

English in Swiss tourism marketing¹

Resumo

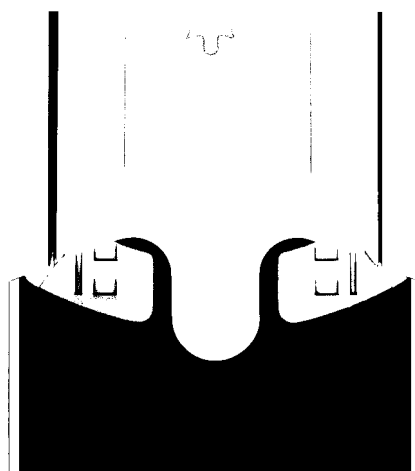
No presente artigo reflecte-se sobre a importância do Inglês no *marketing* turístico suíço e a sua relação com as línguas nacionais da Suíça. Através da discussão de vários exemplos, é defendida a ideia de que a escolha linguística reforça desigualdades económicas se a escolha da língua publicitária continua a ser apenas controlada por questões de mercado. Esta opção puramente economicista também tem consequências mais vastas na utilização e valorização das línguas nacionais.

The Sphinx Observatory on the Jungfrauoch, the highest point in Europe that can be reached by public transport and a major Swiss tourist attraction, has a metal commemorative plaque on one of its outside walls. It reads as follows:

THE JUNGFRAUJOCH - TOP OF EUROPE
WELCOMES TO SWITZERLAND THE FIRST
TRAVEL GROUP FROM CHINA
UNDER THE
'APPROVED DESTINATION STATUS'
AGREEMENT
6 SEPTEMBER 2004

The plaque is in English only and there is no indication of the language of the area, German, nor of the language of the visitors, Chinese. The plaque is striking in at least two ways: first, lingua franca use of English is typically associated with spoken interactions and the metal plaque bolted to the rock wall 'solidifies' English as a lingua franca use by its very materiality. Second, as a monolingual sign, the plaque is rather uncommon in the context of Swiss tourism texts, where

¹ The data for the present paper come from a larger research project on *Languages, identities and tourism: Towards an understanding of social and linguistic challenges in Switzerland in the context of globalization* funded by the Swiss National Fund (project number 108608) as part of a national research program on *Language Diversity and Linguistic Competence in Switzerland* (<http://www.nfp56.ch/>). I gratefully acknowledge the Swiss National Fund's financial support as well as the intellectual contribution of my co-investigator Alexandre Duchêne, who also provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.



multilingual practices are the norm, even if English is usually part of those multilingual practices. The monolingual use of English also stands in contrast to advice about language choice on signage aimed at Chinese tourists published jointly by the Swiss Hotel Association and the Swiss Tourism Board:

Many Chinese understand only little English, German or French: Chinese signalling [sic] at the most popular tourist spots of the destination as well as for generally important information (airports, train stations, cable cars, museums, entrance, exit, bathrooms, etc.) is a must. (Garcia and Bérout 2004: 20)

The official signage of the Jungfrau Railway does indeed include some Chinese as does the signage in some souvenir shops in the area. While I do not know specifically why this advice to use Chinese was not heeded when the commemorative plaque was designed, the following excerpt from a newspaper article from 2004, when Switzerland achieved 'Approved Destination Status' for tourists from Mainland China explains the general considerations:

A key to the success of the [Titlis] cable car company has been the decision to hire Mandarinspeaking [sic] guides, employ Chinese cooks in its mountaintop restaurant and to print promotional material in Chinese.

It is a price not every tourist operator or resort can, or is, willing to pay. 'We don't have any money to invest in new markets,' said Beat Anneler, head of Lake Thun tourism in the Bernese Oberland.

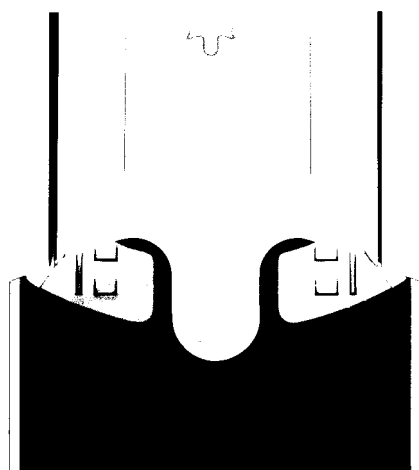
'If we did, we would put it into promoting Lake Thun in Britain or the Netherlands, which are third and fourth in importance behind Germany and Switzerland for our region,' Anneler added.

'For the most part, there has been no growth in tourism over the past few years,' said Piotr Caviezel, tourism director for Appenzell. 'That often resulted in failed attempts to break into new geographical markets.'

'In my opinion, most regions in Switzerland don't have the means or the infrastructure to tap into Asia or eastern Europe.' (No Author 2004)

Clearly, language choice is a business choice in the context of tourism. The multilingual provision of tourism texts involves a relatively higher investment than the monolingual provision of tourism texts but, at the same time, multilingual texts are likely to yield a higher return. Language choice as investment decision is largely conditioned by two factors, namely target market and available resources. Language choice as business choice favors English in the context of Swiss tourism as the introductory example shows: as tourism markets internationalize and diversify, an investment into the language of a specific market (Chinese in the example) may still be too high relative to market size, and so English is used as the international 'default' language. English thus becomes the most salient language in the context of Swiss tourism marketing: it tops a linguistic hierarchy in which the national languages are not equal but hierarchized according to their economic importance from German via French and Italian to Romansh.

In the following, I will begin by briefly reviewing the existing literature on English in Switzerland before moving on to a discussion of the interrelationship between language and tourism. I will then describe the research project from which I draw my data and describe the types of multilingual texts that can be



found in Swiss tourism advertising. In a next step, I will consider the language choices that are being made as well as the use of code-switching into English in non-English-language versions of a marketing text. In the conclusion I will explore the commodity value of English in Swiss tourism advertising and the implications of language choice as market choice more generally.

English in contact with other languages has been one of my main research interests ever since my 1992 MA thesis on *Anglicisms in German and Spanish*, which the honoree supervised. While my perspective has changed over the years from a system-linguistic one to a sociolinguistic one, this paper is thus more than a festschrift tribute to the honoree; it is also a tribute to his role in my own intellectual development.

English in Switzerland

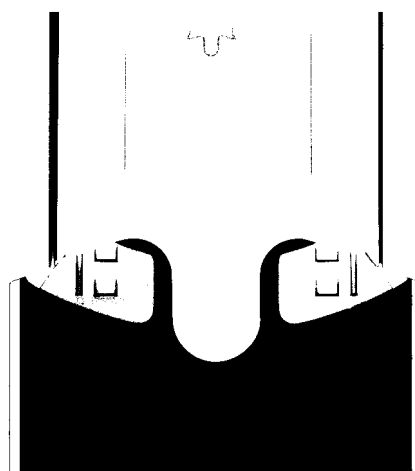
Linguists know Switzerland for its diglossia in the German-speaking region (Ferguson 1959) and for its official quadrilingualism. The official languages are Standard German, French, Italian and Romansh but one could be forgiven for thinking that they are English, German, French and Italian, as I will illustrate with the following example:

When I rented a car in Basel in early 2005, I was also issued a road map of Switzerland. The front page of that map had a tripartite layout. The upper two thirds consisted of a picture of a mountain glacier mirrored in a pristine mountain lake and set against a blue sky – a photograph I have since come to recognize as typical Swiss tourism iconography. The illusion of untouched nature is only broken by a headline in the middle of the picture: “Get this feeling.” The quarter of the front page below this image is divided in two: the left two thirds consist of another photograph: an Audi sedan set in another mountain landscape, complete with snow-covered peaks and lake. Apart from the car, which takes up most of the picture, there is no sign of human intervention, as it is placed off any discernable road or track. The car’s license plate shows the brand name *Europcar*. On the right side of the picture, the following text is printed in white against a green background:

Have a nice trip in Switzerland.
Gute Fahrt in der Schweiz.
Bonne route en Suisse.
Buon viaggio in Svizzera.

The remainder of the front page consists of two lines: a bigger green one that covers about three quarters of the remaining tenth, and which repeats the brand name, *Europcar*, printed in white; and a smaller black one which contains the slogan “you rent a lot more than a car.”

The dominance of English on the front page of this map is obvious: headline and slogan are in English, and it comes first in the quadrilingual list of wishes for a good trip. The example is typical in two ways: first, it demonstrates the ubiquity of English in Switzerland and second, as a multilingual text, it raises



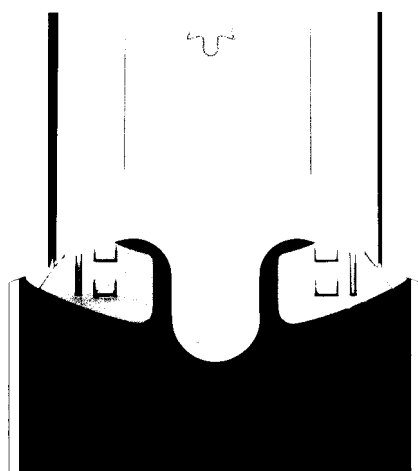
the question of the position of English vis-à-vis the national languages. Because of its frequent use in conjunction with one or more of the national languages, English is often termed the fifth national language (e.g., Watts and Murray 2001). There is a significant body of literature on English in Switzerland (e.g., Andres, Korn et al. 2005; Brohy 2005; Cheshire and Moser 1994; Demont-Heinrich 2005; Grin 2001; Häuptli 2001; Murray 2003; Trabant 2000), and research has concentrated on three aspects of English use in Switzerland relative to other (national) languages, namely the language of advertising, language education, and language in the workplace.

The use of English in Swiss advertising is probably the most visible manifestation of English language use, as in the road map example above. In advertising, English is a marker of a modern, cosmopolitan identity that is orientated towards business success and 'fun' (Cheshire and Moser 1994), similarly to the use of English in advertising in other non-English-speaking countries such as France (Martin 2005), Germany (Piller 2001), or South Korea (Lee 2006).

The role of English in Swiss foreign language education is the subject of heated public debates where English is most clearly set up as a competitor with the national languages – be it as a competitor against another national language in primary and secondary education (Brohy 2005; Coray 2001) or as a competitor against the local national language in tertiary education (Dürmüller 2001, 2002). In these discussions, English is ideologically associated with modernity and globalization, as in advertising, while the national languages are associated with local and national identities (Demont-Heinrich 2005).

An argument that is often cited in discussions around English in the curriculum is the one that students will 'need' English to be successful in the labor market and that English has a high use value in the workplace. In a telephone survey of 2,400 Swiss residents, Grin (2001) found indeed a robust link between English skills and earnings in the Swiss labor market. German-speaking men who were highly proficient in English reported an average monthly income of CHF 7,636 while their non-English speaking peers only earned CHF 5,164. However, the link was less clear for women and French speakers: the average monthly income of women who reported high proficiency in English was CHF 4,096, and their wage gains did not rise progressively from 'no' proficiency in English, via 'low' and 'basic' to 'fluent'. Women only saw a progressive rise from 'no' via 'low' to 'basic', but no further incremental gain was associated with 'fluent' proficiency. For French speakers, proficiency in German is more highly rewarded than proficiency in English. These findings clearly call an undifferentiated view of 'English in the workplace' into question, and call for investigations into the role of English in different sectors and by employees at various levels of the job hierarchy – the gender differences reported by Grin (2001), for instance, are clearly connected to the fact that women as a group occupy lower-ranking jobs than men and that they are more likely to work part-time than men.

Another interesting twist on the role of English in Swiss workplaces is apparent in the work of Kleinberger Günther (2003), who found in her Zurich-based workplace ethnography that some employees took up English not because they



actually needed it on the job but because proficiency in English was a status-booster.

While advertising, education and the workplace are typically treated as distinct domains, and the use of English in these domains as separate phenomena, they are clearly related: the ubiquity of English in advertising, a highly visible public genre, leads to a perception that 'English is everywhere' and that English is needed to go about one's daily life, particularly if one aspires to the modern cosmopolitan successful identities touted in so much advertising. This perception leads to an increase in language learning - both in state schools which provide increasing levels of English instructions and in a mushrooming private English education sector. Advertising for English language learning further increases the visibility of English, and stresses its importance in the job market. The slogan of a private English language institute in Basel, whose advertising materials can be found on most of the cities' buses and trams, for instance, reads: "Investieren Sie in Ihre Zukunft mit Englisch." Increasing knowledge of English in turn leads to increasing use of English as a lingua franca in international workplaces. Of course, I do not want to suggest that there is a causal chain from advertising to education to language in the workplace. Rather, the point I am making is that these domains are interrelated and an increase of English language use in one domain leads to an increase of English in other domains, too. Thus, in order to understand societal language choices in their complexity, we need a better understanding of their interrelationship, and I will return to the question of interrelationship between various domains in the section on data collection methods below.

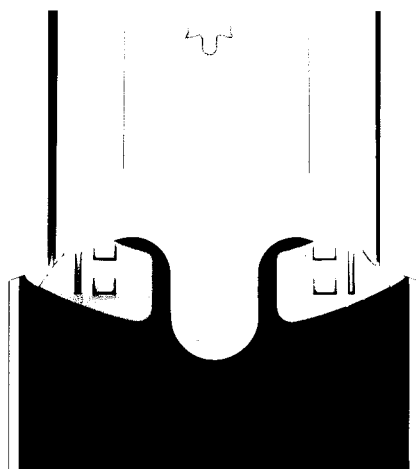
Language and tourism

The 2006 annual report of the Swiss Tourism Federation gloats:

Terrorism, natural disasters, health threats, increases in the price of oil, fluctuating exchange rates and economic as well as political uncertainties influenced international tourism in 2005. Despite these negative effects, the figures surpassed expectations throughout the world; for the first time ever, there was a record number of more than 800 million arrivals, and frequencies increased by 5.5 per cent. This result confirms last year's recovery on the global tourism market, and is still 1.5 per cent ahead of the long-term annual average of 4.1 per cent. (No Author 2006: 41)

It is obvious that tourism is a key sector of the new economy, and its importance for national economies cannot be overestimated: it has "the potential to generate added value, employment, government income and other benefits whether directly or through induced effects in the economy."² It has an average annual growth rate of more than 4%, higher than any other sector of the world

² <http://www.world-tourism.org/TSAconf2005/>; last accessed on April 18, 2005



economy.³ In Switzerland, tourism is the third largest export sector (behind the Chemical Industry, and Engineering),⁴ and one that is of particular importance to the national identity as exemplified by the following quote from the website of the Swiss Hotel Schools Association:

Switzerland is considered the birthplace of tourism. In the past, and still today, people from all over the world visit Europe and Switzerland for its natural beauty and quality of service. This tiny nation of 7 million people has 5600 hotels which provide accommodation for more than 35 million guests every year! Tourism is indeed a very important economic activity in Switzerland. Due to the lack of manpower and the high cost of our labour force, the Swiss hospitality industry not only welcomes a majority of international visitors, but also employs a truly international work force.⁵

The quote also illustrates the importance of tourism as an employment sector: in Switzerland, one person out of twelve is directly or indirectly employed in the tourism sector, with significant regional differences: "In mountain areas, the proportion is much higher than in urban areas." (No Author 2006: 11)

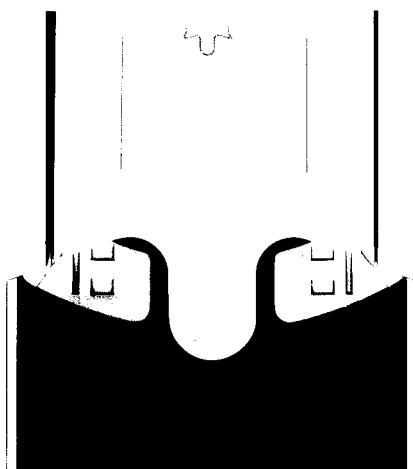
Tourism is thus a significant contemporary activity that touches the lives of many people: whether they are tourists themselves, whether their livelihood is directly or indirectly dependant on tourism, or whether they just happen to go about their daily business in a tourist location as so-called 'locals.' Tourism activities are predicated upon linguistic activities, and it is possible to identify at least five 'tourism genres', namely tourism marketing, tourism spacing, tourism service interactions, tourism training, and tourism narratives.

Tourism marketing can be considered the first step in the travel chain: countless brochures, websites, or travel guides are published to entice people to travel – when I say 'people' I am obviously referring to the global minority who has disposable income to spend on travel. In addition to tourists, tourism as an activity also needs destinations. Destinations are characterized by the availability of tourism infrastructure such as transport, accommodation and attractions. These tourist spaces are semiotically marked as tourist spaces by a range of visual and oral signage containing welcomes, directions, prescriptions or prohibitions. Once tourists are engaged in the act of traveling they also become engaged in a range of service interactions such as phone interactions with booking agents or checking-in interactions at the airport or at a hotel reception. These interactions are to a certain degree pre-scripted by tourism training as it is provided by a range of specialized education institutions, language institutes or in-house. Finally, what remains of the tourism experience is also mostly linguistic: souvenirs with inscriptions, postcards sent to family and friends, and,

³ http://www.world-tourism.org/market_research/facts/market_trends.htm; last accessed on April 18, 2005.

⁴ http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/tourismus/uebersicht/blank/panorama/wirtschaftliche_be-deutung.html; last accessed on April 21, 2005.

⁵ <http://www.aseh.ch/switzerland/>; last accessed on April 15, 2005. See also Tissot (2000, 2003) for an economic history of Swiss tourism.



particularly, the stories tourists tell about their journey, be it during tea break in the office, on a travel blog, or as published travel writing.

Obviously, the boundaries between these 'genres' are not clear-cut – on the contrary, the linguistic practices and ideologies that constitute them circulate. Languages and texts travel as much as actual tourists do. This raises the key question of how language choices can be studied as objects in motion, or to phrase it differently: how can linguistic and textual practices be investigated as process as well as product? It is to the question of method that I will now turn.

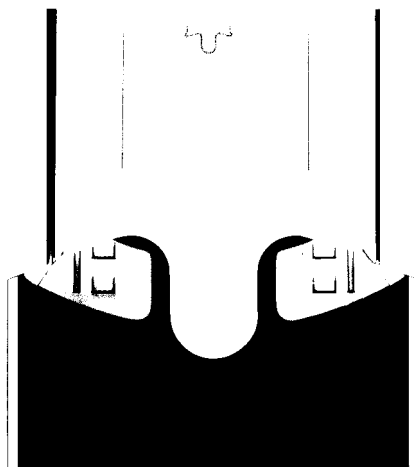
Methodological challenges

It has become clear by now that 'tourism' is a heterogeneous sector that cannot be studied *per se* – in the same way that 'English in Switzerland' is heterogeneous and needs to be studied in different domains in interaction. Tourism, just like language spread, is characterized by an enormous diversity of institutions and social actors, of places and discourses, all of which are interrelated but not necessarily in clear and unidirectional ways. On the global level, there is an international 'tourism discourse' where destinations compete internationally by stressing local specificity in an increasingly homogenous form. On many tourism websites, for instance, a kind of paradox is apparent in strangely hybrid texts that try to communicate local authenticity through the use of locally specific terms but, at the same time, have to do so in international English. In the following example *Sennehääss* and *Lendauei* evoke local authenticity but their reference remains unclear. These terms are used symbolically to invoke local authenticity in an English promotional text.

Cheerful laughter drifts across the square, lively music sets your toes tapping. With a gleam in his eye and a witty remark on his lips, a man dressed in «Sennehääss» lights up his «Lendauei» in the midst of the jollifications. If you have time and leisure, join in and listen to the ancient rhythms and yodel melodies that, now melanchiolly [sic], now merry, can still move our hearts.⁶

On the national level, a number of state and private institutions such as the national tourism board, the national hotel association or the national automobile club work to produce national tourism, both as a representation (marketing brochures, websites, etc.) and as service providers. On the local level, tourist interactions occur in tourist information bureaus, hotels, or attractions. Many of the workers in these local sites will have gone through training in nationally or internationally operating hospitality and tourism colleges or they may be part of in-house training programs, which in turn may be structured on the basis of a national quality control program such as the Swiss Quality Label. All these examples go to show that the object of an inquiry into the languages and texts in contact in Swiss tourism is an object in motion: linguistic processes and products stand in a dialectical relationship with each other.

⁶ http://www.appenzell.ch/e_neu/aktuell/index.php; last accessed on January 04, 2007.



A multi-site sociolinguistic ethnography (in the sense of Heller (2002)) can be considered the most appropriate methodology to meet this challenge. Multi-site ethnography allows the exploration of linguistic practices and ideologies in different institutions, by different social actors and in different media and formats. In terms of institutions, key variables include state vs. private, national vs. regional vs. local, and educational vs. provider. Social actors include tourists vs. service workers, decision makers, marketing officers, and hospitality lecturers vs. students. Relevant variables in terms of media and formats include spoken, written and computer-mediated data as well as representational and interactional data, as well as multilingual data in various combinations.

On the basis of these general considerations, we identified three generic sites in which we wanted to work, namely hospitality and tourism colleges, tourism providers, and tourist destinations and spaces. In all the selected sites data collection focused on the following types of data: field notes of participant observation, recordings of interactional data, interviews with selected actors in the sites, job ads, policy documents, training materials (curricula, syllabi, textbooks, teaching materials, etc.), promotional materials (brochures, websites, fliers, etc.), and signage.

Hospitality and tourism colleges are privileged sites for the study of linguistic practices and ideologies in the tourism sector as it is here that communication practices and explicit training of these practices intersect. Furthermore, explicitly tourism-related language teaching takes place in these educational institutions.

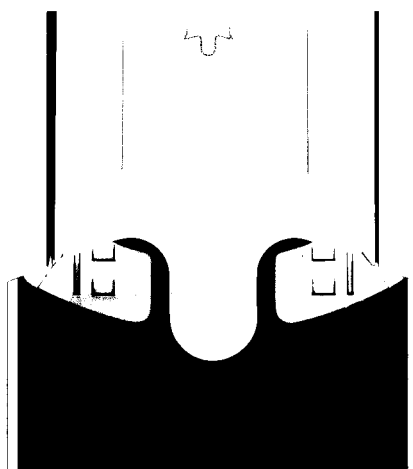
Tourism providers such as tourism boards, logistics companies and travel agencies are another privileged site in which tourism as a practice is produced. These corporations actually structure tourism practices by making transport, accommodation, package tours etc. available to tourists. Most interactions between tourists and 'locals' are actually interactions between tourists and service workers employed by these providers.

Finally, tourist destinations and spaces are spaces where local and global semiotic and linguistic practices intersect to turn a 'place' into a 'destination.'

In this paper, I am mostly only using data from one site that can be considered a tourism provider, namely the national tourism board (NTB). NTB is a marketing consortium with the aim to promote tourism to Switzerland. It provides a portal service for Swiss destinations as well as booking services. Data collection included site visits to the head quarter, collection of numerous brochures and the website, both in the published form and various pre-publication forms, and interviews with the director of e-commerce and the director of city marketing. We also collected data in a call center that provides booking services for NTB but I will not draw on those data here.

Multilingual texts in Swiss tourism marketing

At least three types of multilingual texts can be distinguished in Swiss tourism marketing: to begin with, one and the same text may appear in a range of isolated



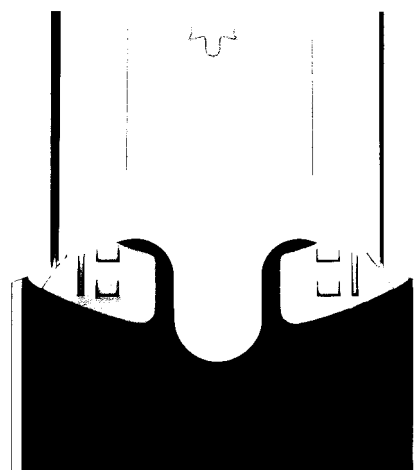
language versions. These versions are translations of each other - they are thus based on a multilingual process but the product is a monolingual text. Second, various language versions may appear together to produce an obviously multilingual text. Third, a text in a specific language version may be interspersed with code-switching into another language. Code-switching occurs mostly in the form of English expressions in a non-English-language version of a marketing text although bits of dialect also occur in various language versions (as in the *Sennehääss* and *Lendaueeli* example above). I will now describe these three types on the basis of NTB's marketing materials.

NTB's print brochures are available in a range of languages, all of which are translations of one or more master texts. An individual brochure is thus a monolingual text although it is related to similarly monolingual texts in other languages through translation. NTB's cities brochure, for instance, appears in three parallel monolingual versions: English, French, and German. From 2007 onwards Italian, Spanish and Russian will be added, too. The source text in this case is the German brochure, which is translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish. The English translation in turn becomes the source text for the Russian translation.

NTB has only very few multilingual brochures but the brochures of many other actors in the Swiss tourism market are more obviously multilingual if the different language versions appear in one single brochure. The different language versions are most often separated into different columns, presented as parallel texts. Alternatively, they may be presented in paragraphs on top of each other (as in the *Europcar* road map cited above), or they may be printed on different pages. One-page fliers sometimes have one language on the front page and one on the back, and longer brochures can be printed in such a fashion that they can be read from the front to the middle in one language, and, if flipped over, the back becomes the front in another language.

On websites, language choices are usually made by clicking on the language name in order to enter a specific language-version. Once the language choice has been made, the reader is again in a monolingual text and the other language versions become invisible.

While the language choice is most often made by clicking on the language name, some websites also make language choice available through national flags: typically, the British flag (and less frequently the US flag) for English, the French flag for French, the German flag for German, or the Italian flag for Italian. This practice obviously renders smaller nations or non-national language use invisible. In the world of e-commerce, German, for instance, is firmly associated with Germany but never with the Austrian flag. To me, the practice of associating language with the (largest) nation where it is spoken seems particularly strange in the Swiss context, where it means that the national languages are oftentimes associated with foreign countries. The practice clearly throws the claim into question that, in Switzerland, English stands for an international orientation and the national languages for a national orientation (see above).



All these practices entail choices: choices that are never neutral or arbitrary but fundamentally linked to specific contexts, ideologies and practices. At the most basic level, choices are made as to which languages are used and which are not. At another level, choices are made relative to content, i.e. whether a complete brochure or website is made available in a given language or whether only certain parts are translated, such as main pages but not subsidiary pages or general information but not special offers. Another choice needs to be made with regard to the relative positioning of the various language versions, which introduces further hierarchies: in cultures that are used to reading and writing from left-to-right, we consider the left-hand column as the first one and therefore more important than columns further to the right; the same goes for the version that comes on top of other versions (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Scollon and Scollon 2003). On websites, a linguistic default choice appears as a user enters a given website, clearly making that language more salient than any choice that has to be actively made by clicking on the desired language name or flag.

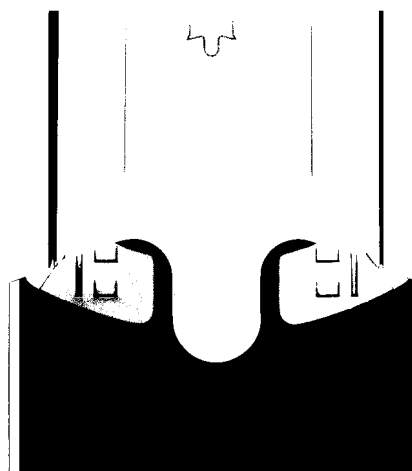
Language choice in Swiss tourism marketing

These choices are made on the basis of two factors, namely target audience and available linguistic resources.

The website of NTB is available in Czech, German, English, Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean (in this order – listed alphabetically on the basis of the language name in the target language). According to the director of e-commerce, these are the languages of NTB's main target markets. Czech and Polish were the most recent additions to these linguistic offerings and were added in 2005 as part of a campaign targeting Eastern Europe.

When an internet user accesses the NTB website, a language will be selected for them on the basis of their IP address, i.e. an IP address originating in Germany will be directed to the German website, while one originating in the UK will be directed to the English website. For some languages, there is actually more than one version. English, for instance, is the language of the US version, the UK & Ireland version, the India version, the Hong Kong version, and the 'international' version. While the languages can be actively changed by clicking on another language button, the user cannot change the country version – they would normally be unaware that there even is more than one country version for a given language. Internet users accessing the NTB website from an IP address in a country whose official language is not available (e.g., from Portugal) will be directed to the English 'international' version.

NTB's range of 12 language versions is a fairly extensive one and consistent with NTB's role as the national tourism board. The language choices of regional destinations or private providers with more limited resources are more limited, as a comparison with Swiss city destinations shows. NTB has city marketing agreements with 26 Swiss cities but all of these except La Chaux-de-Fonds also



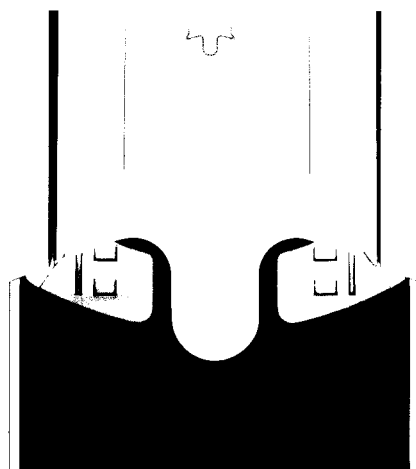
run their own tourism websites. All of these 25 websites⁷ are available in at least two languages and all of them incorporate an English-language version in their offerings. The following table summarizes the language choices available on those websites.

Table: Language choice on the website of 25 Swiss city destinations

No. of languages	Languages used	No. of websites (out of 25)	Cities
Bilingual		10	
	English, German	9	Baden, Chur, Lucerne, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Thun, Winterthur, Zurich, Zug
	English, French	1	Geneva
Trilingual	English, German, French	8	Bern, Biel, Fribourg, Lausanne, Martigny, Sion-Sierre, Solothurn, Vaduz
Quadrilingual		4	
	English, German, French, Italian	3	Bellinzona, Locarno, Montreux-Vevey
	English, German, French, Dutch	1	Brig
5 Languages	English, German, French, Italian, Chinese	2	Neuchâtel, Lugano
8 Languages	English, German, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish	1	Basel

The table makes the omnipresence of English obvious: English and the local language are treated as default languages. Another national language might seem optional but it is optional for German-speaking cities only: Geneva is the only French-speaking city that does not have a German version. Thus, English enjoys a greater presence than any national language (although German comes close) – it is certainly much more widely used than the national minority languages French, Italian and Romansh. The use of foreign languages (other than English, if English can still be considered a foreign language under these circumstances) is haphazard and clearly optional - three out of the 25 websites provide a Chinese version and there is one Dutch, one Japanese, one Russian and one Spanish version each. The latter three can all be found on one single website – that of Basel, whose eight language versions are clearly exceptional for a Swiss city destination.

⁷ <http://www.baden.ch/>; <http://www.baseltourismus.ch/>; <http://www.bellinzonaturismo.ch/>; <http://www.berninfo.com/>; <http://www.biel-seeland.ch/>; <http://www.brig-belalp.ch/>; <http://www.churtourismus.ch/>; <http://www.fribourgtourisme.ch/>; <http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch/>; <http://www.neuchatel-tourisme.ch/>; <http://www.lausanne.ch/>; <http://www.maggiore.ch/>; <http://www.lugano-tourism.ch/>; <http://www.luzern.org/>; <http://www.martignytourism.ch/>; <http://www.montreuxtourism.ch/>; <http://www.schaffhausen-tourismus.ch/>; <http://www.siontourism.ch/>; <http://www.solothurn-city.ch/>; <http://www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch/>; <http://www.thuntourismus.ch/>; <http://www.liechtenstein.li/>; <http://www.winterthurtourism.ch/>; <http://www.zug-tourismus.ch/>; <http://www.zuerich.com/>; last accessed on January 04, 2007.



Although none of these 25 city destinations are located in the Romansh-speaking area, it is still worth pointing out that Romansh does not appear at all – the fact that it is a national language clearly counts for nothing vis-à-vis its limited market share (Romansh speakers as tourists as opposed to Graubünden⁸ as a tourist destination).

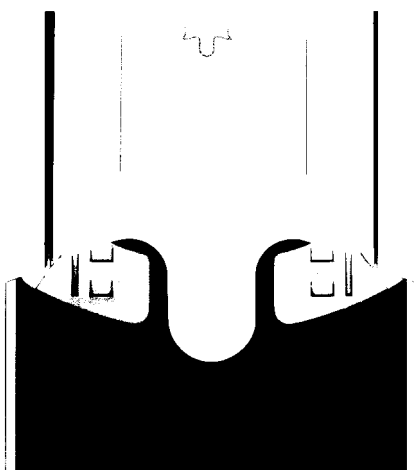
The number of language versions is clearly a question of target audience and available resources. While NTB targets a broad national and international market, smaller destinations tend to target a more clearly circumscribed market. At the same time, websites require significant maintenance. The marketing director of the Interlaken tourism board explained to us during an interview that they could maintain their three language versions – English, French and German – with existing staff but that they did not have the resources to invest into other languages. For some other markets a decision was made to have fliers translated into Arabic and Chinese but not to offer web-versions in these languages. In contrast to brochures, websites need to be continuously maintained and thus differ from brochures in terms of one-time investment vs. ongoing costs.

Another aspect of the target market as a key factor in language choice becomes apparent in content decisions, i.e. which parts of a marketing text are being made available in which language? Bi-, tri- and even quadri-lingual (with Italian as the fourth) language versions tend to be full translations, but for other languages it is usually a reduced version of a marketing campaign that is offered. The e-commerce director of NTB, for instance, told us during an interview that he and his team regularly asked themselves questions such as “Welche Sprachen hat der Winter?” When we didn’t understand his meaning, he used NTB’s summer hiking campaign as an example. The summer hiking campaign is not made available in Spanish, for instance, because “für Spanier macht Wandern keinen Sinn.” Similarly, NTB’s director of city marketing told us during another interview that it was pointless to translate city brochures into Asian languages because Asian tourists were not individual travelers but traveled in groups, as part of organized tours. It is obvious that these decisions also contribute to an increase in the use of English, i.e. Spanish hikers or Asian individual tourists will have to refer to English-language materials.

Code-switching into English

A further difference between English and other languages lies in the fact that English does not only appear in English-language versions of marketing materials but also as part of the non-English-language versions in the form of loan words. The most visible and striking of these might be the country name ‘Switzerland’ itself.

⁸ Incidentally, the tourism website of Graubünden does offer a Romansh version (in addition to an English, German, French, Italian, and Dutch version).



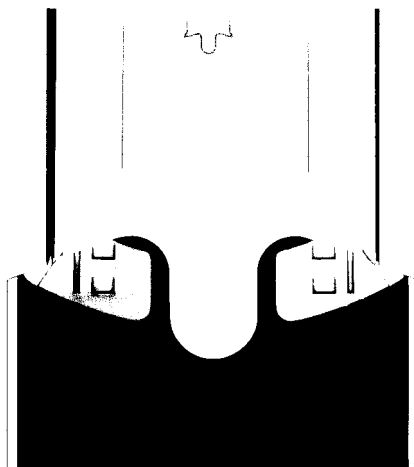
For example, a German children's video of 2006 (Janosch 2006) has four friends travel from their Northern German home to six destinations around the world: the mythical Atlantis, Australia, Canada, Egypt, Greece and Switzerland. These destinations are all presented as German-speaking, i.e. there is hardly any evidence that these countries might not be German-speaking. The limited indications of other languages that there are include a kangaroo in Australia that keeps addressing the friends as 'folks', a beaver in Canada who speaks German with a strong (stereotypical) 'American' accent, and hieroglyphs in Egypt that the friends need to decipher. The only exception is Switzerland, specifically a village in the Bernese Oberland, where a skiing instructor speaks German with a stereotypical Swiss-German accent and raps the friends over the knuckles when they doubt the reliability of the clock on the local church spire by saying "Made in Switzerland. Schweizer Präzisionsuhrwerk." It might seem counter-intuitive that the only destination that should be linguistically marked by the use of an English phrase is not one of the English-speaking countries in the video but precisely a place that is German-speaking - the video's default language. However, the video reflects the wide-spread use of 'Switzerland' in German texts instead of 'Schweiz.' The URL of the NTB website, for instance, contains the designation 'Switzerland' in all its language versions except Czech, Polish and Japanese. Additionally, we have collected a wide range of data - souvenirs of all kinds, postcards, signage - that feature the country name only in its English version as 'Switzerland.'

In addition to the English country designation, slogans also add an English flavor to many non-English language versions. The country slogan used by NTB, "Get natural", appears not only in the English version but also in Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Another slogan that is used by NTB, "Quality. Our passion", is English in all language versions in which it appears (Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish).

In addition to these highly visible elements (country designation, slogans), non-English-language versions are interspersed with English loans - the German version of the NTB entry page, for instance, has a 'news' section, which on January 03, 2007, contained the following 'news':

- Evolution Snowboard Festival Davos
- Weltcup Skirennen Adelboden
- Swiss Snow Walking Event Arosa

On the same day and on the same front page one could click on 'home' and 'meetings', 'choose language', win "coole Winterweekends", subscribe to a 'newsletter', watch a film titled "cool white" etc.. Despite the liberal use of English loanwords in the German-language version of the NTB website, the director of city marketing told us during an interview that it was NTB policy to avoid anglicisms in high-profile texts such as the one he was pointing to, which read "Unser Penthouse". With 'penthouse' obviously being an Anglicism he proceeded to explain the difficulties of that particular campaign, which was designed to highlight Swiss naturalness through a juxtaposition of nature images with designa-



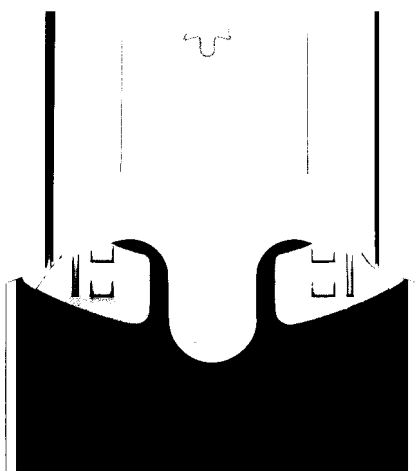
tions of contemporary city life ("Unser Penthouse" appears against a picture of a snow-covered solitary mountain chalet).

The use of anglicisms in non-English-language tourism advertising positions the readers in the same way as the use of English in non-English-language advertising generally: as modern, global, successful and sophisticated fun lovers etc. (see above). However, the explanation we received for the use of 'penthouse' also points to another factor, namely the fact that English loanwords in German have become part of the specialized vocabulary of marketing, and non-English alternatives may not even be available.

Conclusion: The commodity value of English in Swiss tourism marketing

Language choice in tourism marketing is governed by market factors, namely target market and available resources. In the conclusion I will explore the commodity value of English in a purely market-driven context. To begin with, I will discuss the ubiquity of English as a consequence of the fact that it is a 'cheap' resource. Second, I will show that despite the fact that it is a cheap resource it may still be out of the reach of some small actors in the tourism market and thus access or non-access to English can reinforce existing inequalities. Finally, I will consider the consequences of the linguistic market for the national languages.

Although all marketing materials we have collected are available in at least two languages, language choice as investment choice results in a much higher visibility of English than of any other language: on the one hand, it is treated as the international default language that promises the widest reach if more language-specific marketing is outside the means of the advertiser. At the same time, save for the local language in the case of German and a second or third national language in the case of the minority areas of the Romandie and Ticino it is the language that requires the least resources. Languages spoken by existing staff require no language-specific investment because they can be maintained by existing staff members who might not have been hired for their language-specific skills. For tourism workers, English is a must, as we have repeatedly found: it is part of the curriculum of all tourism and hospitality schools, it appears in all the tourism-related job ads we have collected and a number of the employers we interviewed stated that trilingualism in English, French and German was an essential hiring criterion in their institution. English is thus favored in a context where language choice is strictly market-driven precisely because it is 'cheap', i.e. more readily available than any other language except the local language, and promising a much wider distribution than the local language. In contrast, the languages of the new tourism markets in Asia and Eastern Europe, and also Spanish, certainly offer a higher return due to specific marketing but they also require a much higher investment: translators need to have language-specific expertise where English is part of the general qualifications not only of translators but of most service workers in the tourism sector.



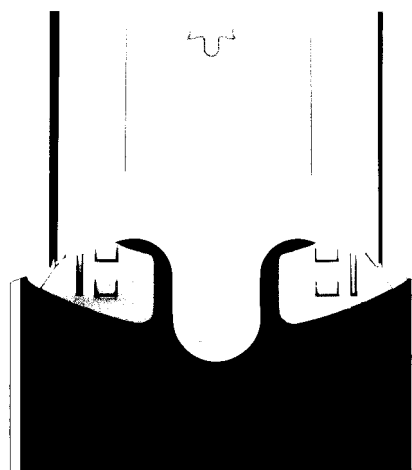
While tourism boards even of small destinations have the resources to advertise at least bilingually, this may not necessarily be true for small tourism actors, such as family-run hotels or farms. It is in their marketing materials that it becomes most apparent that bilingual marketing is actually 'a must' in the tourism sector. As an example, I will discuss the site of a small family-run farm in Interlaken. The front page contains pictures of the farm and the option to click on 'Deutsch' next to the German flag on top of the page, and the option to click on 'English' next to the British flag at the bottom. At the very bottom of the page there is a small notice saying 'The English side translated of the Speacktool of *google*. We ask to excuse the errors' and the errors in the English-language version are indeed numerous. The 'about us' navigation button reads "over us," for instance, and longer sentences become virtually incomprehensible to a non-German-speaker:

Own dwelling lends a certain liberty in holidays. One comes and goes through the own entrance. Cooks at home which one tastes and enough place has. The most favorable variant in intersheets for alone traveler, groups or too secondly. Simple rooms with two and more beds for one or more nights.

If anything, the English-language version of this website is involuntarily comical but as a marketing text it is obviously worse than useless. As this example demonstrates, language choices further reinforce existing economic inequalities if language choice is purely a matter of market choice.

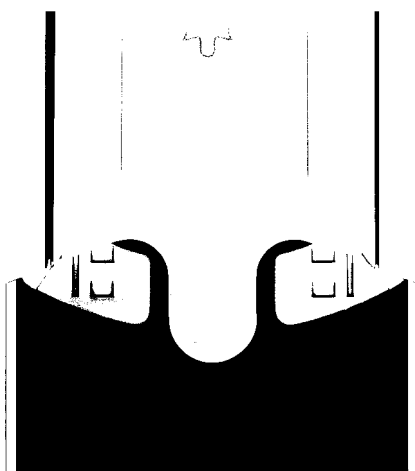
Finally, language choice as market choice in the Swiss tourism sector also has consequences for the use of the national languages. It might seem that national considerations play a role in tri- or quadrilingual advertising materials, i.e. those where at least one other national language in addition to the regionally predominant one appears. However, we need to bear in mind that, in the tourism sector, the national 'argument' is also a market argument: French, German and Italian are not only national languages of Switzerland but also the languages of Switzerland's largest international tourism markets. Indeed, the frequent graphic association of these languages with the flags of France, Germany, and Italy shows that these as languages are as transnational as English.

At the same time, the language choices on the websites of Swiss city destinations also demonstrate that the national languages become clearly hierarchized: German-speaking cities may or, more frequently, may not choose to provide versions of their websites in other national languages; for French-speaking cities, with the exception of Geneva, German is not optional but Italian is; and for Italian-speaking cities neither German nor French are optional - they are the languages of their largest target markets. Unless there are legal requirements (as in the case of Graubünden; see footnote 8), languages without an economic value do not appear, or they do so only to a very limited degree and merely at the level of a symbolic token such as a Swiss German 'Gruezi' or a Romansh 'Bun Di' at the beginning of a brochure or website.



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