should be especially interested in the way English is picked up and used by the young.

The reason for the preference of English expressed by the young is obvious. To sum up what I have mentioned before: It is English, which they need most as a language for international communication, it is English which they need most in the job worlds they want to enter, such as banking, tourism, aviation, electronic data processing, the media, engineering, medicine, – you name them, or rather you should try to find even a humble profession for which English is not an asset today; and it is English which is the language of what is fashionable – of the high tech disco and of the anti-nukes, of body building and of the ecological movement, of the styled punks and of the smart yuppies; how would the young not want to know English, the language of their idols and gurus; finally English is also the language which they can use for intranational communication.

For English language teaching the popularity of English, especially among the young, looks like a great advantage. At least motivation should not be a problem. Indeed, teachers of English hardly ever complain about their students; on the other hand, the complaints of French teachers in German-speaking Switzerland and of German teachers in French-speaking Switzerland are chronic.

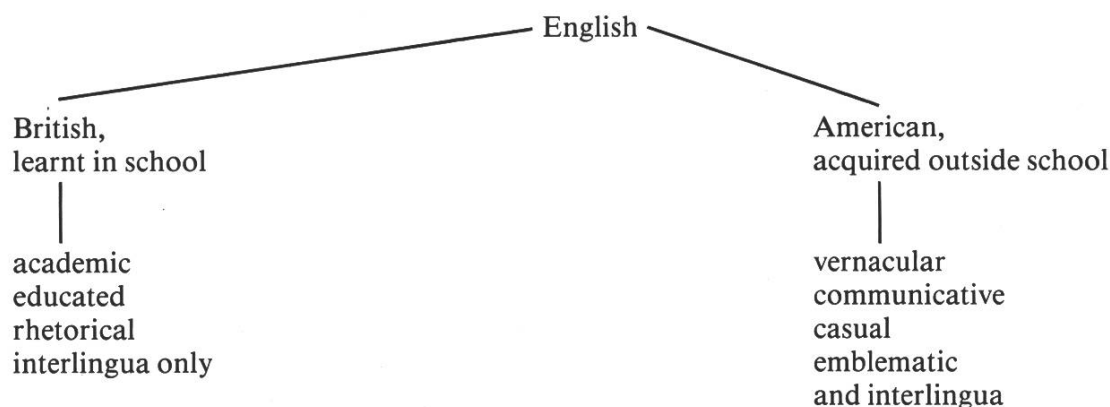
But there are problems for English language teaching nevertheless. These have to do with the lack of a clearly defined standard at a time when non-native speakers of English greatly outnumber native speakers of English. What should the English teacher in Switzerland opt for? British English, and if yes, which variety of it? Or American English, or even a kind of Continental English, maybe some form of Swiss English?

In actual fact, we do not have that much of a choice. What concerns textbooks and other teaching materials, including audio ones, Switzerland is in the firm grips of the British or a British-oriented ELT industry. But what our students hear on the radio, in the movie houses, on their cassettes, and what they read in their pop magazines, in advertisements, on posters and on product labels, is clearly American English. And it is American English

which serves as the base, if not the model, for the kind of English used in subcultural domains. American English enters by the back door, so to say. If British English is the language of instruction in Swiss schools, American English is the language of many extra-curricular activities.

There is, then, today a rivalry between British and American English in our schools. At the same time this is a rivalry between a rhetorical and a communicative style; following Stephen KRASHEN (1977), I claim that these two styles are picked up in different ways: The «rhetorical» style, and the formal, academic varieties that are associated with it, are learned in schools, where rules are taught so that they can be followed consciously. According to Krashen, in this instance, we should speak of language learning. On the other hand, in the case of the «communicative» style and the informal and casual varieties associated with it, we ought to speak of language acquisition; for here the rules are internalized subconsciously, often in a process of imitation, mostly, of course, outside school. The situation is summed up as follows:

Uses of British and American English



There is a problem here that should be faced by school authorities. Language policy concerned with English should also address the question of determining the standard for ELT. As we know from HUGHES and TRUDGILL (1979) a pure Standard British English is spoken today only by three percent of the British population. On the other hand, it is American English that is predominantly used in scientific journals, in popular magazines, and in business and diplomatic circles – not to speak of its wide-spread use in popular culture. In view of this situation it is rather strange that school authorities – boards in charge of appointing teachers – should favor a traditional kind of Oxbridge English more than the teachers themselves. This, at least, was the information received when this question was researched nationwide (BLUME et al., 1982).

However, the determination of a standard for ELT in Switzerland seems to be a minor problem for language policy if compared with the larger issue of language maintenance and of bilingual and multilingual stability in Switzerland.

It should have become clear from the various approaches to the topic I have taken that the future status of English in Switzerland depends on the young. We have seen that they favor English over another second Swiss language, and we have also seen that they are eager to pick up and then make use of American English as a feature of fashionable culture and of self-identification. They want to learn English because English is increasingly used in so many professional fields, but also because English has become a means for emotional expression.

English teachers should make use of this many-sided motivation; and if they want to make their daily work easier and avoid the interference clash between vernacular American and a more high class and formal British English, they should opt for American English materials. The maxim used to be: choose either British or American English; but today the advice is: choose American, for if you settle for British, American forms will continue to come in through the back door anyway.

Which is also to say that there is no stopping the further spread of English in Switzerland, unless extremely drastic measures be taken: nothing less than cutting Switzerland off from the American-dominated Western world in practically all respects. And since this would mean the end of commerce, of technological development, of banking, of progress in science, of innovation in the arts and in fashion, this is highly unlikely to happen. Switzerland cannot try to suppress English and at the same time continue to embrace an economical system and a model of civilization which are defined by and through English.

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