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ENGLISH AS A CULTURAL SYMBOL: THE CASE OF ADVERTISEMENTS IN FRENCH-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

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Abstract As a world language, freed from its ties with any country where it is a native language, English acts both as a linguistic resource and as a symbolic resource for the different countries that use it. The occurrence of English in advertisements in the Suisse Romande is analysed in this paper as an illustration of the symbolic use of English. In the Swiss advertisements that we analyse, English evokes connotations relating to stereotypes of countries where it is spoken as a native language, most notably the USA. It also evokes connotations associated with its use as an international language, symbolising, for instance, professionalism and international appeal. More significant, however, is the apparent appropriation of English as a symbol of Swiss national identity, allowing the French-speaking Swiss to construct a self-image that is consistent with the way in which they are seen by outsiders and to lay claim to a social identity that is not available to them through their own language.

Introduction

English must be currently the world's most extensively studied language, as befits, perhaps, a language which is not only one of the most widely spoken in the world but also the main medium of international communication. As a result we now know a great deal about both the form and the function of English in the many countries of the world in which it is used (see, for example, Bailey & Görlach, 1982; García & Otheguy, 1989; Trudgill & Hannah, 1987; Cheshire, 1991). Less extensively studied, however, has been the way in which English sometimes functions as a cultural symbol—in other words, not as a system of signs, but as a sign in itself. One of the few scholars who has focused on this aspect of English is Haarmann: his research in Japan (Haarmann, 1989) shows how English is used symbolically

in Japanese television advertisements, with no expectation that viewers will understand what they see or hear. The recent development of advertisements in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union also shows English being used in this way: advertisers presumably assume that Russian viewers or readers will associate the Roman alphabet and the English language with a particular set of connotations, rather than that they will understand the particular English words or phrases that they see. In situations of this kind we are witnessing what Eastman & Stein (1993) term 'language display', where a language is used not in order to communicate linguistically, across linguistic boundaries, but to lay claims to the attributes associated symbolically with speakers of that language.

The question that then arises, of course, is which attributes English represents when it is used in this way. Does it symbolise certain characteristics that seem typical of speakers in one of the countries in which English is spoken as a native language, such as the USA? Or does the status of English as an international language allow it to act instead as a symbol of international appeal? Haarmann's analysis of Japanese television commercials found that when English was used in a visual setting that was clearly British or American, it might evoke a stereotype of that country; in general, however, the stereotyped reactions did not derive from an association with a country where the majority of the population speaks English as a native language, but instead from a more general association of the English language with ideas of modernity and social advance. Most Japanese have little sustained direct experience of foreign cultures, but the use of English in TV commercials, together with other foreign languages (mainly French), makes them feel that they are members of a modern, 'cosmopolitan' society. Haarmann claims, therefore, that the use of English in television advertisements in Japan does not, as might at first be thought, reflect the influence of America or of Europe in Japan, but is, instead, a special Japanese way of using the English language.

This conclusion seems to us an important one, for it lends support to the views of scholars such as Smith (1976) and McArthur (1984). Smith claims, with reference to English language teaching, that English has now become a language of the world, freed from its ties with a particular country where it is spoken as a native language. As a result, he argues, learners of English no longer need to study the culture of a country whose principal language is English, in order to use the language effectively. McArthur (1984) claims, in similar vein, that English is now the world's first truly global language, with a unique non-national, non-regional, non-ethnic stature. In other words, it has been claimed that English now belongs to any country that uses it. If this is so, we would expect the different countries that use English as a cultural symbol to exploit this linguistic resource in their own special ways, in order to meet their own individual requirements.

The analysis that we present in this paper supports this idea. We discuss the use of English in advertisements in the Suisse Romande, the French-

speaking part of Switzerland. We argue that just as there appears to be a uniquely Japanese way of using the English language in advertising, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of Japanese society, so there is a special Suisse Romande way, reflecting in its turn some distinctive aspects of French-speaking Switzerland. This suggests to us that English may indeed be available as a potential symbolic resource for any country of the world that may need it.

The Role of English in Switzerland

Switzerland is often cited by outsiders as a prime example of a successful multilingual society (Stevenson, 1989), 'a miracle of unity in diversity' (Pap, 1990: 109). It is unique amongst the countries of Europe in having no less than four national languages (German, French, Italian and Rumantsch), three of which are used for official purposes. It is worth stressing that it is the *country* which is multilingual, not the inhabitants; the majority of the Swiss are monolingual speakers of just one of the Swiss languages (the Rumantsch speakers, however, who make up only 0.8% of the population, are mainly bilingual in Rumantsch and German). The situation in German-speaking Switzerland is rather complex: here the Swiss speak a range of Alemannic dialects, most of which are mutually intelligible within Switzerland (though not outside it). These dialects are in a diglossic relationship with the official variety of German, which is very similar to the *HochDeutsch* used throughout the German-speaking world, and mutually intelligible with it. The diglossic situation of German-speaking Switzerland is discussed in Watts (1988) and Lee (1992).

Although most Swiss people view English as a foreign language, its status within the country has been gradually changing during the last forty years, with the result that in several respects it is now used as a second language rather than as a foreign language. Three types of function can be identified for English in Switzerland. First, although English has no official status within the country, it does have a place in some official or quasi-official domains of everyday life, presumably because it can serve as a 'neutral' second language for all the Swiss language groups. Thus from 1986 onwards Swiss passports have been worded not only in German, French and Italian but also in English. English is also used for the official timetable of the Swiss Federal Railway. A second function reflects the status of English as a global international language. For example, a recent law governing the two Federal Polytechnics (high status technical universities) explicitly acknowledges the possibility of teaching in English, and at one of them, the Lausanne Federal Polytechnic, certain courses in economics and other subjects are taught through the medium of English. The other Federal Polytechnic, in Zürich, published its triennial research report in English in 1993. A further example can be given from the business domain: here English is used as a lingua franca, with some Swiss companies opting

to use it not only for their international business relations but also for communications within the company, on the grounds that this is cheaper than paying for the translations that would otherwise be necessary. Thirdly, English is used within Switzerland in a number of private domains, particularly amongst younger people. Dürmüller (1991, 1992) found that an increasing number of younger Swiss prefer to communicate in English with a Swiss interlocutor from a different language area, which goes against the Swiss educational policy of making a second Swiss language an obligatory second language at school to facilitate communication within Switzerland. The preferences of these young people may well be related to the fact that English is currently very fashionable amongst this age group. As in many other western or 'westernised' countries, many young people use English for a number of expressive purposes: not only do they listen to English language popular music and see English language films, but they use English themselves, for graffiti, when swearing, in short exclamations such as *good luck*, and even for straightforward short exchanges of information. *Bye bye* is a common informal leave-taking expression.

All these examples show the extent to which English has pervaded the Swiss way of life. It 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. It is within this context that the research described in the remainder of this paper needs to be seen.

The Sample of Advertisements

Our research was based on 1242 advertisements collected systematically from two weekly magazines published in French-speaking Switzerland and aimed at Swiss readers, namely *L'Hebdo* and *L'Illustré*. For each magazine, we collected all the advertisements that appeared during the first half of 1992, in issues number 2 to 21. The two magazines differ in that *L'Hebdo* is intended for a relatively well educated readership (educated mainly to university level), whereas *L'Illustré* is written at a more popular level. This can be seen from the subjects that are discussed in the magazines, with *L'Hebdo* dealing with politics, the economy, culture, social issues and news, and *L'Illustré* with people, events, sport, gossip, 'what's new', feature articles and TV.

Table 1 shows the percentage use of English in the advertisements occurring in the two magazines during the period of study. It can be seen that English occurs in about a quarter to a third of the total number of advertisements in the two magazines, with *L'Hebdo* using English more often than *L'Illustré*. The difference is significant ($X^2 = 13.1$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.01$). Some of the advertisements appeared more than once in the two magazines: if we consider only the different advertisements that appeared during the six month period, the percentage using English rises to 40.9% ($N = 147$) for

Table 1 Percentage use of English in the data set

	Percentage of ads using English	Percentage of ads not using English	Total
<i>L'Hebdo</i>	34.7 (N = 296)	65.3 (N = 558)	100 (N = 854)
<i>L'Illustré</i>	24.2 (N = 94)	75.8 (N = 294)	100 (N = 388)
Total numbers	N = 390	N = 852	N = 1242

L'Hebdo and 30.6% ($N = 51$) for *L'Illustré*, with English still used significantly more often in *L'Hebdo* than in *L'Illustré* ($X^2 = 5.0$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$).

English is by no means used in all the advertisements in our sample, then, but it occurs often enough to be worth proper investigation.

Impact of English

We began our more detailed analysis by analysing the proportion of English relative to other languages in those advertisements in which English was used. Since we wanted our analysis to reflect the amount of English to which readers of the two magazines were exposed, we decided to base our investigation on the total occurrences of advertisements in our sample (i.e. 1242 advertisements) including, therefore, some that appeared more than once. The results are shown in Figure 1.

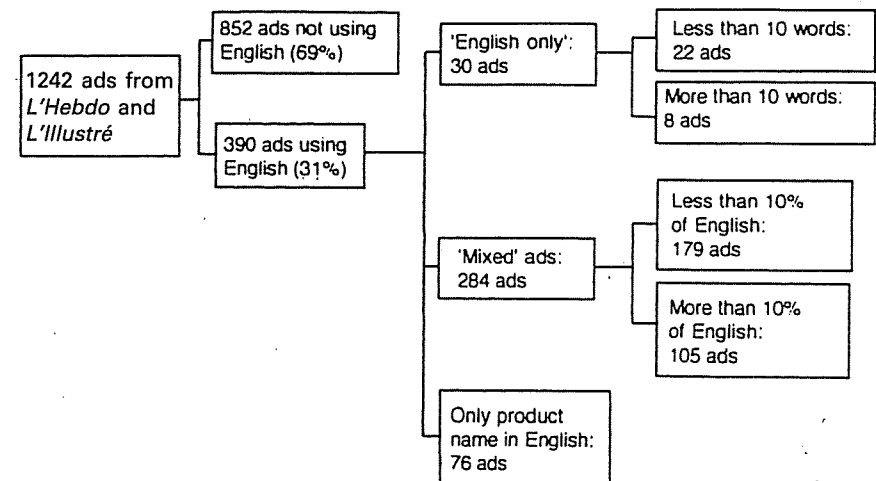


Figure 1 Proportion of English used in advertisements in the data set

In quantitative terms, the impact of English would seem to be relatively slight. Figure 1 shows that of the 390 advertisements in which English occurred, 76 had only the name of the product in English. These products were of many different kinds, including make-up (*Lip Spa*, for example), perfume (e.g. *Lonestar*), watches (e.g. *Royal Oak*) and motorcycles (e.g. *Fireblade*). There were just 30 advertisements in which English was the only language to be used, and in 22 of these the text consisted only of 10 words or less. A further 31 advertisements, all for cigarettes, used English for the main advertising message, giving only the necessary factual information about the content of tar and nicotine in French and German. The majority of English-using advertisements, however, (253, excluding the cigarette advertisements just mentioned) used English together with French or, very occasionally, with German. In these advertisements English was not the most dominant language, at least not from a quantitative point of view, for the majority had only between 1 to 10% of the text in English.

Nevertheless, although the relative proportion of English was small, the English part of the text tended to occur in a particularly prominent position in the advertisement. We can see this by applying the framework for analysing advertisements set out by Leech (1966): this framework was still relevant for the advertisements in our sample, despite the considerable changes that have taken place in advertising techniques during the last thirty years. Leech identifies five main components in press advertisements: the headline, illustrations, the body copy (the main part of the advertising message), the signature line (a mention of the brand-name, often accompanied by a slogan or a trademark), and the standing details (consisting of, for example, strictly utilitarian information in small print, such as the nicotine and tar content of cigarettes, the address of the manufacturer, or legal footnotes). Not all advertisements have all these components, of course. We found that the most common position for English was in the signature line of the advertisement, as the slogan accompanying the brand name. This slogan usually accompanies all goods carrying the brand name in question, rather than simply the particular product that is advertised: for example, Pioneer's slogan *The Art of Entertainment* accompanies not only the particular CD player advertised in our sample, but all the Pioneer products.

In our data set the slogan stands out from the image and the rest of the text in a number of ways, including its position in the advertisement, its print size (it may be in larger size print), its type face or its colour. Often several of these factors combine to make the signature line particularly prominent. Furthermore, the signature line is sometimes used as the main slogan, occurring in large print in the centre of an advertisement, which is obviously a strategic position. The most frequent position for the signature line, however, is the bottom right corner (or, sometimes, simply the bottom of the page, standing alone). This can also be considered a strategic position, if we assume that when we look at an advertisement whilst reading a

magazine, we roughly reproduce the usual movement of reading, starting at the top left corner and ending at the bottom right corner. The signature line, in this case, ensures that the brand name and the accompanying slogan are the last pieces of information which readers receive, and the information, therefore, that they are presumably the most likely to remember. Examples of signature lines in English from our sample are *SPIRELLA of Switzerland*, *Your Bath Boutique* and *NCR Open, Cooperative Computing. The Strategy for Managing change*.

To sum up, then, the quantity of English used is rarely great, relative to French, but the English words usually appear in key positions in the advertisements, thereby having a greater impact on readers of the magazines than might be suggested by the amount of English that occurs.

English as language or as pure symbol?

Haarmann's research in Japan suggested that English functioned purely symbolically in that context, since Japanese viewers were unlikely to be able to understand the English words and phrases that were used. In the Suisse Romande, on the other hand, the fact that English occurs more in *L'Hebdo*, the magazine with the more educated readership, suggests that advertisers might expect it to be understood by consumers. We therefore analysed the English syntax and vocabulary used in the advertisements, to help decide whether the English that occurred was likely to be understood by Swiss consumers. In the Anglophone world present-day advertisements make much use of puns and word play, often rendering them opaque for foreign learners of English. If this were also the case in the Suisse Romande, we could assume that the role of English in advertising is purely symbolic, as it is in Japan, since it would be unlikely that Swiss consumers could understand the English texts.

In fact, however, the English syntax used in the advertisements is very basic. The majority of advertisements used English only in words and phrases rather than in full sentences, and of the 53 full sentences that did occur, 38 (72%) were imperatives. As an example, consider the text of a Honda motorcycle advertisement (for the *Fireblade* model) which consists of the simple imperative *Come ride with us* (it is noteworthy that the imperative is in American English, rather than the British *Come and ride with us*). Imperative sentences are easy for learners of English to recognise, of course, for they are superficially very simple. The remaining 15 full sentences were declaratives: interrogative sentences, with their more complex surface form, do not occur in our sample, though they are common in advertisements in Britain (see, for example, Cook, 1992). Syntactic structure, then, is simple—even rudimentary.

The vocabulary is also elementary. We estimated the potential difficulty for a Swiss reader of the 2716 words in the sample by using the main entries in *Harrap's Dictionnaire Anglais Élémentaire* (1991) as a principled

way of establishing what might constitute a basic English vocabulary. This dictionary claims to contain only the commonest English words, such that they will be found in textbooks for the first years of English study. In this way we found that 66.8% (1815) of the English words used could be considered to form part of the basic vocabulary of English. Of the remaining 901 words that might be problematic to a reader with only a basic knowledge of English, a further 18.5% (504 words) could be easily associated with either a French or a German word (such as, for example, *reality*, which has the French equivalent *réalité*, or *field*, with the corresponding German *Feld*). All the French-speaking Swiss are required to study German at school, as we mentioned in Section 2. Thus only about 15% of the words in our sample of advertisements seem likely to cause a real problem of understanding to a reader with a basic knowledge of English.

There is, however, the special case of puns, which occur in 25 advertisements in our sample and which do require a relatively sophisticated knowledge of English in order to be interpreted. For example, the slogan *Paradice*, for Pierrot ice cream, uses phonetic similarity between the final sounds of the word *paradise* and the word *ice*. In this case, the pun functions only if readers know both the English words. Moreover, they need to recognise that the spelling of the word *paradise* has been altered and that this new word now contains *ice*. The slogan *Select today!* for Select cigarettes also implies a relatively sophisticated knowledge of English, in order to appreciate that the phrase can be read simultaneously as a noun phrase and as a verb phrase.

Unlike Japan, therefore, it seems that English can function at a number of levels in advertisements in the Suisse Romande. It can function as a cultural symbol, for readers who can recognise that English is used but who cannot understand the meaning of the English text—or, of course, for readers who merely glance at the advertisement without spending time reading it. As Eastman & Stein (1993) point out, fluency and understanding are unnecessary for a language to be successfully used as display. Advertisers will not lose out, then, by using English, even if it is not understood by consumers. However, English can also convey referential meaning: with the exception of the puns, it seems that even those Swiss readers of magazine advertisements who have only a rudimentary knowledge of English will be able to understand the majority of the words and phrases that are used. In this case, the simplicity of the vocabulary and the syntax may even have the effect of flattering those readers who find that they can easily understand the English that they see in an advertisement. Finally, readers who have a more sophisticated knowledge of English and who spend a little time reading the advertisements may enjoy the word play involved in the puns. Thus in the Suisse Romande where, as we saw earlier, consumers are exposed to English as part of their everyday lives, English may have a dual function in advertisements, acting both as a language and as a cultural symbol.

Symbolic Functions of English

As we have seen, it is unlikely that English functions exclusively as a symbol in Swiss advertisements since most readers will be able to understand the English text (except perhaps in the case of puns). Even when the English words are understood, however, the fact that English has been chosen in an advertisement may still have a symbolic meaning in itself, over and above the literal meaning of the English words. In order to investigate the image that might be associated with English, we first examined what kind of products were advertised in English, and then established their country of origin.

Type of product

Table 2 lists the percentage number of advertisements for each product for which there were more than five advertisements in the data set, showing, for each product, the number that use English and the number that do not.

It can be seen that local services, such as chatlines, insurance, banks, medicines and clairvoyance tend to be advertised mainly or exclusively in French, with only credit cards advertised exclusively in English. A separate analysis established that credit cards, perfume, motorcycles and cigars were advertised only in *L'Hebdo*: furthermore, there were far more advertisements in *L'Hebdo* than in *L'Illustré* for watches, computers and communication products and cameras. Apart from these products, the range of products advertised in the two magazines was very similar. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the two magazines in terms of the number of advertisements for a given product that used English. In other words, it seems that it is the nature of the product that determines whether English is used (and which similarly determines the frequency with which the product is advertised in each of the magazines) rather than the intended readership of the magazine in which the advertisement appears.

Connotations

We saw in Table 2 that advertisements that use English cover a wide range of products, touching on many areas of life, including leisure time, domestic life and the business world. In this section we attempt to identify some of the specific connotations that English may have in the advertisements in which it is used. This is not an easy task, however. Reactions to advertisements are complex, subjective and indeterminate (Cook, 1992), with the result that not only may different readers respond in varying ways to the same advertisement, but the same reader may react differently to the same advertisement on different occasions. We therefore make no attempt to analyse in quantitative terms the connotations that might be associated with

Table 2 Products advertised

Products	Number of ads using English	Number of ads not using English	Percentage of ads using English
Credit cards	14	0	100.0
Cigarettes	54	10	84.4
Hi-fi equipment	7	2	77.8
Cigars	6	2	75.0
Computers and communication	46	19	70.8
Cameras	8	7	53.3
Air travel	14	13	51.9
Alcohol	33	32	50.8
Shoes and clothes	13	15	46.4
Watches	24	29	45.3
Cars	42	60	41.2
Motorcycles	2	3	40.0
Perfume	3	5	37.5
Music	7	13	35.0
Beauty	8	16	33.3
Schools	17	38	30.9
Household Equipment	10	43	18.9
Sport and Leisure	2	9	18.2
Holidays, Hotels	15	85	15.0
Telephone chatline	1	6	14.3
Furniture	9	84	9.7
Insurance	2	41	4.7
Banks	0	81	0.0
Medicine	0	37	0.0
Clairvoyance	0	17	0.0
Soft drinks	0	15	0.0
Others	44	98	31.0
Whole sample	390	852	31.4

the use of English in our data, but simply discuss certain trends that can be identified.

It is striking, for example, that English is used more often overall for products that are particularly susceptible to passing fashions, and which people may use as part of an expression of social identity. Thus English occurs far more frequently in advertisements for cigarettes, cigars, shoes, clothes, watches, cars and alcohol, than it does in advertisements for more mundane everyday necessities such as household equipment, food and insurance. English is preferred, in other words, for what Haarmann (1989) identifies as typical consumer goods. Perhaps this simply reflects the fact that English is currently fashionable in Europe, especially amongst younger

people, but it also suggests that English is used for display, in the way discussed by Eastman & Stein (1993), as a way of claiming a particular kind of social identity or self-image.

The overwhelming use of English to advertise credit cards is also striking. Credit cards such as Visa or Mastercard have begun to be used in Switzerland only recently, and they are still used very infrequently there compared to other countries with similar economies and a comparable standard of living. Many large stores, high class restaurants and petrol stations still operate only with cash. The Swiss do not really need to have credit cards, as long as they stay in Switzerland. It is only when they venture outside their own country that credit cards become essential, and it is no surprise, therefore, to find that credit cards are sold to the Swiss in English, the language of tourism and international travel. The association of English with tourism and travel may also account for its use in advertisements for air travel, in *L'Hebdo. L'Illustré*, with its less professional readership, has far fewer advertisements overall for air travel (a total of 5 compared with 22 in *L'Hebdo*), none of which use English. International appeal is also exploited, we assume, in the use of English in advertisements for holidays. A particularly interesting case is that of an advertisement for Portugal as a holiday resort which uses English for its 'brand slogan': *PORTUGAL Land of discoveries*. Both the text and the image of the advertisement put forward the argument of Portuguese culture. The image shows a medieval horseman against a backdrop of the sea, and the French text can be translated as: 'From the western frontier of Europe, Henry the Navigator set out to conquer a new world and to found an empire. Discover today a rich cultural heritage'. It seems odd that English should be used in this culturally-bound advertisement, rather than French, the language of the targeted tourists, or Portuguese—which, even though it may not be understood by Swiss consumers, is the language of the culture which the advertisement promotes. It must be remembered, however, that Switzerland has a large number of Portuguese seasonal workers, and that for the average Swiss citizen, Portugal is likely to have connotations associated with their domestic help or of another kind of employee with low status within Switzerland. The choice of English here can be interpreted, therefore, as an attempt to raise the image of Portugal, to avoid any associations it may have within Switzerland as the poor relation of Europe, and to show it as active on the international tourist scene. This seems a clear example, then, of English being used for the connotations it evokes by virtue of its status as an international language.

The use of English in advertisements for computers and communication products, and for hi-fi equipment reflects, we assume, an association that stems from the use of English as a lingua franca in the domains of science and technology. These associations are also exploited in advertisements for other products where technical expertise or professionalism is the theme, even when no technological details are given. An advertisement for a Seiko watch claims, as we saw: *He's spent 21 years 3 months and 2 days getting*

here. *But all that matters is the next 48.62 seconds.* This advertisement stresses the accuracy of the watch and it is significant that this is done in English, the language of technological competence. The general argument of competence is also used to imply that professionals use a product, and that it must, therefore, be the best product of its type on the market. Thus an advertisement for Breitling has the signature line *Instruments for professionals*, and the slogan *Cover Girl Professional Mascara* occurs in an advertisement for Migros cosmetics. For some products, then, the use of English may evoke connotations associated with its status as an international language, in the domains of tourism, travel, science and technology.

Thus for some products the use of English in advertisements appears to reflect the functions of English within Switzerland, broadly coinciding with the domains of life in which the Swiss are used to seeing English used. As discussed earlier, these uses encompass that of a lingua franca (stemming from the availability of English as an international language), and that of an expressive language, symbolising being 'hip' or, perhaps, adherence to an international youth culture, for younger speakers at least.

Sometimes, however, English is used in an advertisement together with a clear reference to a country where English is the principal native language. Usually the country is the USA, but in some cases it is Great Britain, as in an advertisement for McGregor sportswear. The advertisement shows an image of a Scottish landscape, the slogan is *McCountry*, and the name of the brand is presented in outline print filled with a tartan design. In another advertisement, for holidays, the country is Ireland, and the slogan *Ireland: Time for dreams*.

The majority of cigarette advertisements are for American brands, and many of these make a clear allusion to the USA. Advertisements for cigarettes account, in fact, for 54 of the English-using advertisements, of which 40 are for American brands. Thirty of these advertisements have a clear reference to the USA in the text, the image, or both (we do not include here references to 'American blend', a general term for a type of tobacco—for example, there are three advertisements for a Swiss brand of cigarette which vaunts its *American Blend*). Thus the advertisements for Philip Morris cigarettes have the signature line *Great American Light Taste*, whilst those for Marlboro cigarettes have photographs of cowboys. Some of the advertisements for Philip Morris show a view of Manhattan in addition to having their signature line in English. Here, then, smoking is associated with the idea of the USA. It is worth noting that this European association between smoking and the USA no longer coincides with reality, given the present strength of the non-smoking trend in the USA. Thus although smoking may no longer be part of the average American lifestyle, it is still, it seems, part of the European stereotype of the American way of life. Furthermore, American manufacturers of cigarettes appear to feel it necessary to keep this stereotype alive for their European market. Despite the ill-founded nature of the association between smoking and the American lifestyle, Swiss

people may well feel that when they smoke American brands, they smoke in (American) English.

Two other themes that recur in the advertisements using English are sport and competition. In many people's minds, of course, the stereotype of a country with a competitive economy is the USA. In this case the stereotype in fact accords closely to reality, for in 1993 the USA was ranked second, after Japan, in the 1993 World Economic Forum table of the world's most economically competitive countries (source: *Le Nouveau Quotidien* 22.6.93). The advertisements in our sample suggest that an association in people's minds between competition and the USA may be mirrored by an association between competition and the English language. The theme of competition is used in two ways in the advertisements in our sample. Some advertisements suggest that their product will win in any competition with other products, and that it is therefore the best; others stress that winners use their product, therefore 'you are likely to win if you use it'. The two themes are related, of course, since winners presumably use a product because it is the best, and therefore this product is likely to win in a competition with other products; but in the first case the advertisement will be centred more on the product, whereas in the second case it will focus more on the image of the winner. An advertisement for a Mitsubishi car, for example, focuses on the product, making use of an association with competition by means of a background image of runners, whilst the foreground shows the car itself, which the slogan proclaims to be *Simply the best*. On the other hand, the Seiko advertisement mentioned earlier shows the image of an athlete in the foreground, suggesting that athletes in important competitions use Seiko watches: in this case, the product is presented in a less prominent way than the main image of the athlete. In both cases, however, the language of the slogan is English.

To sum up, certain products, especially cigarettes, seem to be advertised in English in order to evoke connotations that have to do with the lifestyle of a particular country where English is a native language, usually the USA. English is also associated with other themes, such as competition and technological advance. The first of these, competition, may reflect a stereotype of American culture, whereas the second appears instead to reflect the international use of English in the domains of science and technology. The international associations of English are also exploited in advertisements for credit cards and holidays. We can say, then, that English is bicultural in our sample of advertisements, symbolising both the cultures associated with countries where it is the dominant native language, and those cultural domains where it is used as an important international language of communication. Furthermore, English is used more often in advertisements for typical consumer goods, where a person's self-image may affect their choice, than in advertisements for everyday items. These everyday items are mainly advertised to the French-speaking Swiss in their own language.

Origins of brands

Table 3 shows the countries of origin of the products advertised in English in our sample.

Brands from English-speaking countries (USA, Great Britain, Ireland, Bermuda, South Africa, Australia and Canada) account for 140 advertisements in the sample (35.9%) out of the total of 390. This appears to be a very different situation from that found in Japan, where 95.4% of the advertisements in Haarmann's (1989) study were for Japanese products. We were hardly surprised to find that products from English-speaking countries were advertised using English; on the other hand, we had not expected to find that the country from which the largest number of English-using advertisements in our sample derived was Switzerland: 30.8% of the different English-using advertisements were for Swiss products, and 32.1% of the total number of English-using advertisements. These figures cannot be explained by the policy of advertisers to use a unique advertisement in several different countries: a recent survey found that pan-European advertising was used by only 1 in 10 companies, and even then, only rarely. Most companies produced different advertisements for each country (source: *The Guardian*, 18.10.93). We need to explain, then, why Swiss companies choose to advertise their products to Swiss consumers through the use of English.

One possibility is that when English is the only language used in an advertisement, that advertisement could be used in all the linguistic communities in Switzerland, at some considerable financial saving to the advertiser. Swiss brands, however, account for only 4 of the 30 English-only advertisements in our sample; the majority of Swiss brands use a mixture of English and French. In our sample, 77 advertisements for Swiss products use both English and French, and are primarily intended, therefore, for a French-speaking audience. There must be another reason for the use of English to advertise Swiss products, then, in addition to its mere convenience as a lingua franca. Why is English used in this way, then? Is it used simply

Table 3 Origins of products advertised using English

Origin	Number of ads	Origin	Number of ads	Origin	Number of ads
Switzerland	125	Italy	8	Denmark	4
USA	96	Ireland	6	South Africa	2
Germany	45	Holland	6	Portugal	2
Japan	30	France	6	Canada	1
UK	20	Australia	4	Unknown	20
Bermuda	11	Sweden	4	TOTAL	390

because of the positive connotations that English evokes, as an international language, as in the holiday advertisement for Portugal? The reason appears to be more complex than this, as becomes clear if we consider the nature of the Swiss products that are advertised using English. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that the Swiss products advertised in English are of many different kinds, as they are in the whole sample. However, four Swiss products stand out as advertised far more often in English than others, namely cigarettes, schools, watches and computers. The case of cigarettes and that of computers have already been discussed: smoking is generally associated with the USA, and English is the main language in the domain of computers and communication technology. The use of English in advertisements for Swiss schools can be easily explained: the 17 advertisements that use English are all for language courses abroad, mainly, but not exclusively, in English-speaking countries, and English is one of the languages mentioned in all these advertisements.

The fact that 46.7% of advertisements for Swiss watches use English is a far more surprising finding, for watches are one of the main components of the cultural stereotype of Switzerland (together, perhaps, with mountains and fondues). Watchmaking is one of the principal industries in Switzerland,

Table 4 Advertisements for Swiss products

Swiss products	Ads using English	Ads not using English	Percentage of ads using English
Cigarettes	10	—	100.0
Schools	17	17	50.0
Watches	21	24	46.7
Computers and communication	5	10	33.3
Furniture	7	31	18.4
Alcohol	4	20	16.7
Household equipment	3	18	14.3
Food	7	70	9.1
Banks	6	81	6.9
Insurance	2	41	4.7
Holidays, hotels	2	73	2.7
Soft drinks	—	11	0.0
Clairvoyance	—	17	0.0
Medicine	—	15	0.0
Others	41	88	31.8
TOTAL	125	516	

Percentage for all ads for Swiss products 19.5

with the main centres located in the Suisse Romande; Swiss watches are justly renowned throughout the world for their accuracy and style. The Swiss are understandably proud of this aspect of their national heritage, and have cantonal and national museums devoted to the history of 'horlogerie'—yet these most typically Swiss products are advertised to Swiss consumers not in a Swiss language, but in English. This seems to us at least as strange as it would be to find that tea, say, or tweed jackets, were advertised in French to British readers of a British magazine. The fact that Swiss watches are frequently advertised in English, therefore, is a finding that deserves an explanation.

English as a Mirror for Switzerland

Our view is that, unlike other consumer goods, watches may be advertised in English precisely *because* they are an important part of the Swiss stereotype. The Swiss author Peter Bichsel in his (1970) book *La Suisse du Suisse* ('Switzerland through Swiss eyes') claims that the Swiss have become used to seeing Switzerland through the eyes of tourists: 'the image we have of our own country is an imported product' (our translation from the French). The use of English in advertisements for Swiss watches seems to us to confirm Bichsel's view. Swiss companies advertise the most typical Swiss product in English, an international language. Moreover, not only do these companies advertise their products in English, but they refer to Switzerland and things Swiss in fixed phrases such as 'Swiss made', 'of Switzerland', 'Swiss quality' or 'Original Swiss watches'. These products are advertised to the Swiss, then, exactly as they would be to foreign consumers. The result is that Swiss people can identify with foreign consumers when they buy these Swiss products, in the same way that, according to Bichsel, the Swiss identify with tourists in the image that they have of their own country.

This seems a curious idea at first, but it makes sense if we consider the question of Swiss national identity in a little more detail. Switzerland, as we saw earlier, is a multilingual country, with four national languages, spoken by four different ethnic groups. These ethnic groups have a turbulent history. It has been claimed that the three largest groups, that is the German speakers, the French speakers and the Italian speakers, are held together as a nation more by the fact that they wish to dissociate themselves from their neighbouring countries, Germany, France and Italy, than by what they have in common with each other (Steinberg, 1976). It is certainly true that the different groups have been at their most united when under external threat. During this century, for example, the periods of exceptional Swiss unity were the years between 1930 and the late 1950s, which were marked first by fascism in neighbouring countries, especially Germany, and then by the 'Cold War'. In more recent times the absence of external threats seems to have led to what some term the 'Helvetic malaise': a sense of self-doubt and dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a shift of attention

amongst the Swiss away from the national solidarity against the outside world, towards the internal divisions of their country (Stevenson, 1989; see also de Rougemont, 1965; Steinberg, 1976). Steinberg's view, in 1976, was that the Swiss could feel their national identity crumbling. These problems have been exacerbated by a number of recent national referenda where the vote was split partly along ethnic lines, the most divisive of which was the 1992 referendum concerning the possibility of Switzerland becoming a member of the European Economic Area. All the cantons of the Suisse Romande voted in favour of joining the EEA, but they were outnumbered by the German-speaking cantons, who voted, overall, to stay outside the community.

Any present-day conflict between the different Swiss ethnic groups, however, is rarely apparent to visitors to Switzerland. Steinberg (1976: 4) writes: 'The oddest thing about Switzerland is how little most foreigners know about it. No country is more frequently visited but less known. Switzerland has two faces, the smooth, expressionless, efficient surface which the tourist glides by without noticing and the turbulent, rich, inside surface which he never sees'. In these circumstances, it is not surprising if the Swiss prefer the tourist's image of themselves—as a courteous and efficient people living in a country that is beautiful, peaceful and harmonious—to their own current 'malaise' and preoccupation with internal conflicts.

The Swiss are very used to tourists. Switzerland has attracted large numbers of ecstatic travellers since at least the eighteenth century, with Byron, Shelley, Goethe and Hugo all celebrating in verse the virtues of the Swiss and the beauty of their country. Today the tourist language *par excellence* is, of course, English, as will be verified by anyone who has witnessed a group of Japanese tourists, say, being guided round the Doges' Palace in Venice by an Italian guide, all using English as a lingua franca. It seems, then, that in their advertisements the Swiss use English, the language of international tourism (and a language with which they are familiar on a day-to-day basis, as we have seen) as a way of transcending a problematic national identity, in order to allow them to construct a self-image that is consistent with the favourable image that they present to tourists.

This argument fits with the model of advertising presented by Cook (1992), where advertising is seen as playing an important role in the construction of our contemporary social and psychological identity. It also fits with Eastman and Stein's concept of language display, which we have already mentioned several times in this paper, whereby speakers appropriate another language in order to vicariously lay claim to a social identity that is not available to them through their own language.

There is also the more practical point that in fact there is no other language that could function as a national symbol of Swiss identity, given that four distinct languages are spoken in Switzerland, and that the most dominant of these (German, French and Italian) are in fact the languages

of neighbouring countries. Only one of them exists in a form that is recognised in Switzerland as uniquely Swiss: this is *Schwyzertütsch*, the name given to the Swiss German dialects. *Schwyzertütsch*, however, could hardly be used to symbolise 'Swissness' to the French-speaking Swiss, who neither understand it nor like it. Instead, English is the logical choice.

Conclusion

We have argued in this paper that English in advertisements in the Suisse Romande is bicultural, standing both for the connotations related to an English-speaking country, usually the USA, and for the international world. Both sets of possibilities were drawn on in the advertisements that we analysed. We also argued that English is used to match the self-image of the Swiss with the image that Switzerland has for outsiders, so that the Swiss national identity becomes an 'imported' identity.

It seems clear, then, that the symbolic function of English in Switzerland is different from the symbolic function that Haarmann found it to have in Japan. In Japan, English is used because, as a language that is clearly external to the country, it is irrelevant to the question of national identity: seeing the English language in advertisements simply makes the Japanese feel that they belong to the wider, modern world. In Switzerland, on the other hand, English is not external to the country; here it seems that because it is familiar to the Swiss, it can be used in advertisements to present an image of the Swiss to the Swiss (and by the Swiss, it must be remembered) that symbolises the favourable image held by foreigners.

The widespread use of English throughout the world has sometimes resulted in its form being freely adapted by speakers of other languages, with new words coined that do not exist in native speaker varieties but that are nevertheless derived from English. For example, *pullover* has been shortened to *Pulli* in German but not in English, and to *pull* in French (see further Görlach, 1989). As Carstensen (1986) points out, Europeans seem to regard English as a kind of open reservoir, from which they can take words at random, and then use them in ways that are not possible in English. Our research, when seen in relation to Haarmann's very different findings from Japan, suggests that English can serve as an open reservoir for symbolic meanings also. Sometimes the use of English may evoke connotations relating to the national or international domains in which it is used; but on other occasions new symbolic meanings can be generated, and these may differ from one context to another. Thus in Japan English can be used to symbolise modernity and social advance, to make the Japanese feel that they belong to the wider global community, whilst in Switzerland English can be used to symbolise a harmonious, peaceful national identity, in the absence of another language that could fulfil this function.

For a language to serve as an open reservoir in this way it must be freed from a fixed association with the culture of a country where it is spoken

as a native language. We therefore support the view that English has now become a language of the world, available to any country that uses it—not merely to fulfil linguistic needs but also to be used as a symbolic resource.

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