THE SWISS PARADIGM OF MULTILINGUALISM AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

The paper addresses quadrilingual Switzerland as a unique sociolinguistic context with reference to the presence and the role of English. The aim is to outline a framework referred to as *The Swiss Paradigm* that builds on relevant theory blended with the results of a quantitative research. The theoretical reflection comprises the assumptions of contact linguistics and macro-sociolinguistics, whereas the empirical knowledge comes from the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey carried out in the canton of Zurich in 2011. A particular interest focuses on the changes that occur in language practices and communicative patterns embedded in the Swiss multilingual setting. The paper intends to provide a macro-sociolinguistic account of multilingual contact where one of the languages develops *lingua franca* features. Thus, English as a global language in the multilingual context of Switzerland may be expected to yield a peculiar scenario displaying the characteristics of the Swiss context. This model does not claim validity for all multilingual settings, but rather urges that other cases be compared with this one in the light of the paradigm's predictions. The proposed Swiss paradigmatic framework indicates – viewed through a macro-sociolinguistic lens – that the present linguistic situation in Switzerland seems to reflect a growing symbiotic relationship between English and the Swiss vernaculars.

Key-words: Global language, language practices, lingua franca, linguistic paradigm, multilingualism, Switzerland

1. INTRODUCTION INTO THE SWISS LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE[1]

Quadrilingual Switzerland seems to be moving towards a country of 'two-and-a-half languages'. The smallest national language, Romansh, is apparently heading towards an unstoppable decline, and the Swiss will be less fluent in a second national language because the knowledge of the other three 'Swiss' national languages loses out to the advantages of English. Italian is not threatened so much in its cultural identity in spite of the growing significance of German in Ticino. The French-speaking Swiss enjoy the cultural identity, but are mostly embittered by their inability to communicate nationwide because of the spread of the Swiss German dialects in the German-speaking part of the country. The German-speaking Swiss use standard German practically only in writing and rarely in speech. The strong

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[1] Based upon research results published in Stępkowska (2013: 259-280).

isolationist aspirations of the German-speaking part of Switzerland in relation to other German-speaking countries only add to the complexity of Swiss multilingualism. Although the cultural and linguistic diversity is protected and accepted as a common occurrence in Switzerland (cf. e.g. Camartin 2000, Schläpfer 2000, Schmid 2001, Widmer 2007), it may be doubted that the quality of the within-the-country communication between different cultural areas is equally satisfactory for all. The Swiss of different mother tongues are becoming exhausted by the attempts to communicate by means of a second or even a third national language, since the individual repertoires of four languages have become a rarity. Nevertheless, despite the cultural, religious and linguistic differences, Switzerland is distinguished by a high degree of cohesion owing mainly to its political institutions. As a 'nation of the will,' Switzerland enjoys a remarkable social integrity. The word 'multilingual' – which defines the Swiss identity – equates to a group ranging from a few dozen thousands to a group amounting to a few millions. English and the phenomena related to its spread and its popularity are becoming a touchstone for this multilingual vitality. In other words, Switzerland needs to prepare for a multilingual future, but with English playing a recognized role in displaying the characteristics of the Swiss context. The Swiss paradigmatic framework to be proposed here aims to indicate the changes that occur in language practices and communicative patterns of multilingual contact where one of the languages develops *lingua franca* features. English as a global language in the multilingual context of Switzerland has apparently entered into a symbiotic relationship with the Swiss vernaculars. Therefore, it may be predicted that both the intra- and international uses of English will show a rising tendency in Switzerland.

2. ENGLISH IN SWITZERLAND

The paradigmatic model proposed in this article is based on the Swiss context whose specific features need to be incorporated in the account of its most important aspects. Thus, apart from the theoretical outline of the multilingual design, there remain a few issues about Switzerland and English to be commented upon.

Swiss society has been classified by Haugen (1972: 166) as a *tertiary speech community* in which communication presents a complete failure and no understanding whatsoever, thereby requiring the help of interpreters. The other two types of communities are a *primary speech community* where the differences are idiosyncratic or idiolectal, and a *secondary speech community* where understanding is only partially achieved. Since Haugen (1972) sees Switzerland as a tertiary speech community, he postulates the requirement of an 'international' or 'auxiliary' language. In other words, such a situation calls for the intervention of language planning which would aim to manage an auxiliary language and the

effects of its usage. The instrumental functions of English render it as neutral, thereby bringing out the contrast with the Swiss mother tongues which act as the embodiment of culture and identity. Consequently, one of the recurring yet vital questions that is usually asked is the one about the development of a new Swiss identity based on a non-indigenous language of wider communication.

Switzerland is a self-proclaimed multilingual country where multilingualism underlies the societal organization and the solidarity among people speaking different languages. Stevenson (1990: 242) argues that multilingualism makes Switzerland "more vulnerable to the insidious challenge of a non-indigenous language that is in a position to usurp some of the functions of native languages." However, the emphasis in the concept of the Swiss nation has been put on the federal principles fostering diversity rather than on one language symbolizing national unity and identity. English has become a part of people's bi- or multilingual repertoires. In terms of the official language policy of Switzerland, multilingualism would be more often connected with the national level, while bilingualism relates better to the individual level and scope of linguistic repertoires.

In Switzerland English is perceived as a foreign language, though practically all Swiss citizens are well aware of the fact that they could not do without English in their everyday lives, and that some level of a command of English is needed for a professionally successful and profitable career (cf. Dürmüller 1991: 151; Lüdi, Höchle and Yanaprasart 2013: 59). Dürmüller (1986: 31) underlines the symbolic values of English able to function as an emblem of ethnicity for the Swiss. Thus English as an *interlanguage* is expected primarily to serve the purposes of pure communication and, in the second place, also of those senses that are more affective (cf. e.g. Watts & Andres 1993, Rosenberger 2009: 121). The patterns of the use of English in non-native settings seem to most bring out the pragmatic qualities of the language that may be termed either as 'second' (ESL) or 'foreign' (EFL) (cf. Kachru 1985). In neither case is English an official language, but the frequency of its usage and the range of domains where it appears are much more evident in ESL countries than in EFL countries. In ESL countries English plays an important role particularly in business, technology, higher education and science. In this context Watts and Andres (1993: 111) observe that "the two terms [ESL and EFL] are the endpoints of a scale of non-native English usage rather than a dichotomous categorization." Therefore, in terms of the non-native English usage, Switzerland has always been categorized as an EFL country but, since recently, also with the reservation that it might be moving toward the ESL end of the scale. This observation is also shared by Cheshire and Moser (1994: 454) who state that "it [English] cannot be considered to be a second language, as it is in countries such as India or Nigeria, but neither is it a

foreign language, as it is in countries such as Japan. Instead, its status lies somewhere in between" (cf. also Dürmüller 1986, 2002).

The last issue to consider here are the chances for English to be used as a language of intra-national communication in Switzerland. The diversity of language groups and the various degrees of their mutual unwillingness to use each other's language create favourable conditions for the English usage. The main advantages of English in Switzerland build on the fact that it is neutral to all linguistic groups and – to use de Swaan's (2001) terminology – it has a high communication value. Dürmüller (1989: 14) reports about the instances of English being used as a *lingua franca* between the Swiss who cannot communicate in the their respective mother tongues. English comes predominantly as the second choice, if the second Swiss national language of either interlocutor does not suffice for effective communication. The chances for English to play an important communication role in Switzerland depend very much on how the Swiss react to the spread of English in their country, as well as on the answer to the question of whether English really needs to stand in a *competitive relationship* to the national languages (cf. Dingwall & Murray 1999).

3. PARADIGMS OF MULTILINGUAL CONTACT

This subsection aims to distinguish three conceptual paradigms of the relationships of ethnicity to nationhood, having distinct implications for the functions of English, i.e. to homogenize or to contain ethnic diversity or to make it possible for the varied ethnic communities to learn and benefit from their differences. The paradigms outlined below for the reference to Switzerland were originally formulated to depict the multiracial, multilingual and multicultural conditions of Singapore (cf. Alsagoff & Lick 1998). Yet, Switzerland would require a paradigmatic framework that could serve as a point of reference for its own linguistic scenarios. The idea of drafting such paradigms seems helpful in determining the place of a dominant language in a multilingual environment in a macro perspective. It should be pointed out that these three paradigms are not absolutely demarcated, and some elements may be taken and combined selectively from each, i.e. fusion, mosaic and symbiosis.

The *fusion* paradigm obscures the distinctions between individual ethnic groups. A nation is made of a homogenized substance, i.e. population. In the end, ethnic distinctiveness is lost. The process of nation-building rests on a "fundamental contradiction" or "competing loyalties" (Alsagoff & Lick 1998: 208), with ethnicity on the one side and nationhood on the other. This loyalty is understood as a finite resource, which means that its proportions are always inverse, i.e. the more loyalty is expressed towards an ethnic community, the less remains for the nation, and vice versa. In the fusion approach, dissimilarities are essentially

centrifugal, weakening the common bonds. Ethnicity is synonymous with divisiveness, ethnocentrism and parochialism. In such circumstances English, as a language void of ethnic traces, neutralizes ethnic distinctiveness in the population's consciousness and overcomes the functions of vernaculars. Therefore, the fusion paradigm features English as a perfect tool for de-ethnicizing the population.

The *mosaic* paradigm takes ethnic communities as the building blocks of the nation. In this view, the national identity consolidates while preserving the cultural traditions and identity of each ethnic community. The concept of ethnic building blocks corresponds with multiculturalism and multilingualism. This ideology provides reassurance that the languages and cultures of individual communities will be safeguarded and that the nation is determined to preserve their diversity. Ethnicity is both practically used in nation-building and kept contained at the same time. Unlike the fusion paradigm, the mosaic paradigm acknowledges the constructive role of ethnicity in nation-building. In fact, the mosaic model of ethnic communities symbolizes a pluralistic cultural democracy in which all ethnic groups enjoy equal cultural and linguistic rights. Thus, the mosaic paradigm fosters the mutual containment between languages. The impact of English should be reflected in economic success and national unity, whereas the vernaculars should serve as cultural ballast.

In the *symbiosis* paradigm, like in the mosaic paradigm, ethnicity contributes to nationhood. However, the idea of symbiosis focuses more on the concept of interethnic relationships as mutual liberation rather than mutual containment. This concept prioritizes an ideology of multiculturalism which involves certain commitments as well as ensuring unity, equality and tolerance. These commitments refer to the cultivation and protection of self-confidence and self-respect in each ethnic group, including the promotion of mutual trust and support. In the symbiosis view, multiculturalism should also foster intercultural consciousness. Inter-culturalness means an openness to differences, to the variety of human possibilities, and opportunities for experience. In this respect, intercultural consciousness is liberating because it enables each culture to determine its own limitations, to challenge its own perspectives and ways, and to broaden its horizons through learning from cross-cultural differences.

To sum up, in the symbiosis paradigm *Swissness* would mean essentially inter-culturalness. The different ethnic cultures – self-critical and mutually respectful – support, complement and benefit from one another. The concept of symbiosis stands in contradiction to the fusion paradigm of nation-building, and transcends the mosaic paradigm in the sense that it goes beyond the equal treatment of different groups. The idea of symbiosis puts English on an equal footing with German, French and Italian. All these languages become

effective tools for ethnic self-creation and development. The neutrality of English is one of the major justifications for its status as the common language. It is not owned by any of the parties concerned and, as a result, none of the major ethnic communities in Switzerland can be regarded as a favoured one. I am of the opinion that the symbiosis paradigm clearly brings out the usefulness of an 'ethnically neutral' language. English in Switzerland may successfully serve two important purposes and, in fact, to some extent it does this already. First, thanks to its neutral status, English grants everyone similar opportunities regardless of their ethnic background, thereby becoming a common denominator for anybody involved. Second, English promotes not only ethnic harmony and national unity, but also fosters a national (Swiss) identity. Therefore, a common language that brings citizens of diverse ethnic origins together and provides them with opportunities for interaction and mutual understanding, can be a powerful factor consolidating the nation in its building of the sense of *Swissness*. Certainly, the role of English in Switzerland cannot be simply assumed. Instead, it needs to be critically assessed against the background of different understandings of ethnicity, culture, multiculturalism as well as *Swissness*. Referring to the descriptions of the Swiss context with the specific role played by English, it appears that no feature of the fusion paradigm can be applied in the case of Switzerland. Instead, the concept of Swiss identity seems to be in line with the symbiotic viewpoint, understood mainly as an ethnic and cultural reciprocity. However, the most accurate illustration of the language situation in Switzerland is the one based, though not entirely, on the mosaic paradigm. Indeed, the mosaic specificity of linguistic regions in this country is reinforced and maintained by *the territorial principle* which operates at the level of cantons and is understood as a guarantee of their linguistic autonomy, by which cantons are authorized to guard their languages sanctioned by tradition. The territorial principle permits each canton to determine which language will be official within its jurisdiction and thereby imposes on individuals the obligation to adapt to the language of the canton. The territorial principle can only regulate language use in official contexts, but the degree to which individual speakers actually adapt to the language of the canton in which they find themselves is variable (cf. Billigmeier 1979: 424, Rash 1998: 35, Stevenson 1990: 238). All in all, the constitutional guarantees given to language communities can be fully realized by means of the territorial principle being seen not so much as a restriction, but rather as a positive instrument of fulfilling national obligations.

4. A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY[2]

The empirical knowledge needed to formulate the Swiss paradigm presented below comes from the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey carried out in the canton of Zurich in 2011. The research was conducted from the CATI telephone studio centre of the PBS Ltd research institute in Sopot, Poland. CATI is a technique used to realize large quantitative research projects. It consists in conducting interviews over the telephone aided by the use of the computer. In total, 400 successful phone interviews were made, based on a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The most frequent question formats of closed questions include *yes-no* answers, ranking schemes, multiple choice or semantic differentials (cf. Fasold 1984: 152). In closed questions, the freedom to present one's views is limited to some extent, but the positive aspects seem to be appreciated by both respondents and researchers. For the former, these questions are much easier to deal with than open questions, whereas for the latter, closed questions are easy to score.

The research was based on probability sampling, representative of the city and the canton of Zurich, and characterized on the basis of the data concerning gender, age, education and employment. The number of women and men participating in the research is comparable. All respondents were adults, half of whom are persons between 35 and 54 years old. The group of respondents over 55 equals 38%. The youngest age category, i.e. persons between 18 and 34, made up as many as 11%. Nearly half of the respondents are people with primary or lower secondary education (48%). The second biggest group concerns the graduates of universities or colleges (28%). Every fifth respondent has declared to have an upper secondary level of education (20%). And, two thirds of all interviewees work professionally (67%).

The collected interviews have made it possible to outline the language repertoires of the Swiss, as well as their opinions and attitudes towards English and its acquisition. The data attained from this empirical research are viewed as a means serving to explore specific processes and phenomena that concern the development of the position of English closely surrounded by other languages. The adopted approach entails interpreting the results in line with the principles of inferential statistics about a given population which make it possible to make predictions or more general inferences about a given population from the analysis of the sample (cf. Babbie 2005: 497, Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero 2006: 17, 344).

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[2] For more details on the CATI methodology see Stępkowska (2013: 225-237).

5. THE SWISS PARADIGM

The proposed paradigm features multilingualism as a linguistic environment of a dominant language with the functions it is expected to serve. The discussion focuses on the question of English becoming an actual *lingua franca* or some form of a 'working' language for the country's internal communication. This also involves the question of English being employed by the Swiss as a means of performing other vital functions like constructing a new shared identity, thereby – to some extent – providing a mechanism for gradually eroding the status of the existing vernaculars. The relevant literature dealing with the macro-sociolinguistic aspects of the Swiss context reveals that the present situation in Switzerland seems to be set in the direction of a symbiotic relationship of English and the Swiss vernaculars. Therefore, it is assumed that the situation relating to English in Switzerland is moderately dynamic as evidenced by the recent statistics which reveal a steady growth of the popularity of English among the Swiss (cf. Lüdi & Werlen 2005).

Referring to the problem of global English, the Swiss context – somehow naturally – induces two main questions: (a) whether Swiss multilingualism makes the expansion of English easier in Switzerland, and (b) how English functions in the competing milieu of other big languages within one country. In the light of the above considerations, it may be assumed that English stands the chance of becoming an intra-national *lingua franca* in Switzerland, simultaneously being used for the purposes of international communication. As Dürmüller (1989) states, where one language group seems quite unwilling to use another language (the French-speaking Swiss) and another language group mostly has to use other languages (the Italian-speaking Swiss), the chances of English to be used as a language for intra-national communication may be seen as 'increasing.' To use Kachru's (1985) terminology, the full transformation of English from a foreign into a second language would shove Switzerland from the Expanding Circle into the Outer Circle of countries, generally characterized by an increased use of English in public life. It is this development that is generally seen as unsettling the traditional linguistic stability of multilingual Switzerland (cf. e.g. Altermatt 1997; Ammon & McConnell 2002).

As for the individual repertoires of the Swiss people, they have turned out to be rather modest in the past (e.g. Andres 1993; Dürmüller 1997, 2002; Pap 1990). It would be hard to say that the Swiss are functionally bilingual, and even more so that they are multilingual. Thus, the polyglot dialogue based on the combination of respective languages based on the mother tongues of the potential interlocutors may be treated as an exception that proves the rule of there being little multilingual activity stipulated by the policy guidelines. It should be clearly stated that despite the appreciable growth of interest in learning English, this trend does not seem to affect negatively the languages in which the Swiss express their identities.

Dürmüller's (2002: 121) observation concerning the weakening motivation of the Swiss to learn a second or a third national language truthfully renders "the utilitarian thinking of the Swiss and their acceptance of a world-wide culture transported by the English language." As the consequence of such attitudes, the four-language repertoire of Switzerland has been abridged to a repertoire of two and a half languages, i.e. the mother tongue, English and a 'half' of a second national language in the sense of a passive knowledge of that language (cf. Watts 2001: 309).

As far as the functions of English in Switzerland are concerned, the existing literature on the subject mentions many recurring predictions which appear to have been confirmed also by the inferences drawn from the results of the CATI survey. For instance, it would be hard to disagree with Dingwall and Murray (1999: 200), who name three functions of English in Switzerland at the end of the last century: (1) English as an international language, (2) English as a cultural symbol, and (3) English as a neutral intra-national foreign language. And, practically the same three types of functions for English in Switzerland have been identified by another pair of authors – Cheshire and Moser (1994: 453).

The macro level of social and linguistic analysis adopted in this article makes it possible to view the phenomena related to English as determinants contributing to the international sociolinguistic balance of power, which – according to Fishman (1977: 335) – include the spread of English, the control of English, and the fostering of national vernaculars. In what follows, the CATI research results are interpreted in the form of a conceptual paradigm that is intended to provide a basis for an account of the multilingual situation in the canton of Zurich. This account should be treated as an analytic outline or a set of terms and descriptions of interrelations and concepts rather than as a consistent collection of principles aspiring to form a system of empirical generalizations. Also, it should be stressed that the role of English in Switzerland cannot be assumed without reservations. The Swiss paradigm features the role of English as an intra-national language which denotes a language other than the mother tongue, and which is used for communication purposes within one country. This 'intra-national' usage of English is meant to be different from the status of a 'second' or 'foreign' language, although generally the acquisition of English in Switzerland is typical of a foreign language. English does not spread in Switzerland as a new mother tongue, but distinctly as an additional language. Figure 1 below represents the conceptualization of English in Switzerland in the form of *the Swiss paradigm* by referring to the vital macro-sociolinguistic concepts emerging at the interface of society and language.

	The Swiss paradigm
Ethnicity and nationhood	Ethnic communities play a vital role in the nation-building. Ethnicity is appreciated for its constructive contribution to the consolidation of nationhood.
Identity	Identity builds on inter-cultural-ness. The diverse participating ethnic communities interact in the spirit of a dialogic culture and mutual respect. The ethnic groups are supposed to learn and benefit from their differences, as well as support and complement one another.
Status of English	English is accepted as an intra-national (but non-national) language for within-the-country communication purposes. It has been unofficially assigned the status of a *lingua franca* or a language of wider communication, but only in some domains of life, such as business, international trade, science or entertainment. Although there are some indications of a status change from EFL to ESL, English is still perceived as a foreign language.
Role of English	English handles certain language problems, thereby facilitating communication across the linguistic barriers within the country. It is mainly used for Special Purposes (ESP). As a 'neutral' second language, English is used by all the Swiss language groups to help prevent ethnic polarization or confrontation. Apart from fulfilling linguistic needs, English as a world language may be appropriated in order to express new social identities or may also serve as a symbolic resource. It is via English that the Swiss nation is exposed to alien lifestyles and values, thus the national languages are felt to fulfil the purpose of cultural 'immunization.'
Language repertoires	English belongs to a repertoire of a societal and individual type, whereby the latter tends to have a simplified composition. Bilinguals who speak English as a second language propagate it and create its importance. The use of English for Special Purposes also makes the language strengthen its position within the societal type of the language repertoire. The altered shape of repertoires leads to a diglossic type of relationship where regional vernaculars coexist with English as a dominant language of a larger scope.
Attitudes toward English	English is regarded as important to individuals' future careers. English also enjoys a high degree of acceptance since it is considered the most useful language. Swiss speakers of English display an exonormative orientation. The general acceptance of the language indicates that the public is ready to welcome English and include it in their language repertoires in the first place.
Language policy	The efforts in the language policy of Switzerland as a country of four national languages aim to maintain the traditional bi- or multilingual types of communication. English is not considered as another official language of the country, but instead it has firmly settled itself in the Swiss language policy and planning as the most (or the first) popular foreign language.

Figure 1: The paradigm of a multilingual contact: the Swiss paradigm.

6. DISCUSSION

English as a *lingua franca*, both in the local and global context, does not have to present a threat to other languages used in multilingual contexts. Interlingual and intercultural dialogue is possible precisely thanks to an additional language treated as nothing more than a useful

tool. Language policy in Switzerland seems to be gradually incorporating English into its multilingual communication reality. The introduction of English into the Swiss schools is the consequence of the changes brought about by the globalization phenomena, as well as by the strong demand for learning English from the Swiss themselves. Despite the strong tradition of multilingualism and its unquestionable value, it is evident that the Swiss – both the language-planners and average citizens – are open to English. At present, the Swiss language policy seems to be looking for a golden mean in order not to allow to marginalize the roles of the French- and Italian-speaking minorities and, on the other hand, to control the spread of English nationwide. It cannot be said that English in Switzerland receives uncritical acceptance in every situation. Rather, it may be argued that English is widely accepted with no fears of losing the national languages' identity. The fact that English is preferred by the Swiss comes from concrete communication needs which are the source of instrumental motivation. It may be even assumed that a highly functional approach to English excludes the possibility of its entering the more intimate domains of life reserved for the national languages in non-native speakers. The language behaviour of individuals is always subordinate to the main goal of communication. If the usefulness of a language scores highly, it will be improved, and if not, the language will be pushed down to more distant places in individual repertoires. It is this hierarchy of languages in the repertoires of bi- or multilingual individuals that raises the biggest concerns in sociolinguists. Postulating a rigid order of languages in the repertoires – e.g. a mother tongue always needs to come first in terms of usefulness and its frequency of use, followed by another national language (if there is one), and then by a *lingua franca* – inevitably leads to a (hyper)critical assessment of most circumstances in which language minorities exist. The assumption that a language assuming the function of a *lingua franca* always has to be in destructive opposition to the national languages would not only reveal a fallacious line of reasoning, but also misrepresent the essence of multilingualism.

7. CONCLUSION

The conducted CATI survey has revealed that English acquired a high place in the linguistic repertoires of the Swiss living in the canton of Zurich. Admittedly, English has already proved to be the most useful language (after German) in multilingual Switzerland, though it has not achieved the status of a *lingua franca* yet. Based on the present language situation, it may be assumed that English as a globalizing language continues heading towards a status change from a foreign language into a second language (cf. Kachru 1985). The language conditions in Switzerland, distinguished by a high degree of stability, seem to create an equally predictable scenario for the future of English. It has been stipulated that a broadly

understood multilingual context seen in the macro-sociolinguistic perspective should be formulated – which accordingly has been conceptualized as the Swiss paradigm. Referring to Switzerland in name, this linguistic paradigm is assumed to describe and validate the factors that create conditions conducive to the development of a globalizing language in other multilingual contexts.

The future communication among the Swiss may include an increasing frequency of English usage, but it is unlikely to consist of English-only contacts. The teaching of foreign languages responds to the demands of the linguistic market and is involved in its development. The worldwide appeal of English induces an increased interest in its learning. People need not be encouraged to study English as its utility is unquestionable, although they seem to be driven not so much by choice as by necessity. Thus, also due to the global factors, English-based multilingualism in Switzerland stands a good chance of prevailing, though other languages also represent an option for communication.

Our times have come to be characterized by a peculiar paradox. On the one hand, we observe a freedom of movement that logically favours one language, gradually endowing it with the status of a *lingua franca*. On the other, we hear demands for cultural freedom induced by a resentment against the monopoly of dominant languages. An acceptable solution to such communication challenges will require a massive collaborative effort consisting in the monitoring of linguistic trends through research and, certainly, a concerted political effort.

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