

## Chapter 13

# Multilingualism and the Modes of TV Advertising

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### 1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become the major framework for the analysis of the language of the media (Bell and Garrett 1998: 6). Bell and Garrett (1998: 17) have recently noticed that this development coincides with a lack of phenomenological approaches to the language of the media. Their volume is intended to remedy this imbalance, but they confine themselves to the study of “factual” media genres, mainly news and editorials. My own study has been inspired by Bell and Garrett’s phenomenological framework (see also Richardson and Meinhof 1999) but focuses on a more “fictional” genre, namely TV advertising. In this article I will examine the use of languages other than German (L2s) in the various modes of German TV ads. While L2 use in print ads has been frequently explored (and deplored), and while multilingual TV channels have received some attention (see e.g. Baetens Beardmore 1984; Richardson and Meinhof 1999), the connection between multilingualism and TV advertising has hardly been studied in any detail. In the following, I will briefly review the literature on L2 use in German advertising before I go on to introduce my data.

In Germany, the complaint about advertising language as a gate opener for borrowings is probably as old as advertising itself. Wustmann’s (<sup>3</sup>1903) frequently reprinted *Allerhand Sprachdummheiten*, ‘a collection of linguistic

stupidity', for instance, featured the complaint about borrowing in advertising along with many other purist worries. While the purist concern has diminished over the years, the perception that advertising language borrows more freely, particularly from English, than language as a whole is a mainstay of the literature on German print advertising (e.g. Römer's influential study <sup>5</sup>1976; or Sauer 1998). Although Kann and Koltes noted as early as 1979 that TV might be an even more influential medium of borrowing than print, their suggestion has never been followed up — in any case not for advertising. My argument in this article will be that advertising on German TV has left the stage of borrowing far behind and it is really multilingualism that is being employed instead of German with English borrowings. My argument entails that it is not only German and English that are being employed but also other languages, particularly French and Italian. It also entails that L2 use is not only a lexical phenomenon but occurs on all linguistic levels. I will argue that L2 use in German TV advertising is mainly a discourse phenomenon rather than a lexical phenomenon.

As a matter of fact, L2 use in TV ads goes even beyond the level of discourse and includes non-verbal elements. TV ads differ from print ads in that they occur in real time and use both visual and auditory communication channels (Geis 1982: 3). Cook (1992: 37) uses the term "mode" to refer to the three means of communication that are employed in TV advertising: music, pictures and language. This study is based on the assumption that multilingualism can occur in any of these modes, that it is not confined to the language mode only. In the music mode an L2 may be employed for the text of a song. In the picture mode an L2 may be implied if the ad is clearly set in a non-German-speaking environment, say a Caribbean beach. In the language mode an L2 may be used in the ad's spoken or written language. Multilingualism in the three modes of TV advertising may create an ensemble of L2 use or it may juxtapose German and L2 discourse. I will explore the rich combinatorial possibilities below.

## 2. The data

My data comes from a sample of 658 advertising spots in 74 commercial breaks that were broadcast on German television in February 1999. 265 spots were broadcast on daytime TV (11–19h) and the remaining 393 come from the



evening programmes (19–23h). They come from 11 different channels (see Table 1). ARD and ZDF are the two national public-service channels, which are federally controlled. Unlike all the other channels in my corpus they do not rely exclusively on commercial advertising to generate revenue but also receive a license fee that is levied on TV set ownership. As a consequence they have far less advertising than their commercial competitors. For instance, they do not have to interrupt movies with commercial breaks and they rarely interrupt other programmes such as talk shows. Instead, they broadcast advertising in between shows. Kabel 1, Pro 7, RTL, RTL II, Sat 1 and Vox are general, mixed programme commercial channels that certainly differ in their market share but much less in their programme structure and target audience. Commercial television is a relatively recent arrival in Germany. It only started in 1984 when RTL and Sat 1 went on air (see Sandford 1997: 51). These two continue with the largest audience share among Germany's commercial channels (see Table 1). ntv and dsf cater to specialised market segments: ntv is a news channel and dsf is a sports channel.

*Table 1. Channels represented in the corpus*

<i>Channel</i>	<i>No. of spots in the corpus</i>	<i>Average daily audience share (minutes)<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Average daily audience share (%)<sup>1</sup></i>
ARD	19	29	15.4
dsf	11	2	1.1
eurosport	15	2	1.1
Kabel 1	6	8	4.4
ntv	56	1	0.6
Pro 7	131	16	8.7
RTL	113	28	15.1
RTL II	106	7	3.8
Sat 1	116	22	11.8
Vox	75	5	2.8
ZDF	10	26	13.6
Other <sup>2</sup>	0	42	21.6
Total	658	188	

<sup>1</sup> Source: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Fernsehforschung (AGF) der Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK), Frankfurt/M. Personal communication. These figures are based on 71.37m viewers aged three and older, and they represent the annual average for 1998.

<sup>2</sup> These are mainly public regional channels that do not have any advertising, but also international channels such as CNN (English), Rai 1 (Italian), TRT (Turkish), TV5 (French) or TV Polonia (Polish).

Eurosport is also a sports channel, but in contrast to dsf, which is national, eurosport broadcasts Europe-wide. This means that only one single set of visuals is being broadcast but that viewers can tune into different soundtracks in English, French or German. Table 1 shows the channels that broadcast my sample of ads in relation to their average audience share.

Commercial blocks are clearly demarcated events in the programme flow: if live programmes such as talk shows or news are being interrupted, the presenter will introduce the commercial block with utterances such as “gleich geht’s weiter” (‘will be continued soon’) or “mehr dazu nach der Pause” (‘more on this after the break’). This is usually followed by a script “Werbung” (‘advertising’) — a boundary marker that seems to be obligatory if the commercial break occurs during a show that does not have an overt presenter or if it occurs between programmes. The end of the commercial break is marked by a script “Ende” (‘the end’) on ZDF, by a clock that is inserted into the last few spots and that ticks towards the beginning of the news at the full hour in most breaks on ARD, and by previews and programme announcements on the commercial channels. The claim that “German commercial channels [...] mark the beginning of a commercial break but, at the end, simply slide back to the interrupted programme with no further marking” (Richardson and Meinhof 1999: 113) is not borne out by my data as the previews function as marker. The commercial breaks themselves differ markedly in length: while they may be as short as one minute only on the public-service channels and only contain two or three spots, they may take up to six minutes on the commercial channels and contain up to 18 spots.

This analysis is based on tokens rather than on types, i.e. on the total number of occurrences of spots in my sample (658). These 658 tokens represent 383 types. As the frequency of release of an ad is related to the viewer’s exposure to a particular ad, a token-based analysis will reflect L2 exposure more accurately than a type-based analysis (cf. also Cheshire and Moser 1994: 455 for a similar argument in their analysis of the use of English in Swiss print ads).

### 3. Language use across modes

Figure 1 shows the proportion of German and other languages (L2s) in the corpus and across modes. Only 175 ads (26.6%) use exclusively German. This



is a surprisingly low figure given the strong monolingual ethos prevalent in Germany. It demonstrates that German TV advertising is indeed a multilingual phenomenon. However, there is a gradient of multilingualism, with German-only ads at the one end of the scale (as these are not multilingual at all they will not be discussed any further) and L2-only ones (see Section 3.5) at the other end.

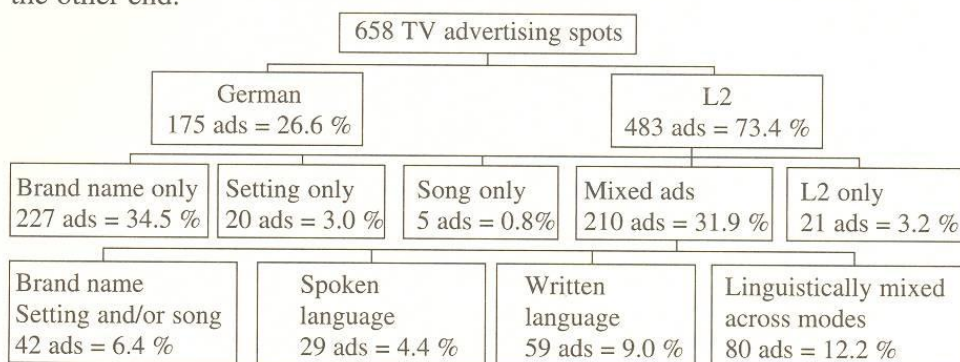


Figure 1. Proportion of German and other languages in the corpus

In between there are those ads that only make use of an L2 brand name with the remainder of the ad in German (see Section 3.1), followed by those that only use an L2 setting (see Section 3.2) or an L2 song (see Section 3.3). Even more multilingual are those ads that truly mix German and an L2 in more than one mode (see Section 3.4).

### 3.1 L2 Brand Name

In 227 ads (34.5%) it is only the brand name that is L2 while the remainder of the ad uses German. The brand name is arguably the most central linguistic item of an ad — it is what it is all about. However, this is true irrespective of the medium of the ad, which also makes it the least significant linguistic item for the present study as it does not distinguish TV advertising from any other advertising medium. TV ads are unique in that they bring together both the visual and the auditory representation of a brand name. For L2 brand names this means that TV ads might actually have an “educational” function in instructing consumers in matching L2 writing and L2 pronunciation. For instance, in an ad for a hand cream called *Atrix Age Control Lotion* the written representation goes with the pronunciation [ˈatriks ˈeɪdʒkənˈtrəʊl ˈləʊʃn]. A naïve German pronunciation of the sequence, i.e. one in which it is not

identified as an English cluster, would be something like [ˈatriks ˈagə kɒnˈtrɒl lɔˈtsjən], and the pronunciation [lɔˈtsjən] does actually exist while [ˈagə kɒnˈtrɒl] is entirely fictive. By bringing spelling and pronunciation together TV advertising does more to promote the desired pronunciation of an L2 brand name than any other advertising medium. The pronunciation promoted by advertisers is not always the correct L2 pronunciation but may sometimes actually be integrated into the German system, as in the case with *Dash*, the name of a brand of washing powder, which is pronounced [ˈdaʃ] instead of English [ˈdæʃ], or *Pedigree Pal*, a brand of dog food, which comes as the mixture [ˈpedɪɡri: ˈpa:l] — an adapted German pronunciation of *Pedigree* would be [ˈpedi:grə] and the English pronunciation of *Pal* is [pæl].

### 3.2 L2 Setting

20 ads (3.0%) are clearly set outside Germany in settings where a language other than German would be spoken. Neither of these 20 ads, however, acknowledges this fact. Rather, in these ads, setting and language use contradict each other. Three of these are travel ads and thus the setting is identical to the product that is advertised. Viewers are presented with pictures of the Maldives, Southeast Asia and Tunisia. The natives in these pictures do not have a language of their own; as a matter of fact, they do not have any language at all: we look at smiling Thai temple dancers, a praying Buddhist monk, intent-looking fishermen and smiling, demure waiters from the Maldives. The Tunisia of the ad is inhabited exclusively by tourists.

Some of the ads in which setting and language do not coincide try to resolve that contradiction by fashioning the product as language. An ad for a brand of margarine, for instance, shows Italian men in their 70s and 80s playing a game of soccer and enjoying food prepared by their wives during the break. The wives also act as appreciative audience to the game. The spot starts with the camera zooming in on individual players with a caption giving their names, age and role in the game (forward, goalkeeper etc). A voice-over then begins to comment on the age and vitality of these men and suggests various reasons for their vitality. Then the men are shown eating and return to the game under the appreciative eyes of their wives. The voice-over has in the meantime pointed out that Italians are so healthy and fit in old age because of their diet, which includes Dante Margarine. As the spot ends, the final comment of the voice-over, which is also printed on the screen, says: "Dante



Margarine. Lebensfreude auf Italienisch” (‘Dante Margarine is Italian for joie de vivre’). In another instance the product is not only represented as the language appropriate to a monolingual setting, but it becomes the medium of understanding in a cross-cultural encounter: a spot for Jacobs Krönung, a brand of coffee, starts with a group of Bedouin riders spotting car tracks in the desert sand. The leader utters a battle cry and they break into a gallop. The camera changes to a European family who are enjoying a coffee break in the shadow of their car, surrounded by mountains of sandy desert. The distant sound of hooves bodes evil and tension runs high as they stare in fear when they see the Bedouins charging down a hill. The father protectively kisses the head of a little boy and a young woman (mother or daughter?) looks at her mug of coffee in a moment of indecision and then gets up, faces the riders, and offers her mug with both hands to the leader of the Bedouins. At this gesture, the attack comes to a halt, the woman and the Bedouin prince smile at each other shyly and take turns sipping coffee from the mug. Relief. And the comment of the voice-over says: “Jacobs Krönung und wir verstehen uns” (‘Jacobs Krönung and we’ll understand each other’). The product has become the means of communication in a potentially dangerous intercultural encounter.

### 3.3 *L2 Song*

In five ads (0.8%) it is only the song that is L2. In four of these it is an English pop song that goes with a set of visuals but no other linguistic signs apart from the brand name. A spot for the clothing retailer C&A, for instance, shows a woman looking into a crystal ball, followed by a shot of a woman at the entrance of a high-rise building, a wheat field, a girl playing with her hair, two women jumping from a landing stage into the sea, a woman fishing, a man against a nondescript background, a couple kissing over the hood of a car, a woman walking a cheetah, a man following a woman at a distance, and, finally, a shot of the crystal ball in which the brand name “C&A” appears. The whole sequence is accompanied by a song with the lyrics: “Feel so perfect. Feel so good. I want this feeling to stay. aiaiai. I want YOU.” Right before C&A appears in the crystal ball, the music stops so that the brand name is presented in silence. A very similar technique is employed in car ads for the Ford Focus and Opel (which appears twice in my corpus): neither presents the viewer with a narrative but rather a sequence of images and in both cases —

just as in the C&A ad — the songs serve as a kind of musical stream-of-consciousness. Again the lyrics refer to the inner life of a person, presumably the product user: the Ford Focus one goes “You gonna be bad, you gonna be bold, you gonna be wiser, you gonna be stronger”, and the Opel one “Feel lifted, lifted, lifted”.

The fifth ad with an L2 song in my sample does not conform to this pattern: it is for Radeberger beer, which is brewed in the vicinity of Dresden. The spot shows Dresden’s famous opera house and as the camera sweeps through the building we hear an Italian aria. The L2 song thus serves the paradoxical function to provide strong regional associations for the beer. Many beer ads promote the regional character of their product, and while one could assume that the use of a regional language or dialect would be a convenient means to do so, this possibility is generally eschewed. Dresden’s Semperoper provides associations of regional high culture, but regional languages and dialects carry associations of rusticity and stupidity for a national audience, i.e. association of “low” culture.

### 3.4 *Mixed ads*

210 ads (31.9%) show a greater degree of admixture of an L2 to the overall German text than the ones discussed so far. Four different subgroups can be distinguished (cf. Figure 1):

- (a) Brand name, setting and/or song are L2: 42 ads (6.4%)
- (b) The spoken language of the ad mixes German and L2: 29 ads (4.4%)
- (c) The written language of the ad mixes German and L2: 59 ads (9.0%)
- (d) The mixture occurs across the ad’s spoken and written language: 80 ads (12.2%)

#### *(a) Brand name, setting and/or song are L2*

Ads of the first type that combine an L2 brand name with an L2 setting frequently advertise food products, such as Bresso, a brand of cream cheese, Dr. Oetker Big Americans, a brand of pizza, or McDonald’s McFarmer, a brand of hamburger. The Bresso ad shows a family picnic in Provence, the Big Americans ad depicts scenes of US family life, and the McFarmer ad contrasts a cheesy US diner where a customer asks in vain for a McBurger with a proper McDonalds outlet where he is then shown happily munching away at the McFarmer. Sometimes the locale of the setting is not clearly identifiable — in



which case I always assumed the default option of a German setting — but an L2 brand name is combined with an L2 song. An ad for bebe young care, a skin cream, for instance, shows adolescent girls having fun to the sound track of the pop song “Forever young”. The song reinforces part of the brand name through its focus on “young”. In another example, an ad for zewa softis, a brand of tissue paper, the song describes possible uses of the product: “If you got a problem, don’t care what it is ...”.

*(b) The spoken language of the ad mixes German and L2*

The second subtype of mixed ads are those in which German and L2 are mixed in the spoken language of the ad. The mixture may occur on the level of pronunciation or lexis. Code-switching (mixed lexis) is quite difficult to determine in these ads as there is no clear-cut boundary between code-switching and borrowing. The standard distinction between the two is based on the notion of institutionalisation, but with the heavy influx of English loanwords into contemporary German, dictionaries as the conventional arbiters of institutionalisation are no longer able to keep up. For the present purpose, I regarded those English items that I had already encountered in another German context as institutionalised and those that I had not as genuine code-switching. The result is that most ads with individual English lexemes were coded as German-only ads (i.e. with loanwords). All of the following examples were, for instance, counted as German-only ads: “die coolen Boots” (‘the cool boots’) in an ad for Barbie dolls, “Sir, Mann über Bord, Sir!” (‘Sir, man overboard, sir!’) in an ad for the insurance DBV Winterthur, or “Trink Onko, bleib happy” (‘drink Onko, stay happy’) in an ad for Onko, a brand of coffee. An example of a lexically mixed ad, on the other hand, is “Club Rotation. Volume Five. Nur das Beste vom Dancefloor.” (‘Club Rotation. Volume Five. Only the best from the dance floor.’) for a music CD.

Phonologically mixed ads use German with a non-native accent. In an ad for Chiquita bananas, for instance, an animated cartoon woman in a Spanish dress says with a Spanish accent: “Natürlich möchte jede Banane eine Chiquita sein. Aber da könnte ja jeder kommen. Natürlich Chiquita.” (‘Of course, every banana would like to be a Chiquita. But then we could admit just anybody. Of course, Chiquita.’). In another ad, for Frosta Gyrospfanne, a pre-cooked meal, the screen is split into two windows and in the left window we see a Frosta cook preparing Gyrospfanne and at the same time talking on the phone to another cook in the right-hand screen. This one is located in a Greek

taverna and also prepares food but in a much more rustic setting. The viewer is privy to the following conversation (see Table 2).

The Greek cook's German is not only marked by a heavy non-native accent but also shows morphological interference in the adjective-noun congruence ("gutes Freund" instead of "gutem Freund"), in the absence of a determiner before this noun phrase ("einem guten Freund") and in the word order ("Wenn ich wieder kann Dir helfen" instead of "Wenn ich Dir wieder helfen kann"). Of course, the whole sequence does not necessarily reflect Greek German but rather a stereotype about "foreigner German". Apart from Spanish and Greek accents, French and Italian ones also occur in ads for food products. The only non-native accent for a non-food product is a Swedish one in an ad for Ikea, the furniture retailer of Swedish origin.

(c) *The written language of the ad mixes German and L2*

In the third subtype of mixed ad, the mixture between German and an L2 occurs in the spot's written language. In some of these the entire written language of the spot is L2 but the other modes of the ad are in German and there is no spoken translation — unlike in the ads mixed across modes to be discussed below, which provide a spoken translation. If the entire writing of a spot is in L2 but none of the other modes are, the written message is usually equivalent to the standing details of a print ad. They contain registration information as in "'FANTA' is a registered trademark of the Coca-Cola Company" or "Sprite is a registered trademark of the Coca-Cola Company" appearing in small print at the bottom of the screen. Some brands have a written L2 slogan that is neither spoken nor translated as in "Let's make things

Table 2. *Conversation in an ad for Frosta Gyrospfanne*

<i>Left window, Frosta cook</i>	<i>Right window, Greek cook</i>
picks up phone	phone rings "A Taverna Pistero"
"Susta. Peter von Frosta. Deine Gyrospfanne is wirklich klasse. Kräuter wie im Olymp."	"Ist altes Familienrezept. Geb ich gerne gutes Freund. Wenn ich wieder kann Dir helfen, ruf an."
'This is Peter from Frosta. Your Gyrospfanne is really great. With herbs that seem to come from Mount Olympus.'	'It's an old family recipe. Which I'm happy to share with a good friend. Give me a ring if I can do anything else for you.'



better" (Phillips), "Where do you want to go today?" (Microsoft) or "glass made of ideas" (Schott Glass). Code-switching is not exclusively a phenomenon of spoken language, as the following Nintendo ad shows. This written text is running across the screen (slashes represent line breaks, i.e. new screens): "Stellenangebot: / Gesucht werden Mitarbeiter, um den imperialen Streitkräften die Macht zu entreissen / Star Wars / Rogue Squadron / Expansion Pak Kompatibel / Nintendo 64. Feel everything." ('Job offer: / We are looking for colleagues to snatch power from the imperial forces / Star Wars / Rogue Squadron / Expansion Pak Compatible / Nintendo 64. Feel everything').

(d) *The mixture occurs across the ad's spoken and written language*

In a fourth subtype of mixed ads, the linguistic mixture occurs across the written and the spoken mode. Either spoken L2 is reinforced by written L2 or written L2 is juxtaposed with a spoken German translation, or vice versa. In the first case it is mainly L2 slogans that are presented in speaking and in writing at the end of a spot, such as "The Queen of Table Waters" at the end of a spot for Apollinaris, a mineral water, or "The Future. Together. Now" for AXA Colonia, an insurance company, or the Rover slogan "A class of its own." In most of these cases the slogan is set apart from the remainder of the ad in two ways: by the switch into L2 and by the fact that it is written and spoken while other linguistic parts of the ad are spoken only. In the AXA Colonia ad, for instance, the voice-over accompanies a sequence of visuals with the following text: "Was bedeutet Aufbruch? Warum wagen manche Menschen den ersten Schritt? Vielleicht weil jemand sie begleitet, der sie sichert und an ihre Zukunft glaubt. Reden Sie mit uns. AXA Colonia. Die neue Kraft. Für Ihre Sicherheit. Für Ihr Vermögen. The Future. Together. Now. AXA Colonia" ('What is the meaning of departure? Why do some people dare to make the first step? Maybe because someone accompanies them, someone who gives them security and believes in their future. Talk to us. AXA Colonia. The new power. For your security. For your fortune. // The Future. Together. Now. AXA Colonia'). It is only the English part of the utterance that is also printed on the screen. Maybe advertisers are not entirely confident that their L2 message will come across if they use one single mode only and they therefore feel the need to reinforce their message in the written mode. Another way to secure L2 understanding is to provide the message in L2 in one mode and a translation in another. In an ad for the movie *You have mail* ('E-Mail für

Dich'), for instance, the print on the screen says "You have mail" while the voice-over provides a translation: "Sie haben Post". In another example, an ad for a CD called "Bad Boys Blues", the print says "the success story continues" and the voice-over translates "Die Erfolgsstory geht weiter". Other ads that provide a German translation of their English visuals are those that have international visuals but national soundtracks. They typically do not tell a narrative and are neither glossy nor artsy but resemble ads of the shopping channels such as H.O.T. or ShoppingChannel. Mostly, these are ads for music CDs such as one called "ABBA — The collection": viewers are presented with extracts from a number of video clips and sound tracks and the final screen shows a list of phone numbers with the heading "Call now" while the voice-over translates "Jetzt anrufen". The phone numbers are accompanied by national flags so that viewers can locate the flag and with it the phone number for the country they are in. As Richardson and Meinhof (1999: 86) point out, these flags work like area codes and are purely indexical guides to the nearest shop. They do not serve to confirm national identity in everyday life. Richardson and Meinhof (1999: 85f) describe the use of this type of ad on the international channel EuroNews; in my corpus these ads are only broadcast on eurosport, which is also international, and on ntv, which is not.

In most cases, L2 writing is juxtaposed with a spoken German translation, but in two ads this pattern is reversed. Both create the illusion of a movie with subtitles. In one of them, an ad for Alfa Romeo, which appears three times in my corpus, an Alfa Romeo driver heads out of St. Petersburg and when he arrives at the airport a dialogue with the pilot ensues. The conversation is in Russian but has German subtitles. While the pilot claims that it is impossible to fly to Berlin, the Alfa Romeo driver asks "are you sure?", checks his instruments and then heads out into the open snow-covered steppe, presumably intending to drive to Berlin. The ad gets truly multilingual when the Italian Alfa Romeo slogan "Cuore Sportivo" 'sportive heart' also appears on the screen.

### 3.5 *L2-only ads*

21 ads (3.2%) do not make use of any German, i.e. they are exclusively L2. The L2 in all these cases is English. Not all of these ads employ spoken and written language. A case in point is an ad for adidas, a brand of sportswear: a set of written expressions spins through a sequence of visuals (see Table 3).



In an ad for chipsfrisch, a brand of potato crisps, the visual is exclusively focused on a pack of crisps, which is shown from various perspectives and accompanied by the pop song "You're my dream come true. My one and only you." At the close of the ad the last words of the song lyrics, "only you," rise out of the pack and the ad ends with a shot of "only you" above the pack of crisps. Ads that have lengthy spoken English texts without enforcing them in writing are rare: in my corpus there is only an ad for the movie "Shakespeare in Love" (which appears twice in the corpus) and an ad for the Nokia Communicator, a mini computer. This ad shows two men fishing at a landing stage and using a Nokia communicator to transmit pictures of their catch. The voice-over comments: "Now you can communicate any way you want. By fax and e-mail, Internet and phone. All with a pocket-sized Nokia Communicator. And you can even communicate with pictures. Take a digital photo on a separate camera. Send or receive it. With the Nokia Communicator. It's an easier way to communicate. Nokia." The print then reinforces the brand name and gives the slogan: "Nokia. Connecting People." This ad also appears with a German voice-over in my corpus — everything else, i.e. visuals and print, remains unchanged. Again, it is clear that the visual track is distributed internationally while the sound-track is adapted to various national languages. The all-English ad appears on eurosport and the one with the German voice-over appears on RTL.

*Table 3. Adidas ad*

<i>Visual</i>	<i>Written expression spinning through it</i>
Bicycle race	Take first place
Marathon	Take last place
Skate boarders	Take control of the streets
Tennis match	Take control of the stadium
Karate fight	Take the first shot
Swim race	Take the last leg
Men shake fists at each other in a stadium	Take it easy, my friend
Black screen	Take what you want
Black screen	Adidas / Forever Sport.

#### 4. The meanings of L2 use

In this paper I have explored L2 use in the various modes of German TV advertising. I have not discussed which L2s are being employed against German as the default choice. In this section, I will describe which L2s are being used in which modes and whether their use is referential or symbolic. Table 4 shows the distribution of all the occurring L2s across L2 use in the various modes. Not surprisingly, the most frequently used L2 is English. The other L2s that occur are French, Italian, invented L2 (see below) and 19 instances of other languages, which are: Frisian (5), Spanish (5), Swedish (4), Russian (3), Greek (1) and Japanese (1). The use of these L2s in the various modes differs considerably (see Table 4).

L2 use in ads in which only the brand name is L2 differs most markedly from all the other modes: it is the only type of ad where it is not English that is the most frequently occurring L2, but rather 'invented L2'. In these ads the brand name is clearly not German but has not been taken from a specific L2,

Table 4. *Specific L2s in the various modes*

	<i>English</i>		<i>French</i>		<i>Italian</i>		<i>Invented</i>		<i>Other</i>		<i>Total</i>
	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%	
L2 Brand name	78	34.4	4	1.8	3	1.3	142	62.5	-	-	227
L2 Setting	1	5.0	2	10.0	4	20.0	7	35.0	6	30.0	20
L2 Song	4	80.0	-	-	1	20.0	-	-	-	-	5
Mixed ads											
L2 Brand name, setting and/or song	23	54.8	4	9.5	2	4.8	12	28.6	1	31.0	42
L2 Spoken	8	27.6	8	27.6	4	13.8	-	-	9	-	29
L2 Written	54	85.7	5	7.9	1	1.6	3	4.8	-	-	63 <sup>1</sup>
L2 Across modes	76	86.4	2	2.3	3	3.4	4	4.6	3	3.4	88 <sup>1</sup>
L2 Only	21	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
Total:	265	53.5	25	5.1	18	3.6	168	33.9	19	3.8	495 <sup>1</sup>
Total excl. brand names:	187	69.8	21	7.8	15	5.6	26	9.7	19	7.1	268

<sup>1</sup> These figures are higher than those in Figure 1 because 12 ads use two L2s instead of only one.



either. It just gives the impression of being L2, usually Romance. Brand namers expect consumers to associate a particular language with the (positive) stereotypes they hold about its speakers. This phenomenon of symbolic L2 use has been described by Haarmann (1984; 1986) and Wienold (1995) for “Western-sounding” brand names in Japan and by Piller (1996; 1999) for Romance-sounding US brand names. An example from my corpus is *Féria*, [ˈferia], the name of a hair dye, which gives a Romance impression because of the accent over the *e* and because of its syllable structure: full vowels in unaccented syllables, *ia*, are Romance-sounding and attractive to speakers of languages with a Germanic stress-pattern because Germanic unstressed vowels frequently get reduced to the schwa.

If a brand name is not taken from a real L2 but concocted in such a way that it gives the impression of being taken from another language, there can be no doubt that L2 use is purely symbolic. It cannot have any referential function (i.e. convey any type of factual information) and it “only” serves the function to symbolically associate the product with another language community and the stereotypes held about the community, the areas where it is spoken and the people who speak it (see also Cheshire and Moser 1994). “Invented Romance” carries associations of the Mediterranean — for many Germans primarily a large holiday resort. While L2 use is mainly symbolic in brand names, particularly in those that make use of an invented L2, L2 use in the other modes serves both symbolic and referential functions.<sup>1</sup>

German is the unmarked language choice on German TV. So any departure from the default choice carries symbolic meanings simply by virtue of its markedness. The symbolic meaning of English is fragmented and polyvocal while that of French, Italian and the other languages are more uniform. French is the language of love and carries erotic connotations whenever it occurs, and Italian is the language of the good life as expressed through food. In most cases, both these languages are used by native speakers of these languages. German TV advertising thus shows images of the Other using their — supposedly — own voice in these cases. Neither of these points are true for ads using English. English is not associated with one single set of symbolic meanings and frequently it is not used by characters that are native speakers of English. Rather, it is often the voice-over that uses English after having used German in an earlier part of the ad (see, for instance, the AXA Colonia ad discussed in Section 3.4). In cases such as these, English is contextually identified as not belonging to a native speaker. In other cases this identification may also be

reinforced because of the speaker's German accent, as in the slogan "For a better understanding" used by the telephone company o.tel.o, or because of the use of non-native idioms as in "Take the last leg" (see Table 3). English is thus used in two ways: as the language of the Other (US-Americans) and, more frequently, as OUR second language. The ads establish a pattern of diglossia in which German is the everyday language and English the language of consumerism. Both languages are legitimately used in German TV ads: while German is suggestive of regional and national identity and of tradition, English is the language of the young, of international technology, competition and progress, in short, of a global consumer identity. If ads do indeed construct our social and psychological reality (see Cheshire and Moser 1994: 467), they construct a diglossic reality for Germany and a multilingual one for German consumers.

### Note

1. A note on terminology: it is obvious that the terms "referential" and "symbolic" meanings as they are used in multilingualism studies and as I use them here do not square with the way they are normally used in semantics where — drawing on Peirce — symbols are usually seen as signs in which the link between signifier and signified is purely conventional (Saeed 1997). Standard semantic theory has not yet attempted to account for meaning in contexts of multilingual language use but has confined itself to monolingualism instead.

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