

THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN SWITZERLAND:

An Updated Survey*

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The history of Switzerland is outlined briefly with special reference to evolution from unilingual to quadrilingual polity. Official modern language policy in the four language territories is described, with data on language boundaries and relative number of speakers. Extent of individual (as against societal) multilingualism in Switzerland is described, in conjunction with language attitudes and names attaching to the different language groups. The role of 'dialects' vs. 'standard language' in the four territories is compared in some detail. Special developments since World War II are focused on. The survey concludes with pointing up the role of religious, economic, and/or political cleavages in interlingual relationships.

1. Preamble

Switzerland is often called a 'miracle of unity in diversity'. In saying this one is thinking primarily of the peaceful symbiosis of four different language groups, i.e. the absence (until recently at least) of interlingual tensions. This lingual¹ diversity is superimposed on, or intertwined with, the diversity deriving from the limited autonomy of about two dozen separate 'cantons' which make up the Swiss Confederation. The Swiss are proud of this diversity, particularly the lingual one, considering it an asset which in some way makes up for the smallness of their country. Thus we find the largest Swiss language group, German, which comprises almost three fourths of the

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¹ I prefer to use the term *lingual* rather than *linguistic* when I mean 'pertaining to language(s)', as against 'pertaining to the science *about* language(s), or linguistics'. I first proposed this terminology, which disambiguates the prevailing usage of *linguistic* covering both senses, in 1957 (*General Linguistics*, 2:42), and repeatedly thereafter. The form *lingual*, rather than *linguistic*, is the logical parallel to *interlingual*, *bilingual*, etc. The ambiguity is avoided in prevailing German usage, *sprachlich* vs. *sprachwissenschaftlich*.

country's native population, lending its sympathetic support to the smallest group, Romansh (Raeto-Romance), making up barely one percent of the Swiss citizenry, to assure the survival of the Romansh language. This seems in marked contrast to the competitive struggle between English and French in Canada, French and Flemish in Belgium, and other interlingual frictions in various parts of the world. It also appears to be in contrast, along somewhat different lines, with current efforts of certain political groups in the United States to declare English as the sole 'official' language throughout the country.

To understand the current language situation in Switzerland we need a historical perspective. Although it might be said that current attitudes are shaped by present forces, not by the past, these forces naturally include images of past events, partly conveyed through indoctrination in the schools, periodic ritual speeches, etc. How did Switzerland become what it is?

2. The history of Switzerland, from league to federal republic

In sharp contrast to the development of the modern European nation-states, i.e. states identified with a particular ethnic group speaking a single language (rather than with some ruling monarchy), Switzerland owes its inception to the successful struggle of some rural communities and some neighboring cities against various feudal overlords. In 1291, the traditionally democratic mountaineers of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden around Lake Lucerne had formed an alliance against local feudal encroachments, placing themselves directly under the German emperor (Holy Roman Empire) and the pope. In the fourteenth century the cities of Luzern, Zürich, and Bern joined this league. It was further strengthened by several more communities over the next two centuries, so that on the eve of the Reformation the Swiss Confederation consisted of thirteen members, or 'cantons', some of them rural and democratic, others urban and even oligarchic. By that time, as a matter of fact, the Swiss had become a strong military power; they had won a number of battles against the rulers of Austria and Burgundy, and in 1499 had defeated the German emperor himself, thus obtaining their freedom from the Holy German Empire.

The Reformation, with one of its leaders (Ulrich Zwingli) preaching in Zurich,² pitted Catholic against Protestant; but the religious cleavage thus

² Calvin, another major voice of the Reformation, was preaching in Geneva, now part of Switzerland; this city was not yet a fullfledged member of the Confederation at that time, but had the status of an 'ally' (cf. Weilenmann (1925: 67)).

introduced into the Swiss Confederation was not strong enough to break up the alliance devoted to common defense against the outside. On the contrary, from the sixteenth century on to the late eighteenth a number of additional Alpine valleys, cities, and other adjoining areas became connected with the Confederation, not as full-fledged members but either as allied territories seeking protection or as subject provinces wrested from the houses of Austria, Milan, and Savoy (administered by individual cantons or jointly).

What about language conditions during those earlier centuries, within what is known as the Old Confederation (up to 1798)? In twelve of the thirteen old cantons, German was the sole everyday as well as official language, with dialectal variations. Only the Canton of Fribourg/Freiburg, which had joined the league in 1481, included a substantial French-speaking population, but its ruling class spoke German (and attempted for a time to extend German to the entire canton). On the other hand, some of the neighboring lands associated with the Confederation as allies were of French, Romansh, or Italian speech. This included part of what is now the Canton of Valais/Wallis, part of the ecclesiastical principality of Basel (the part which later became the Jura district of Bern), the principality of Neuchâtel, and the Republic of Geneva, as regards French; and the League of the Grisons (now the Canton of Grisons/Graubünden), for Romansh and some Italian. Similarly, among the subject provinces, French was spoken in the Vaud, and Italian in the Ticino.

The ruling cantons, of German speech, were induced by their own tradition of local autonomy not to interfere with the free use of French or Italian in these lands, even in the courts and local administrations; and of course free use of French and Romansh continued in the allied territories. The point is that, while German remained the only official language of the Confederation, several Romance idioms were freely spoken under Swiss rule and protection. Moreover, the Confederation maintained increasingly close political ties with France, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the dominance of French as a literary language became so great that the aristocratic ruling families of Bern, Fribourg, and Solothurn adopted it as their own tongue in polite conversation and in writing. (For the above summary and some of what follows, see chiefly Mayer (1968: 708 ff.), McRae (1983: 39–45); fuller details in Weilenmann (1925).)

Not only did the old Swiss Confederation have no central government or national army, it did not even have a capital city, or some equivalent center which would regularly host the periodic league meetings. Instead, the host canton would periodically change by a system of rotation (about the same way that in present-day Switzerland the office of President of the Federation

rotates annually among the seven members of the Federal Council). One effect of this on language conditions, as has been pointed out (von Planta (1957: 14)), was that there did not evolve any intellectual center whose local dialect might have shaped a uniform way of writing Swiss German across the land. At a time when Zwingli's Bible translation in Swiss German (a variety of Alemannic) could have provided a standard, New High German had already begun to be the norm for literary purposes in much of what is now Germany and Austria. The Swiss printers of Basel, in need of a larger book market than the small Confederation could provide, were adopting the foreign High German standard. As a result, in present-day Switzerland, there is a wide gap between the spoken varieties of Swiss German and the High German used in writing; moreover, there is no single standard for spoken Swiss German either. Nevertheless, written forms of Swiss German were used in documents and printed books up to the eighteenth century (McRae (1983: 70)).

A new phase in Swiss history opened up in 1798, when under the impact of French revolutionary ideas, and of an invading French army, the old Confederation was replaced by the Helvetic Republic, a centralized democratic state founded on the rights of man, doing away with all traditional privileges. Its constitution, dictated in Paris, elevated all subject and allied territories to complete equality with the traditional thirteen cantons, adding several new cantons (or 'departments'). The laws of the Republic were now published in German as well as in French and Italian; all three of these languages could be spoken in the country's parliament (but not Romansh, even then used only by a very small minority of the Helvetic population, and without enjoying major-language status even in any adjoining country). Thus it was under foreign pressure that Switzerland had become an officially multilingual state for the first time. The new cantons included French-speaking Léman (= Geneva), and Italian-speaking Bellinzona and Lugano (soon to be joined as the Ticino); moreover, bilingual French-German Fribourg and Valais now came under the control of their French-speaking majorities.

But five years later, in 1803, the so-called Mediation Act formulated by Napoleon himself, recognizing that the changeover from a federation of autonomous ministates to a highly centralized unitary state had been too sudden and extreme, restored a limited amount of autonomy to the cantons. Nevertheless the lingual equality of 1798 was preserved by the inclusion of the French-speaking Vaud and Italian-speaking Ticino among six new cantons which were now added to the thirteen old ones. Also included at this time was

the ancient League of the Grisons (or Republic of the Three Leagues), as the Canton of Graubünden/Grisons, a trilingual Romansh-German-Italian area. (The other three new cantons, St. Gallen, Aargau, and Thurgau, were German-speaking.)

Upon the downfall of Napoleon in 1815, the Allied Powers at the Congress of Vienna restored the old regimes of aristocracy and privilege. The old cantons resumed almost all of their former sovereign independence; and the Confederation reverted to German as its sole official language. However, the six new cantons retained their autonomous equality within the Confederation rather than reverting to their former 'allied' or 'subject' status. Three more cantons were now added: Geneva (the earlier Léman), Neuchâtel, and Valais – the first two French-speaking and Valais at least partly so. At the same time the Canton of Bern, until then entirely German-speaking, acquired a significant French-speaking population when it received the Jura territory (part of the ecclesiastical principality of Basel) in compensation for the loss of its former territories, Vaud and Aargau, which now had cantonal status.

As a result, starting in 1815 and continuing almost up to the present day, Switzerland now had twenty-two cantons: fourteen of them German-speaking, three French, one Italian, three French-German bilingual, and one German-Romansh-Italian trilingual. (Actually, three of the German-speaking cantons subdivided themselves for limited purposes into half-cantons, partly reflecting such cleavages as Catholic-Protestant and/or urban-rural: Unterwalden, one of the original three, divided into Obwalden and Nidwalden in the course of the fourteenth century; Appenzell into Appenzell-Innerrhoden, Catholic, and Appenzell-Ausserrhoden, Protestant, in 1697; Basel into urban Baselstadt and rural Baselland in 1833.)

Although the official language of the Confederation had reverted to German in 1815, the equality of the sovereign cantons kept the multilingual principle alive; i.e. each canton was free to regulate language use within its own borders. As a matter of fact, even at the meetings of the Federal Diet the representatives of French-speaking cantons often continued to speak in French. So did those of Bern at times. (Among Bern's aristocratic families, of German mother-tongue, French was still regarded as more educated.) But legally, newly bilingual Bern as well as Fribourg and Grisons recognized only German as the 'official' tongue; Valais remained legally bilingual (Mayer (1968: 713)).

In Switzerland as elsewhere, the 1830's and 1840's were a time of struggle between Conservatism and Liberalism, with the latter gaining the upper hand.

Nine cantons (largely Protestant and urban) overthrew their reactionary governments in favor of liberal constitutions. Seven conservative Catholic cantons formed a separate alliance, and there ensued a very brief and mild civil war in 1847. A liberal victory then led to the new Swiss constitution of 1848, which turned the country in a definitive way from a league or confederacy into a federal state, with the cantons retaining some of their former autonomy but now subject to the sovereignty of a federal government, and with Bern as the capital. This was and is similar to the structure of the United States — except, of course, for the dwarf size of Switzerland versus the giant size of the USA, and, what is more relevant in our context, the fact that the several languages of present-day Switzerland are native to her soil, having been spoken in that location over many centuries (with very little change in language boundaries during that time); whereas the United States is essentially an immigrant country, trying to homogenize foreign-born populations of ever so many different mother-tongues into a more or less unitary mold, through the construct of a ‘melting pot’ whose efficacy is thought to depend heavily on the pervasive use of one unifying language, English.

3. The four language territories, in general

The Swiss constitution of 1848 declared German, French, and Italian as the ‘national’ and presumably co-equal languages of the Confederation. This clause is still valid, despite an amendment of 1938 that elevated Romansh to the fourth ‘national’ language but then distinguished this from the other three languages, which now are called not only ‘national’, but ‘official’.³ What this means in practice is that all federal laws are published in German, French, and Italian (but only the most important ones, since 1938, in Romansh); each of the three texts has the same authority. Many other official documents emanating from federal authorities, other than laws, are published in German and French only (for reasons of economy, since Italian and Romansh are spoken by only about 5% and 1% of Swiss citizens). In the federal parlia-

³ According to Mayer (1968:714), ‘the multilingual principle was so much taken for granted at the time [1848] that the committee preparing the draft of the new constitution made no mention of languages at all. It was only toward the end of the debates in the Constituent Assembly that a French-speaking delegate made the proposal to add an article on language. His proposal was adopted without opposition ...’

ment, any one of the three official languages may be used, but Italian seldom is. By an unwritten law, moreover, at least two of the seven members of the Federal Council (the executive branch of the federal government) must be of French or Italian mother tongue. Similar quotas are aimed at, as far as practical (at least on a rotational basis), in the federal judiciary and in other federal top positions. Private citizens in their dealings with federal agencies may use any of the three official languages (Mayer (1977: 80, 85), Mayer (1968: 720)).

But what about language use within the individual cantons, i.e. in cantonal parliaments, in dealings between residents and cantonal authorities, in the public schools (which are under cantonal rather than federal direction) and in other public activities, as well as in private life? The overriding principle in Swiss private life, of course, is that of the liberty of language; i.e. anyone may use any language he/she pleases in strictly private dealings. However, the principle that regulates language use in public contexts is that of 'territoriality'; this, again an unwritten law, states that it is up to each canton to determine its 'official' language or languages, on the basis of *which* language actually predominates in private use in the canton or in a given community. It is the 'official' language only that must be used in the public schools (not necessarily in the relatively few private schools), and in various public dealings. This implies, among other things, that individuals migrating from one language area (e.g., German-speaking Zurich) to another language area (e.g., French-speaking Geneva) must promptly learn the language that predominates in their new domicile, for contacts with local authorities, and they cannot demand bilingual education (whether of the transitional or the maintenance type) for their children.

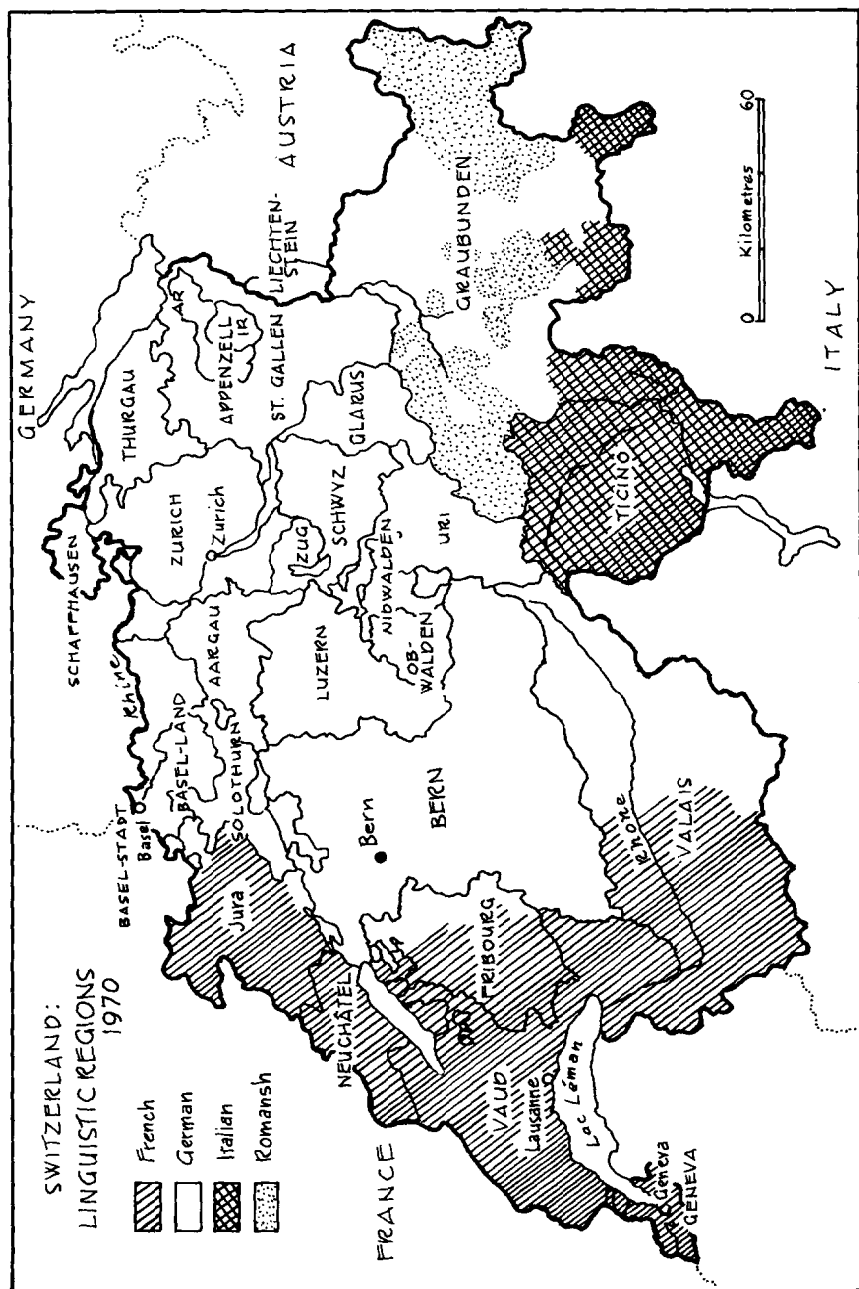
How does the territoriality principle apply in the three bilingual (German-French) cantons of Bern, Valais, Fribourg, and in trilingual Graubünden? In the cantonal legislatures and administrations of the first three, both German and French are used (but in the Canton of Fribourg, only the French texts of local laws are considered authentic). In Graubünden/Grisons, German is usually the language of administration, with translation if needed (Mayer (1977: 80–82, 85, 87), Mayer (1968: 719–720), Schäppi (1971: 55, 57, 61), Hegnauer (1947: 69, 72), Müller (1977: 51), Billigmeier (1979: 423–424)). The instructional language in the public schools of the bilingual cantons is German or French depending on which part of the canton the community is located in. In Graubünden, with its particularly complex trilingual pattern, the language of instruction is determined by each community, or even by individual teachers.

Chiefly along the border area separating French and German, and along the German-Romansh lines within the Canton of Graubünden, there are a number of bilingual communities, i.e. extending across language boundaries. Actually, the number of such communities is quite small, at least if we base the count on the current official definition of 'bilingual', viz., containing a language minority which represents at least 30% of the community's total population.⁴ On this basis, out of a total of some 3,000 Swiss communities in 1970 only thirty-five were French-German bilingual; and there were some German-Romansh ones. The largest is the city of Fribourg/Freiburg, followed by Biel/Bienne (in the Canton of Bern), where there are two separate school systems (Schäppi (1971: 20–21)).⁵

⁴ According to Schäppi (1971: 20), the arbitrary cut-off point of 30% was used in the census of 1970 in conformity with a federal decree of 1963 about the language or languages to be used on traffic signs. (This reminds us of the current debate in the Canadian province of Quebec as to whether public signs of various kinds should be in French only, or French and English ...) Schäppi distinguishes this 'scientific-statistical' definition from a 'historical' one: a community where native use of two languages is part of the local tradition – and from a 'political' one: a community is considered bilingual if it has officially declared itself to be that.

⁵ In Belgium, since 1952, territoriality prevails in predominantly Flemish-speaking Flanders and in predominantly French-speaking Wallonia, except for the bilingual capital, Brussels. In Canada, at present, anyone can still deal with the authorities in either English or French, but there has been a drift toward territoriality in the French-speaking province of Quebec. Other countries suggesting interesting comparisons with Switzerland, as regards language liberty vs. territoriality, include South Africa (English plus Afrikaans) and Finland (Finnish plus Swedish).

The current debate on the status of English in the United States, alluded to in the introductory paragraph above (p. 110), in effect aims at defending the territoriality principle, already informally in effect for most public activities, against recent attempts by some minority groups to develop bilingual-education programs even beyond the 'transitional' to the 'maintenance' stage. Every state in the Union has many minorities of non-English mother-tongue, but none has any such majority (not counting the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico). Use of languages other than English in such public activities as immigrant churches, newspapers, and parochial schools has always been permitted in the United States, at the federal as well as the state (= 'cantonal') level. At the community level, Spanish does have a strong position, historically in New Mexico and Texas, more recently in southern Florida, parts of California, and metropolitan New York; but there are no 'officially' bilingual communities. As of early 1988, California and twelve other states had passed new legislation declaring English the only 'official' language; interestingly, such states as New Mexico, Texas, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York (the latter three with large recent immigrant minorities) and twenty-two other states had either voted down or tabled similar legislative proposals.



Some statistics on the Swiss population by language group (McRae (1983: 50)) are given in table 1.

Table 1

Switzerland: Total resident population, and Swiss citizens only, by mother tongue (percentages).

Census year	Total pop. × 1000	German	French	Italian	Romansh	Other
1829	1,978	70.1	22.2	5.8	1.8	—
1850	2,393	70.2	22.6	5.4	1.8	—
1880	2,832	71.3	21.4	5.7	1.4	0.2
1910	3,753	69.1	21.1	8.1*	1.1	0.6
1930	4,066	71.9	20.4	6.0	1.1	0.6
1950	4,715	72.1	20.3	5.9	1.0	0.7
1960	5,429	69.3	18.9	9.5*	0.9	1.4
1970	6,270	64.9	18.1	11.9*	0.8	4.3*
1980	6,366	65.0	18.4	9.8*	0.8	6.0*
Swiss citizens only						
1910	3,201	72.7	22.1	3.9	1.2	0.1
1930	3,711	73.7	21.0	4.0	1.2	0.1
1950	4,430	74.1	20.6	4.0	1.1	0.2
1960	4,844	74.4	20.2	4.1	1.0	0.3
1970	5,190	74.5	20.1	4.0	1.0	0.4
1980	5,421	73.5	20.1	4.5*	0.9	1.0*

As the asterisked figures show, there was a relatively marked increase in the proportion of residents (whether citizens or not) of Italian mother tongue, near the beginning of the century and again after 1950, and also of residents of some 'other' mother tongue after 1960. This is explained by the relatively heavy influx of workers from Italy before World War I, many of whom returned to their homeland during and soon after that war. Again there has been a heavy influx of 'guest' workers from Italy starting in the 1950's, and also from other countries such as Spain particularly since the mid-1960's. As some of these more recent foreign-born workers have become naturalized (through marriage or otherwise), the proportion of citizens of Italian or 'other' mother tongue has grown somewhat in recent years.

Other than that, and more important for our purpose, the above statistics indicate that, over the past century and a half, there has been very little change in the proportion of native speakers of the three 'official' languages, viz., German, French, and Italian (counting Swiss citizens only). The proportion of German-speaking Swiss citizens has been hovering around 73 or 74%

all along; there has been a slight drop from c. 22 to 20% for French speakers, an almost steady proportion of c. 4% for citizens of Italian speech (except for the recent increase just explained). However, if the above census figures are entirely accurate, the proportion of native Romansh speakers fell substantially during the late nineteenth century, continuing to fall slightly in the present one, hovering around 1% at present.

Moreover, the three official Swiss languages have occupied sharply delineated territories for centuries (except for some minor shifts in the Canton of Bern, around the city of Biel/Bienne). In Graubünden, however, there has been a major retreat of Romansh in favor of German over the past century or so (see the second map, below). Looking at this relatively high stability of the major language boundaries in another way: Out of a 1970 total of 3,072 communities making up Switzerland, only 71 have experienced a change in lingual majorities between 1860 and 1970; half of these, 36, have moved from a Romansh to a German majority in Graubünden. Also, what McRae has called 'mother-tongue homogeneity' is relatively high in the three major regions: In 1970, 96% of all German-speaking Swiss were living within the 'German' region, 92% of the French-speaking Swiss were living in the 'French' region, 79% of Italian-speaking Swiss in the 'Italian' region – but only 49% of Romansh speakers within the 'Romansh' region (McRae (1983: 50–57)).

This relatively high stability of language frontiers is all the more remarkable since these are only partly formed by natural frontiers: The German-French language frontier does follow the Bernese Alps or the Jura ridges for some of its length, but crosses open country in the Plateau and in Valais. It is the historical result of the entry of Germanic-speaking Alemans into the area formerly occupied by Burgundians, also of Germanic origin but Latinized. On the other hand, the northerly limits of Italian, both in the Ticino and in Graubünden, are delineated by the Alps (McRae (1983: 51), Mayer (1977: 79)).

4. Digression: Some points of terminology

We pause here to consider a few terminological problems. I sometimes feel a little uncomfortable, being a native Swiss myself, about using the terms *German*, *French*, *Italian* in connection with Switzerland when it is not entirely clear whether the reference is to language, or geography, or citizenship. Is the 'Italian' region in Italy? Does *the German majority* refer to citizens of

Germany? Are Swiss citizens of French mother tongue to be called (in English) Swiss French, or French Swiss? Let us have a quick look at the corresponding terms used in the three official languages of Switzerland: Speaking in German, a German-speaking Swiss is called a *Deutschschweizer* (or, in Zurich dialect, a *Düütschschwyzer*); to refer to a French-speaking Swiss as *Französischschweizer* may be all right coming from the mouth of a German citizen but sounds somewhat stilted to the German-speaking Swiss themselves, who prefer to call their French-speaking compatriots *Welschschweizer*, or, somewhat less accurately in a geographic vein, *Westschweizer*, or in Swiss-German dialect simply *Welsche*. (The latter term is etymologically related to Wales as well as to Gaul, thus pointing to Celtic, and then to the Latin which replaced Celtic in Gaul, and which became French. According to Weilenmann (1925:4, 50), *Welsche* at one time simply meant 'those of foreign speech', as seen from the viewpoint of Alemannic speakers, i.e. not only French speakers but also those of Italian or Romansh speech.) Italian-speaking Swiss are referred to as *Italienischschweizer*, or occasionally (by analogy to *Westschweizer*) as *Südschweizer*, but most commonly as *Tessiner* i.e. from the Canton of Ticino, somewhat inaccurately omitting the Italian-speaking minority in Graubünden/Grigione.

Speaking in French, a French-speaking Swiss refers to his part of the country as *la Suisse romande* (never *la Suisse française*!), and to himself as a *romand*, literally a person of Romance rather than of German speech. (Perhaps the narrowed meaning of this term, referring only to French rather than also to Italian, Romansh, and other Romance languages, evolved in the eighteenth century before Ticino and Graubünden became Swiss cantons in 1803?) A *romand* calls a German-speaking Swiss a *suisse allemand*, and an Italian-speaking compatriot a *suisse italien*. (In French, what originally labeled only the Alemannic branch of Germanic speakers became generalized to mean 'German', whereas what originally labeled the Frankish branch became generalized to 'French'. In a linguistic sense, the Alemannic branch of German dialects survives in Switzerland, and in adjoining Alsace.) A Swiss of Italian mother tongue calls himself a *svizzero italiano* (or if from the Ticino, perhaps preferably a *ticinese* to skirt the sensitive subject of Italian Fascist expansionist designs). He calls a fellow-citizen of German (or Swiss-German) speech a *svizzero tedesco*; and he uses the same phrase for the Swiss-German dialect, which then, literally, becomes the German variety of Swiss (even though there is no Swiss language as such), rather than the Swiss variety of German... (The same kind of comment is applicable to a *romand* calling Swiss-German dialects *le suisse allemand*.)

In English, it might be best to use *Swiss German* (with or without hyphen) for the dialect(s), but to call the speakers *German Swiss* rather than *Swiss German*; similarly, (Swiss) French for the language, but *French Swiss* for the speakers (or still more accurately, if desirable, *German-speaking Swiss*, *French-speaking Swiss* for the people), and so forth.

There is a somewhat different terminological problem involving the native speakers of Romansh. *Romansh* is clearly the name of a language, not also of some country or a kind of citizenship. However, it is reported that, in recent years at least, some German-Swiss individuals have been confusing *Romansh* with *Romani*, the latter term properly referring to the ancestral language of the Gypsies. There *are* groups of Gypsies in present-day Switzerland (as a matter of fact, the Swiss government quite recently recognized them as a neglected ethnic minority entitled to some forms of assistance). But of course their *Romani* speech is not one of the Romance languages. In (Swiss) German, actually, *Romansh* is often referred to as *Raetoromanisch* (in Roman times, the Romansh-speaking area was known as Raetia), or more briefly as *Romanisch*. The latter abbreviation can cause further confusion, viz., with French *romand* (= 'French'), and with the scholarly designation of all the Latin-derived languages (in French, *les langues romanes*, i.e., Romance or Romanic). Not to speak of Rumanian (Ger. *Rumänisch*, Fr. *roumain*), the dominant language of Rumania ...

A terminological problem of quite a different sort, pervasive in linguistics and adjoining fields, is the precise meaning of *bilingualism*, and of related terms such as *multilingualism*, *diglossia*, *dialect*. One distinction particularly important in the present context, not sufficiently heeded in some of the literature, is the one between *societal* and *individual* bilingualism (or multilingualism). So far in our discussion of language conditions in Switzerland we have been dealing with *societal* bi- (or multi-) lingualism, viz., the fact that in different parts of Switzerland a different language is dominant, natively spoken by the vast majority of the respective regional population; or more generally, that there are societies such that part of the population preferably uses one language and another part another (I say 'preferably', because if it were so 'exclusively' there would be no communication between parts of the population, and hence no real society).

On the other hand, whether or not a given individual has some degree of proficiency in two or more languages (not necessarily the same degree, or in the same 'domains') is a question of *individual* bi- (or multi-) lingualism. The term *diglossia*, closely related to individual bilingualism as well as to the concept of dialect, and which is also subject to some confusion at present,

was proposed by Charles Ferguson some thirty years ago at least partly in conjunction with his study of language conditions in German-speaking Switzerland, where one variety of a language (standard High German) is used for formal purposes and another (Alemannic-German dialects) as an informal style. As a cover term for proficiency in two or more (not necessarily 'many') languages I personally prefer *plurilingual(ism)*. (The term *diglossia* in its original sense might be dispensed with if in its place we speak of *stylistic plurilingualism*, or *stylistic pluridialectalism*.) For a fuller discussion of this terminology see Pap (1982); also Moulton (1963).

5. Interlingual plurilingualism and interlingual relations in modern Switzerland

How widespread is individual plurilingualism in Switzerland? There is a common misconception about this outside of Switzerland, particularly in the United States and in other essentially 'monolingual' (I prefer *unilingual*) countries. That misconception, prompted at least in some measure by the confusion between societal and individual plurilingualism, is to the effect that most Swiss speak several languages – and as a matter of fact find it easy (much easier than, say, Americans) to 'acquire' a second or third language.⁶ In reality, a large proportion of the Swiss population is essentially unilingual; probably less than half speak or read a second language with any degree of fluency in a variety of domains. My judgment on this is, of course, impressionistic. More objective data are hard to come by; Swiss census statistics do not supply a measure of bilingualism. But, according to McRae (1983: 66–67), a market research survey carried out for the Reader's Digest in 1969 indicated, none too reliably, that 16% of Swiss adults claimed to speak German non-natively (i.e. as a second language), but 45% claimed to have a speaking knowledge of French (as a second language), and 14% (not counting residents of the Ticino) made a corresponding claim for Italian, 20% for English. (But the percentages of those claiming a reading rather than a speaking knowledge were lower.) The survey report did not specify how many of the questioned adults were making a claim for more than one of these foreign

⁶ Here is one of my terminological prejudices: I cannot get comfortable with the term *to acquire* to mean 'to learn' (a language). Learning a language, whether first or second, may metaphorically be compared to a conquest, an overcoming of many difficulties; but why use a term that suggests a commercial transaction, a taking-possession-of some external material object? This usage, to my mind, exemplifies excessive reification.

languages; undoubtedly some did, which would actually reduce the number of plurilinguals as a percentage of the total population.

McRae also cites a survey of 1973, which found that 65% of German Swiss 'knew' French, while 52% of French Swiss 'knew' German. Yet another sample survey summarized by McRae, of 1972, indicates that, among some 1,900 subjects polled, 40% of native German speakers reported knowing only their mother tongue, 31% claimed to know just one additional language, 28% claimed to know two or even more foreign languages. By contrast, in that 1972 survey, 50% of native French speakers said they know only their mother tongue, 25% of native Italian speakers responded the same way. A still more recent survey, by the Swiss Federal Bureau of Statistics (as reported in *Swiss American Review*, 8 September 1982), found that c. 16% of German-Swiss understand French 'very well', c. 15% understand English 'very well'; for the French-Swiss, the corresponding figures were 14% and 8%. Finally, a survey in 1987 (see *Swiss American Review*, 21 September 1988) indicates that 35% of 'Romands' do not know a word of (standard) German, 65% not any Swiss German, and 25% of 'Alemannics' do not know any French.

Overall, these several surveys, with their limited accuracy, seem to agree on at least one thing: a substantial proportion of Swiss do not know a second language, and certainly not 'well'; this applies in somewhat greater measure to the French-Swiss than to the German-Swiss. Also, a larger percentage of German-Swiss know some French than the other way around. Thus Heinz Kloss was basically right when he wrote: 'Swiss citizens are no more bilingual, by and large ... than persons from, say, the Netherlands or Scandinavia – probably even less so than these ...' (1967: 11).

Nevertheless, the fact that modern Switzerland is a plurilingual society (in a 'societal', but not necessarily 'individual' sense), plus her heavy economic dependence on tourism and foreign trade, do provide a relatively strong motivation for individual Swiss to study one or more foreign languages, and for Swiss public schools to make such study compulsory. In the German-speaking part of the country, French has been the favorite second language taught in the schools all along; but the balance may now be tilting in favor of English. Italian is straggling far behind. In the French-speaking region, German has been occupying first place, but may now also be competing with English; in any case, German here means standard German, not Swiss-German dialects. (A rather unique proposal in the Grand Council of the Canton of Neuchâtel, in 1987, to offer secondary-school pupils a choice between standard German and Swiss-German dialect was soundly defeated ...) A mild sort of friction surfaced in late 1988 when several German-

speaking cantons rejected a proposal to start the teaching of French as early as the 4th or 5th primary grades: in response, one of the Geneva political parties urged that English be substituted for German in the Geneva schools! In the Italian-speaking Ticino, the second language studied in the schools is usually French. In Graubünden, all education in the upper primary grades and in high school has usually been conducted in German (according to *Swiss American Review*, 2 December 1981), but there may be attempts at present to assign a larger role to Romansh. As a second language taught in Romansh territory, (standard) German is overwhelmingly in first place.

There seems to be some contradiction between saying, as I did above, that a large proportion of Swiss do not 'know' a second language, or at least not well, and reporting, as I just did, that the study of a second language is compulsory in Swiss public schools. Certainly the Swiss educational system (which is subject to variation by canton!) has not remained static over the decades; the duration of schooling, and of second-language study with it, has been extended, but comparative data on resulting foreign-language proficiency are not available to me. Most Swiss grow up and live in unilingual settings; and it is true in Switzerland as elsewhere that the very limited foreign-language skills acquired in school are easily forgotten unless practiced under the pressure of necessity. One undertaking that has traditionally produced some real communicative competence in French in many German-Swiss youths has been the so-called *Welschlandjahr*, a year (or longer) spent in school or on a job in the *Suisse romande*. A survey of 1981 among Swiss aged 25 to 50 showed that about one fourth had moved to another Swiss language area before age 25, and 10% to a foreign country; but 85% of these returned to their original language area before three years were up, according to *Thema* (1987: 34–35).

As a matter of fact, according to the same source, in Switzerland the major part of internal migration is between different language areas rather than within the same area. Particularly, there is a drift from German to French and Italian Switzerland. In 1980, only about 80,000 French-speaking and 45,000 Italian-speaking Swiss were living in the relatively large German area; whereas the relatively small French area included some 120,000 German and 17,500 Italian speakers, and the Ticino 21,000 German-speaking plus 3,500 French-speaking Swiss. This squares with much earlier statistics, for the 1930's: In those years, according to Hegnauer (1947: 59–66), native German speakers residing in the three Romance-language territories (French, Italian, Romansh) represented a much larger proportion of the total population of these territories (c. 10%) than was represented by the three groups of native

Romance-language speakers living among German speakers in relation to the total population of German-speaking Switzerland (c. 4%). More specifically, in 1930 German speakers constituted 12.3% of the population of the French-speaking area, 6.9% of the Italian and 15% of the Romansh area. On the other hand, only 4.1% of the population of the German-speaking region were native speakers of one of the three Romance languages. (These figures included resident aliens.)

There are contradictory claims on how this difference in proportion tends to affect the speed and degree of lingual assimilation of new residents of one language area who have moved in from another area. Hegnauer, in the 1940's, believed that assimilation is the faster the smaller the proportion of the 'foreign' element. (This is borne out, by and large, by the history of immigrant groups in the United States.) In accordance with this Hegnauer claimed that assimilation of Romance speakers in the German-speaking territory was proceeding more readily than that of German speakers in the Romance territories – although he acknowledged that the presence of Swiss-German dialects, besides standard German, represented a stumbling block, whereas the learning of French was relatively easier because of the disappearance of local patois. However, McRae, writing in the 1980's and using data from 1960 and even the 1890's, reports that German-speaking Swiss who have moved to French-speaking Switzerland tend to shift to the dominant language (in the same or at least in the next generation) more readily than do French-speaking Swiss upon moving to German-speaking Switzerland. Also, McRae adds that 'German is clearly the weaker language in French-German marriages but much the stronger one in combination with Italian or Romansh' (McRae (1983:61–63)). (In other words, Hegnauer was right about Italian and Romansh, but not about French.) Summing up, 'the German Swiss makes a greater effort to learn French than the Romand makes to learn German' (McRae (1983:67)). Essentially the same view is expressed in Müller (1977:12), and Ris (1979:42). Going even further than that: '... it is typical even for French Swiss who know High German adequately to try routinely to establish a conversation in French before resorting to it (McRae (1983:73)). Thus the German Swiss, unlike the Anglo-Canadians, do not hold a majoritarian outlook vis-à-vis the Francophone minority (Schmid (1981:123)); from a sociolinguistic standpoint, French cannot be called a 'minority' language in the case of Switzerland (McRae (1983:74)). (For a brief comparative discussion of the 'minority language' concept also see Pap (1979).)

6. The language situation in 'German' Switzerland

I have already alluded to the two main reasons for this state of affairs: on the one hand, the diglossia situation among the German-speaking Swiss, with a variety of spoken dialects differing substantially from the standard German as written and as taught in the schools; on the other hand, the traditional high prestige of the French standard language, as a symbol of higher education and elegance. It is appropriate at this point to look at Switzerland's four languages with respect to their internal diversification, the relation between a 'standard' form and non-standard varieties; it being understood that, notwithstanding transformationalist abstractions, no language in actual use is completely uniform. (Even within a standard dialect, there are different styles or registers: but we need not go into the latter type of variation, for present purposes.)

First, again, some points of terminology: It is customary to refer to the Swiss varieties of German, essentially spoken rather than written, as *Swiss German*, and as *dialects* (in English, that is); whereas the 'standard' variety of German as used chiefly in writing (standardized as to grammar, but somewhat less so as to vocabulary and pronunciation!) is normally called the standard German *language*, or also *High German* (*Hochdeutsch*). *High* in this context tends to be interpreted, by non-linguists at least, as an evaluative term, synonymous with *good*. In technical linguistic terminology *High German* actually contrasts with *Low German* (*Niederdeutsch*) as originally spoken in parts of northern Germany etc. – a contrast of geographic altitude rather than of quality as a language.⁷ We may wonder whether the term *High German* has not at times engendered subconscious resentment in the German-speaking Swiss: Why should standard German (or *Schriftdeutsch* = 'written German') be considered good and lofty, and the Swiss German dialect(s) by implication bad or lowly? Also, hasn't this terminology been prone at times to evoke, perhaps mixed with resentment, a feeling of actual shame, about speaking 'bad' or 'lowly' German? At any rate, if many German-speaking

⁷ Within the framework of German dialectology, and in the corresponding linguistic terminology, it actually makes no sense to contrast Swiss German dialects with *Hochdeutsch*; for these dialects are part of Alemannic, which is a branch of *Oberdeutsch*, which itself is a branch of *Hochdeutsch*; and thus, the Swiss dialects are themselves varieties of *Hochdeutsch*! The term *Schriftdeutsch* 'written German', however, does make some sense: the somewhat artificial variety of *Hochdeutsch* that became the standard used in writing. The trouble is that 'educated' Germans use *Schriftdeutsch* for speaking also, in different styles fitting different levels of formality; and so do the German-speaking Swiss, but in certain formal contexts only.

Swiss prefer, as I think they do, to call the standard written language *Schriftdeutsch* rather than *Hochdeutsch*, this may be because of the implications just alluded to.

Moreover, what about the possible subconscious effect (not only among the German Swiss but also among others) of calling the standard written variety of German etc. a *language* (in German, *Sprache*), but calling a variety usually employed in speaking a *dialect* (in German, *Mundart* 'way of speaking')? Is a spoken variety, not normally written, not also a language? (Particularly so in German, inasmuch as the noun *Sprache* is derived from *sprechen* 'to speak'!) Of course we are here dealing with an old prejudice, common among non-linguists but also held by too many linguists, according to which a written language is more advanced and more 'civilized' than a merely spoken one: for instance, technologically backward people such as Africans have been said to have 'dialects', not 'languages'. Even in Italy, it is still the established terminology to refer to the standard variety of Italian (as used in writing) as the *lingua italiana* but to any other varieties as *dialetti*. It is my preference to use the term *dialect*, for scientific purposes, to designate any of several varieties within a language, whether only spoken or also used in writing, whether (more or less) standardized in a formal and explicit way or not. (In a sense, actually *any* variety within a language, any dialect, is more or less standardized by implication, by virtue of being recognized as one communication system distinguishable from another.) Thus, I prefer to speak of the 'standard' (writable) dialect of a language, vs. 'nonstandard' (which need not mean substandard...)

On the other hand, it is useful and important to distinguish between 'regional' (or 'geographic') and 'social' dialects, the latter characterizing social subgroups (such as upper vs. lower class, male vs. female) within a population. There may, of course, be some overlap between the two, in connection with internal migration, shifts of power, etc., so that a regional dialect may become the characteristic medium of expression of some social subgroup (as defined by economic status, educational level, etc.). Where do the Swiss dialects fit in? In the case of Swiss German, we recognize almost pure instances of regional dialect – but only 'almost': at different times and places we have to recognize social-dialect components also. The Romansh dialects can be classified as entirely regional. The varieties of Italian as current in the Ticino and small parts of Graubünden involve a mix of regional and social dialect. On the other hand, most of the French-speaking region of Switzerland exhibits great uniformity now, dominated by standard French even though with some inherent social-dialect variation. Here are some details:

As far as the Swiss German dialects are concerned, I have already indicated (pp. 111–112) why regional speech differences in the thirteen cantons and adjunct territories of the Old Swiss Confederation were preserved without producing a leading or standard dialect, and why High German as evolved in Germany eventually became the standard medium of written communication. The Swiss historical development, marked by political decentralization and the persistence of *Kantönligkeit* (cantonalism, i.e. particularism), is in sharp contrast in this respect to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, where a northern (Holland) variety of Low German became elevated in the seventeenth century to serve as the standardized national language, Dutch. (But in adjoining Belgium, independent since 1830, the Flemish variety of Netherlandic still has difficulty asserting its equality with French, which was the sole official language in that bilingual country until 1873.)

In Switzerland, which had become a quadrilingual country by the early nineteenth century, the big issue in the German-speaking areas was henceforth whether use of the Swiss-German (Alemannic) dialects would be appropriate not only in colloquial interpersonal communication but also in more formal situations, such as classroom interaction in the schools (where reading and writing in Hochdeutsch or Schriftdeutsch was to be the core of the curriculum), in preaching, public speaking, and in the military. A scholarly interest by the German Swiss in their local dialects can be traced back at least as far as the sixteenth century, during which Zurich German-Latin glossaries were produced in connection with Zwingli's Reformation. In the eighteenth century there appeared dictionaries of the Bern and Basel dialects; and a general Swiss-German dictionary was attempted by one Franz Joseph Stalder in 1806–12. But it was not until 1862, when there already existed a fear that the Swiss-German dialects might be dying out, that a comprehensive dialect dictionary entitled *Schweizerisches Idiotikon* was started; the last volume in this large scholarly enterprise is still not completed. Much more recently, starting about 1960, reflecting the current strong interest in an expanded use of Swiss German, a whole spate of regional dictionaries and grammars have come off the press (see annual report for 1987, Verein für das Schweizerdeutsche Wörterbuch; also, Moulton (1963: 134)).

What characterized language conditions in the late nineteenth century was the opposite of the present trend: under the influence of the formation of a unified German Reich, and the presence of relatively large numbers of German aliens in Zurich and other urban centers of northeastern Switzerland, the use of standard German became common there in post-elementary education, in the churches, even in the army; and it even advanced into polite

conversation. Increasingly also, standard German elements were permeating the Swiss dialect itself. On the other hand there were those Swiss Germans who, ashamed of their 'lowly' dialect, but feeling insecure about speaking Hochdeutsch, would switch to French in order to sound well educated ... (Müller (1977: 103–107)).

In central and western parts of the German-speaking region, especially in the countryside, the position of Swiss German did remain stronger than in the urban northeast. It was from centrally located Bern that a reaction against the encroachments of standard German set in, about 1900: a new wave of (Bernese) dialect literature had its beginning (there had been some in the earlier nineteenth century): and the Bern cantonal legislature formally decided to continue using the local dialect in its deliberations – despite the presence of French-speaking representatives from that bilingual canton (Ris (1979: 43)). Again in the 1930's, to counter imperialistic threats from Nazi Germany, the value of *Schwyzerdüütsch* as a patriotic symbol was stressed. In the 1950's, the desire to sound different from Germans even when using *Hochdeutsch* in formal speaking situations led to the codification of a Swiss version of standard German pronunciation (Moulton (1963: 137)). (Most 'German' Swiss, when speaking standard German, had always sounded different from the 'Prussians' to the north anyway, under the influence of Swiss dialect phonology.)

Starting in the 1960's, finally, the strongest movement yet in favor of an expanded use of Swiss German has produced the present situation: regional dialect is now widely used in elementary and even secondary school, in the military, in many public speeches and sermons, and, last but not least, even in a good part of radio and television programs (even though these also have audiences in southern Germany and in Romance-speaking areas of Switzerland!).⁸ Again the Canton of Bern has been in the driver's seat in all this, launching some new literary works in local dialect, insisting on continued use of Bernese in parliamentary proceedings (but, as will be explained below, losing part of its French-speaking territory in the process). Standard German is still generally spoken in scientific lectures, corporate board meetings and such – and in addressing foreigners (Ris (1979: 43–49), McRae (1983: 69–70)). And, we should add here, newspapers and magazines continue to be in

⁸ According to a report reprinted in *Swiss American Review*, 21 September 1988, the proportion of Swiss-German as against standard German programs on the leading radio station was 35% in 1970, but rose to 50% by 1979 and to two-thirds by 1988. In local television, the use of Alemannic dialect had 'invaded' 31% of the transmissions.

standard German, except for some of the advertising. One result of the spread of local dialect in the schools and elsewhere is that nowadays most young people know Hochdeutsch badly, exhibiting even less skill in writing or speaking 'good German' than do their elders.⁹ Also, the more the 'German' Swiss express themselves in their local dialect rather than in standard German as learned in school, the harder it is for the French- and Italian-speaking Swiss to communicate with the Swiss majority. Furthermore, this signals a growing estrangement from traditional German culture, especially its literature.

Other aspects of the situation deserve brief mention here, because of their bearing on general sociolinguistic theory. Ris observes that all three twentieth-century movements promoting the use of Swiss-German (c. 1900, 1930's, 1960's) have been centered in the educated urban middle class, with relatively little impact upon the less educated lower strata of the urban and rural population; as a result, the less educated simple folk often show more respect for, and willingness to use, Hochdeutsch as a mark of education than the more highly educated. Ris adds that in the relatively rural parts of the cantons of Valais, Bern, and Fribourg people tend to speak standard German (or a reasonable facsimile thereof ...) not only with foreigners, but also with other Swiss who speak a different dialect. On the other hand, in talking to foreign or 'guest' workers and to restaurant service personnel one uses Swiss dialect almost exclusively, according to Ris (Ris (1979:47-48)). My own observations during several recent stays in Switzerland do not bear out Ris on this last point; but in any case, for many unintellectual 'ordinary people' in the German-speaking region the dialect remains, not so much a symbol of patriotic self-assertion, but simply a natural marker of in-group feeling and, perhaps, of talking down to 'family servants', while standard German marks social distance. (Cf. the difference between Ger. *du* and *Sie* or *Ihr*.)

Ferguson had pointed to the contrastive use of Swiss-German as against standard German in Switzerland as an instance of what he proposed to call *diglossia*, viz., the use of two different varieties of the same language to perform different functions, viz., informal vs. formal communication. (Other

⁹ One can, of course, attempt comparisons between this and the current situation in the United States and other countries, where the rise of television and various types of popular entertainment have been concomitant with, if not one cause of, a drop in literacy and in the valuation of 'formal' language. Ris (1979: 55) points out that while the 'active competence' of German-Swiss youth in the use of Hochdeutsch has fallen off, their 'passive competence', i.e. ability to understand, may actually have increased due to regular watching of West German television and the like.

such instances would be 'vulgar' vs. 'classical' Arabic in Arabic-speaking countries, Haitian Creole vs. standard French in Haiti.) Ris makes the point, with which we can agree, that as Swiss German is currently extending its use to encompass formal situations (traditionally reserved for Hochdeutsch), at least as far as speaking is concerned, the original diglossia concept is becoming less and less applicable to Switzerland; i.e., Swiss German dialect may be on its way to becoming a language for *all* functions, parallel to standard German. The language situation in present-day 'German' Switzerland, then, is somewhere half-way between diglossia and bilingualism (Ris (1979: 54–56)). But since standard German is still generally the medium for writing, an important functional difference between it and Swiss German remains.

We have already pointed out that no natural language is completely uniform, even if considered 'standardized'. We have also indicated that Swiss German is not one uniform dialect, but actually a bunch or bundle of local-regional dialects, exhibiting considerable differences between them; but by and large they are mutually intelligible. One might now ask: if Swiss German were indeed going to become a multifunctional language parallel to Hochdeutsch, going the way of Dutch so to speak, and assuming that this would imply its use in writing too, how much uniformization among the various current dialects would we necessarily have to presuppose? How much structural and/or functional variation is permitted within what one calls a 'language', and when do we have to begin referring to *different* languages? A clear answer to this kind of question evidently cannot be gotten from formal linguistics; it has to be supplied by sociolinguistics, as it involves bundles of socio-cultural attitudes toward the various forms of communication involved. Only some twenty-five years ago Moulton thought that a single standardized Swiss German (whether called a language or a dialect) was unthinkable, because of the competition between different cantons, i.e. the above-mentioned *Kantönligeist* (Moulton (1963: 136)). Indeed such complete merging of, say, the distinctive dialects of Zurich, Basel, and Bern, into one is most unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, a certain amount of dialect mixture and dialect leveling has been noted in recent decades, in conjunction with increased postwar mobility, industrialization, use of Swiss dialect in broadcasting, etc. Particularly, the dialect of Zurich (now the leading urban center of the country) and the one of urban Bern have tended to crowd out distinctive features of less widespread dialects. Ris, a native of Bern, even claims that the dialect movement of the 1960's was directed, not only against the cultural-economic supremacy of

nearby Germany, but also against the hegemony of Zurich within Switzerland! (Ris (1979: 44)). The same author, looking at the present-day picture of Swiss-German dialect variation, proposes to distinguish at least four types: (a) archaic purely local dialect, about to die out (e.g., Lötschental); (b) regional dialect limited to one small region (e.g., the Bernese Alps); (c) regional features of speech retained by those settling outside the region (e.g., the Bernese countryside around the capital); (d) regional features of speech currently becoming part of an interdialectal or 'average' Swiss German (e.g., Zurichese). Many German-Swiss individuals, therefore, end up using two different kinds of dialect, depending on who they are talking to (Ris (1979: 51–53)).

And while we are on the subject of leveling out or mixture of Swiss-German dialects, two last remarks: The spreading use of Swiss German into areas traditionally reserved for standard German must necessarily also involve an increasing encroachment of the latter on the former, not so much in pronunciation and grammar, but rather in lexicon and phraseology; for, as von Planta had already pointed out in the 1950's, Swiss German is basically a conversational medium for the home and for emotional life; its basic vocabulary is therefore inadequate for abstract or analytic expression (von Planta (1957: 64)). Therefore, as the Swiss writer Hugo Loetscher put it in a recent lecture at City University of New York: when the (German) Swiss use their dialect for scholarly debating, they tend to think in Hochdeutsch and then translate it (phonologically and grammatically) into their dialect. Thus, standard German vocabulary keeps flowing in (along with adaptations of French, earlier in Swiss history, and of English more recently). My second remark is this: While some leveling-out of Swiss-German dialects makes for easier intercommunication across the country, the retention of some dialectal and cantonal diversity in the 'German' territory may actually be in the interest of the continued survival of a Switzerland free from interlingual tensions; for the three Romance-speaking territories are less likely to feel 'crushed' by the superior size of the German-speaking territory (representing almost three-fourths of all citizens) if the latter can be viewed as a kind of mosaic rather than as one monolithic language bloc (cf. McRae (1983: 70, 233)).

7. The language situation in 'French' Switzerland

Relatively little need be said about the language situation in the French-speaking territory, beyond what has already been mentioned above. Through

the Middle Ages a variety of local dialects or *patois* were spoken there, most of them derived from the post-Latin speech of the Burgundians in south-eastern France, i.e. of the Franco-Provençal type, substantially different from the speech of northern France, especially Paris, which has become modern French. But after the Reformation, which placed high value on bourgeois-urban rather than peasant culture, these dialects gradually gave way to standard French in most of the area, particularly in the Protestant portion. (It is significant that in modern standard French the very term *patois* connotes, not just some local or regional speech form like the varieties of Swiss German, but a low-class jargon. It is equally significant that in modern French the standard language is referred to as *le bon français*, 'good French', and standard German as *le bon allemand*, nonstandard varieties being deemed 'bad' by implication.)

By 1750 the various *patois* were receding in the city of Geneva, by 1800 in Neuchâtel and Lausanne; and by 1900 they were all but gone in these cities and the entire Vaud and southern Jura. At present, these old rural speech forms survive only among some older villagers (barely 2% of the *Suisses romands*) in the Catholic cantons of Valais, Fribourg, and (northern) Jura (cf. *Thema* (1987: 26), McRae (1983: 70–71), Müller (1977: 9)). So there is no 'diglossia' situation in this part of the country; immigrants from the German-speaking part only have to learn standard French (whereas the Romands in the latter territory are faced with both Swiss-German speech and standard German writing). Nevertheless, stimulated by the strong Swiss-German dialect movement of the present, there have been in recent years some attempts, more of a folkloristic sort than for serious practical reform, to rekindle interest in the Patois in the area; as of 1985, there were five cantonal societies devoted to this purpose.

Of considerable importance, however, in the context of this study of interlingual relations in Switzerland, is the rather unusual flare-up of tension between French and Swiss-German speakers in the Canton of Bern, which has led to the secession of a French-speaking portion of this canton, constituting itself as the new Canton of Jura, the first cantonal rearrangement since 1815. It all started in September 1947, when the Bern legislature rejected a French-speaking nominee from the Jura hills by the name of Moeckli to head Bern's Public Works Department. Moeckli, it was pointed out by the majority of that august body, was not sufficiently fluent in Bern-German dialect to qualify. (The Canton of Bern, although bilingual since the early nineteenth century, is the only Swiss canton where legislative deliberations have been and still are conducted in Bernese dialect rather than in Hochdeutsch, although French is also permitted.) This incident highlighted the

actual minority status of French speakers in that canton; and, ultimately aided by French-language propagandists in France, Belgium, and Quebec, the 'affaire Moeckli' blossomed into the 'Jura Question', to wit, whether the French-speaking Jura population (which from the French Revolution to 1814 had actually been ruled by France) should constitute itself as a separate canton, within the Swiss Confederation.

Bern, thanks to the long Swiss tradition of local-regional autonomy and democracy, did not seriously attempt to suppress the separatist movement (which underneath the language issue also involved economic and religious matters, as it turned out). In 1950 the canton granted fully equal status to French and German as official cantonal languages; but this did not settle the issue: In 1974, a narrow majority of the whole canton voted in favor of authorizing a new Canton of Jura; and this was approved, as it had to be, by federal popular vote in 1978. In the end, however, this only involved the heavily Catholic northern portion of the Jura, with some 55,000 French and 12,000 German speakers. The predominantly Protestant southern portion of the Bernese Jura, including 41,000 French speakers, as well as the bilingual city of Biel/Bienne, voted to stay with the heavily Protestant Canton of Bern. French is now the sole official language of the new canton – as well as of the southern Jura within the old canton; German and French are both official in the city of Biel/Bienne (cf. McRae (1983: 185–201), Mayer (1968: 707, 734–735), Mayer (1977: 88–90)).¹⁰

8. The language situation in 'Italian' Switzerland

In the Italian-speaking territory of Switzerland, viz., the Canton of Ticino and the three southernmost valleys of the Canton of Graubünden/Grigione, bordering on Italy, at least three distinct varieties of Italian can be distinguished, only one of which is used for writing. In the first place there is the Ticinese dialect (or slightly different local dialect variants), similar to the local dialects of the Lombard region of Italy. This used to be dominant for speaking purposes throughout the countryside, and is still quite alive (although with increasing adaptations to standard Italian in recent decades, comparable to the intrusion of standard German elements into Swiss Ger-

¹⁰ The Canton of Jura as voted for in 1978 was officially integrated into the Confederation in 1987. But already there are strong efforts afoot in the new canton to either annex the South Jura, now part of Bern, or else to create a South Jura half-canton (in which case the Canton Jura would become the other half).

man). It is now heard mostly in the northern or Sopraceneri part of the Ticino, and in southern Graubünden.

In the southern and central part of the Canton of Ticino, which includes the touristy towns of Lugano and Locarno, this rather archaic rural Lombard-type dialect has been almost entirely replaced by the so-called *lombardo illustre*, or educated urban regional speech of the Lombardia province, dominated by the city of Milan. (This, we might say, is functionally about half-way between Swiss-type standard German speech and the currently developing supra-cantonal or 'average' type of nonstandard Swiss German mentioned by Ris.) The latter regional variety of spoken Italian is also used by the speakers of Ticinese dialect in communicating with outsiders. And finally in third place, there is standard Italian; this is used with foreigners and on formal occasions of speaking (as in legislative or judiciary proceedings, in post-elementary classrooms, in sermons, and the like), as well as in writing (von Planta (1957: 14), McRae (1983: 71), Bianconi (1980: 8, 33–34, 120–122, 248)).

Bianconi, who surveyed the situation in the 1970's, and who stresses that local dialect varieties are still very much alive (or revived?) among the young people, also adds mention of (southern Italian) regional speech forms as used by Italian 'immigrant' workers in the Ticino. Bianconi further remarks (p. 121), with some justification, that Ferguson's original notion of 'diglossia' no longer quite fits the situation in Italian-speaking Switzerland inasmuch as standard Italian, or some regional variant thereof, is now used in informal conversation, and not only in formal contexts, particularly by Italian-born immigrants; and on the other hand, he claims, Ticinese dialect is no longer confined to informal-intimate settings, but is now sometimes used to deal with formal topics also. In the Ticino, geographically closer to Italy than to the rest of Switzerland, (renewed or continuing) use of Ticinese dialect has currently become a symbol of a somewhat illusory socio-political identity, in Bianconi's view (pp. 247–249): the Italian-speaking Swiss have political, administrative, and economic ties with Switzerland, chiefly the German part, but can identify more readily with Italy on the cultural and lingual level.

Until the opening of the St. Gotthard railroad (involving completion of a monumental tunnel) in 1882, the Canton of Ticino had been a rather poor agricultural area, quite isolated from most of the rest of Switzerland by high mountains. At that time practically the entire population of the canton was Italian-speaking (99%, according to McRae (1983: 213–215)). But with the build-up of tourism, commerce, and industry in the southern portion between the two World Wars and particularly since the 1950's, the Italian-speaking

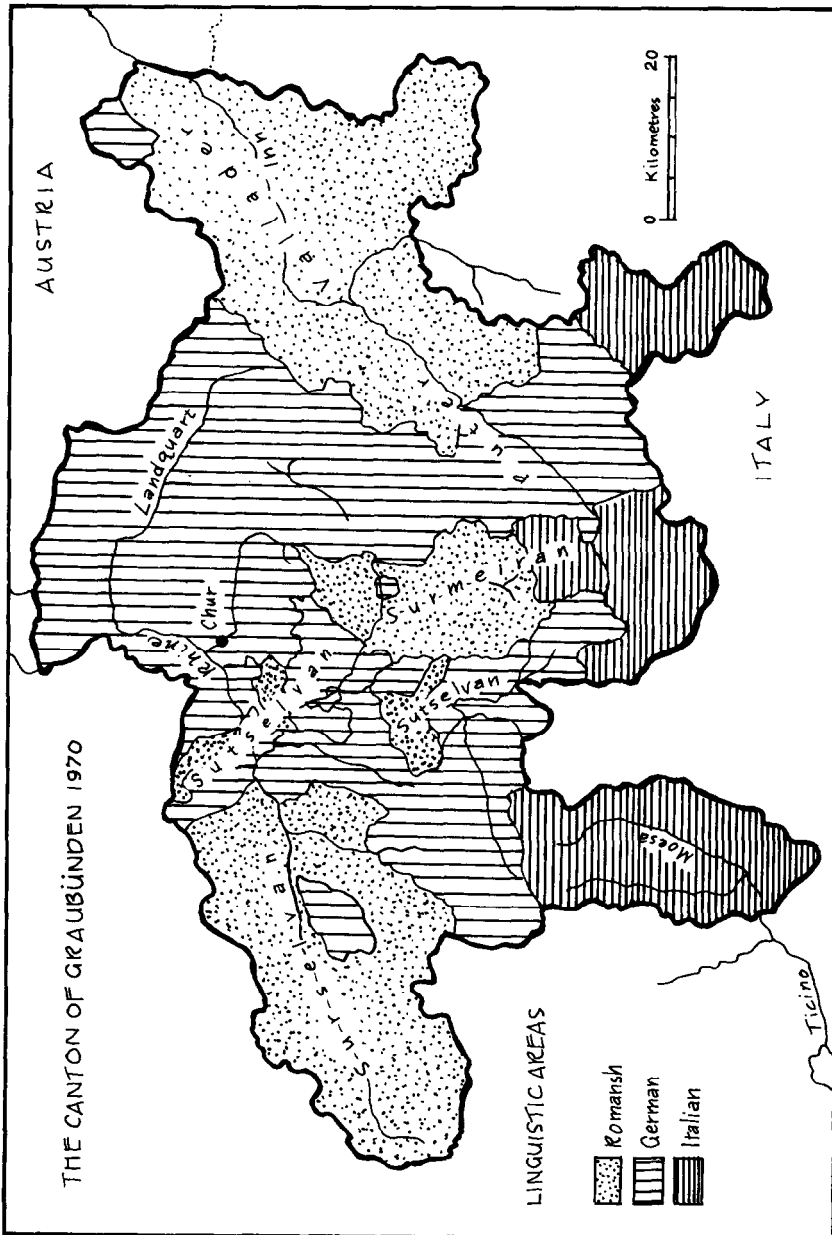
percentage of the population dropped markedly: by 1980, to 84% if we include resident aliens, or to about 60% if we count only native-born Ticinesi. This was due mostly to the arrival of German speakers; as of 1980 about 31,000 of the non-Ticinesi were from 'German' Switzerland, and c. 3,000 from Germany. The newcomers have tended to resist assimilation, giving rise to a so-called 'Ticino question'; but as their children pass through the local public schools, and with the growing role of Italian-language television and radio, it seems that even the more urban southern part of the canton is going to hang on to its essentially Italian character (cf. Bianconi (1980: 23–25), McRae (1983: 213–215)).

Writing in 1957, von Planta nicely summed up the language situation in Switzerland like this: the 'Welsche' (French speakers) attempt to speak the way they write; whereas the German Swiss and the Ticinese use their native tongue in speaking but write a foreign literary language; as for the Romansh Swiss: these write the way they speak (von Planta (1957: 17)).

9. The language situation in Graubünden

Which brings us to the Romansh language area, in the Canton of Graubünden/Grischun. The proper linguistic classification of Romansh as such has been debated by scholars: is it a distinct language, or merely a variety of Italian? In the 1870's, the Italian philologist Ascoli concluded that the Romansh dialects of Switzerland, of the Italian Dolomite valleys (southern Tirol), and of the Italian province of Friuli (adjacent to Yugoslavia) had a common pre-Roman (i.e. non-Latin) base. This view was contested from 1909 onwards by other Italian scholars, who saw all these dialects as mere varieties of Italian. Whereupon a number of Swiss scholars, in World War I days, re-asserted the independence of Romansh from Italian. In the 1930's, again, Fascist Italy revived the 'Italian' hypothesis, for her own political purposes. Actually this Fascist propaganda seeking to legitimize a claim on Romansh (as well as on Italian-speaking) Switzerland was a major reason why in 1938 Romansh was constitutionally recognized as the fourth national language of the country (McRae (1983: 72)).

As already stated, the canton most commonly referred to (in German) as *Graubünden* (in Romansh, *Grischun*, in Italian *Grigione*, in French and English *Grisons*) harbors three languages in its territory, viz., Romansh, German, and Italian. But it is linguistically even more complex, in that a situation of diglossia exists in the German part (*Bündnerdütsch* vs. *Hoch-* or



Schriftdeutsch), as well as in the Italian part (*dialetto* vs. *lingua italiana*); in the Romansh part, the several dialects are not only spoken but also written, so that the notion of diglossia does not quite apply here, except that for dealings with outsiders and non-local authorities German is generally used.

Glancing back into history: the Romanized Raetians or Raeto-Romans once inhabited a wide territory extending from southern Germany to the shores of the Adriatic. But in medieval times and beyond, they never possessed a political organization of their own, nor were they even included in the same state. Thus no close bonds ever existed between the speakers of Romansh in Graubünden, and their lingual cousins surviving in the Italian provinces of South Tirol and Udine. Breakup of the originally Raeto-Roman territory had been due to two major incursions by German-speaking peasants: Alemans moving southward to settle along the Rhine around Chur, in the ninth century or earlier; and Walsers moving north from the upper Rhone Valley in the thirteenth century. Therefore, in the Late Middle Ages there were really not only three but four different ethnic groups within Graubünden: Romansh, Italian, Bündner German, and Walser German; the speech of this latter group has left its traces in the archaic Oberwallis dialect, within the now bilingual Canton of Wallis/Valais. During that period there was actually a good deal of conflict between the Walsers, on the one hand, and the Romansh together with Bündner Germans, on the other. (Language affinity did not matter then. Even today, Graubünden's Romansh speakers seem to feel closer to their cantonal brethren of German speech than to those of Italian speech.) (Billigmeier (1979: vii, 2–5, 31–32), McRae (1983: 72, 216–217, 223, 226).)

Five dialects of Graubünden Romansh are usually distinguished: Valladér and Putér (bracketed as *Ladín*) in the Engadine valley, along the Inn river flowing into Austria; Surselván and Sutselván in the upper Rhine valley; Surmeirán in the Oberhalbstein valley. The number of speakers per dialect now ranges from c. 15,000 for Surselvan to c. 3,000 for Vallader. Each of these dialects has its own miniature literature. In the early period of the Republic of the Three Leagues (= Graubünden) lack of a single written standard was no serious handicap; Latin and German, occasionally also Italian, were used to deal with neighboring authorities. During the Reformation religious texts were written down in variants of *Churwälsch* (= Romansh); from these evolved regional forms of religious and legal literature by the seventeenth century and some belletristic writing in one or the other dialect by the nineteenth (McRae (1983: 71–72), Billigmeier (1979: 5–7, 266–67), *Thema* (1987: 19–20)).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, native Romansh speakers still constituted about half of the total population of Graubünden; by 1880 their proportion was down to 40%; a hundred years later, in 1980, their share had sunk to about 20%. At the same time, whereas in 1880 98% of all Romansh speakers lived in Graubünden, 70% did so by 1980, due to emigration to other cantons. That the Romansh language is in danger of extinction, with modern tourism etc. supplanting a secluded rural way of life, was recognized early in this century. The elevation of Romansh to a 'national' language in 1938 was intended to stem the tide; but this probably was a case of 'too little too late'. A further effort in more recent years has been the elaboration, under semi-official sponsorship, of a single written standard, by amalgamating elements from different dialects. This new artificial standard language called *Rumantsch Grischun* is used by a new daily newspaper, *La Quotidiana*, the first issue of which appeared in June 1988 (*Swiss American Review*, 21 September 1988; *Thema* (1987: 20–21)). How far the new standard language will find its way into the schools is not clear; in the past, the Canton of Graubünden has had to print spelling books for the elementary grades in four different Romansh dialects plus German and Italian! In any case, all public education in the Romansh-speaking communities beyond the first three elementary grades is currently conducted in German ...

10. Recent foreign influences on the Swiss language scene

An up-to-date survey of language conditions in Switzerland, as promised in the title of this study, requires us to have at least a quick look at some foreign influences impinging on the national language scene in recent decades: the presence of large numbers of foreign or 'guest' workers, and the impact of English.

As has been indicated above (p. 118) in connection with statistics on the Swiss population by mother tongue, a heavy influx of foreign workers into Switzerland from the 1950's into the 1980's swelled the number of native speakers of Italian and of 'other' languages there substantially. These aliens came, usually on a contract and limited work-permit basis, chiefly from Italy, later on also from Spain and some other countries, to satisfy the labor needs of the booming Swiss postwar economy. While many returned to Italy etc. at the end of their contract or work-permit period, many others have been allowed to stay on as resident aliens, including families. A minor percentage, in recent years, have even acquired Swiss citizenship. The magnitude of this

or even permanent addition to the country's population is suggested by the following figures: Whereas the number of aliens with temporary work permits had been about 50,000 in 1946, it had risen to about 720,000 in 1964, broken down as follows:

Italians	474,340	(65.8%)
Spanish	82,320	(11.5%)
Germans	78,550	(10.9%)
Austrians	27,715	(3.8%)
French	24,012	(3.3%)
Others	33,964	(4.7%)

The above total of 720,000, however, does not include family members brought in by contracted aliens, nor some 100,000 gainfully employed aliens that had permanent residence rights, as of 1964. These figures have to be related to a total of barely five million Swiss citizens at that time. Because of what many Swiss feared was an excessive 'alienization' of the country, the federal government began to impose ceilings on the employment of additional aliens (Mayer (1967: 140-144)). By August 1969, the total of 'guest' workers (excluding permanent residents) had ebbed only slightly, from 720,000 to about 660,000, distributed as follows:

Italians	c. 399,000	(60.5%)
Spanish	c. 95,700	(14.5%)
Germans	c. 57,200	(8.7%)
French	c. 37,000	(5.6%)
Austrians	c. 19,900	(3.0%)
Others	c. 50,700	(7.7%)

From a linguistic point of view, it must be kept in mind that the large majority of the foreign-born involved were and are actually speaking dialects of one or the other of the three Swiss 'official' languages; chiefly Italian. Nevertheless, their presence introduced a considerable temporary distortion into the traditional proportions of the Swiss 'territorialities'; particularly, a large number of Italian speakers working in the urban-industrial centers of the German-speaking area. In addition, the 1960's and 1970's brought a substantial number of speakers of Spanish, and of various other non-Swiss tongues. The question that must interest us here primarily is about the degree of mutual influence between the speech of these various immigrant groups,

temporary or permanent, and the native Swiss varieties of speech. Very little information based on solid research is available on this question at this time; such research should and could still be undertaken as a contribution to the linguistic topic of 'language contact' and to sociolinguistics generally.¹¹

The following partial findings may be of interest: In a sample survey conducted by the sociologist Rudolf Braun among Italian workers in German-speaking Switzerland, about 1969, it was found that 46% of the Italians had little or no knowledge of German; whereas 16% of their German-Swiss supervisors and fellow-workers had a 'good' knowledge of Italian, and another 25% had at least some 'limited' knowledge of that language (usually acquired in special courses in Italian to meet the needs of work-place intercommunication). The Italian workers showed little interest in learning German because, they explained, many Swiss do know Italian; and their own stay in Switzerland was only temporary; and there was hardly any contact with Swiss citizens outside the work place; and furthermore, the Swiss German dialect, unwritten, was particularly difficult to learn. Giovanni Rovere, in a sociolinguistic study of Italian 'guest' workers in 1974, found that lexical borrowings from Swiss German were rare in their speech, except for certain expletives and interjections of a 'vulgar' nature. Kurt Mayer, as of 1967, expressed the opinion that the long-term effect of the heavy Italian influx on the proportion of Italian vs. German (or French) in the various Swiss language territories would be very slight, on the ground that those migrants acquiring permanent residence, or at any rate their children, would eventually adopt the official language of the area in which they settled (Mayer (1967: 146–148)). Undoubtedly Mayer's prediction has proven correct – because of the principle of territoriality mentioned earlier. There is still the possibility, however, that when a 'balance sheet' is drawn up some years hence, the large presence of Italian immigrants will be found to have 'rubbed off' at least in a minor way on language conditions in the Ticino, and on attitudes toward the Italian language elsewhere in the country.

Of quite a different sort is the postwar 'invasion' of Switzerland by the English language. There are two distinct aspects to this: the popularity of English as a second language; and the infusion of English words and phrases as borrowings into the native languages of the country.¹² We have already

¹¹ I drafted a research proposal along these lines while visiting Switzerland in 1974; but no research funds were forthcoming at that time. In West Germany, several useful studies on language conditions among foreign workers there were carried out and published in the 1970's.

¹² Of course English has never been native to Swiss soil. However, as an amusing aside, there used to be in the city of Bern a schoolchildren's slang, or type of Pig Latin, called *Mattenenglisch*.

seen (p. 123) that, as far as language learning in the public schools is concerned, English may be displacing French as the favorite foreign language in the German-speaking region, and it may be displacing German in the top spot in the French-speaking region. In recent years suggestions have been heard, and voiced in the press, that English should be promoted as a *lingua franca* to bridge the gap between Swiss of different mother-tongue, particularly those of German vs. French speech. This would get around the diglossia problem requiring native Romance speakers (French, Italian, even Romansh) to learn standard German in school and Swiss-German dialect (now more widely used than ever) without formal instruction. Ris reports that nowadays Swiss scientists of different language backgrounds sometimes speak in English to each other (Ris (1979: 59)). All in all it appears that, whereas from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century one of Switzerland's own national languages, viz., French, tended to be the preferred 'bridge' across languages, this function is now shifting to English, a really 'foreign' language.¹³

Even prior to World War II, a number of Anglicisms had, of course, infiltrated into spoken Swiss German, and into written German. (Most of these lexemes could also be found in French and Italian.) They were usually nouns, having to do with sports such as boxing, tennis, soccer, and the world of entertainment (e.g., *star* 'leading movie actor or actress', *dancing* 'night-club'); also an occasional adjective such as *fair*, and a verb such as *flirten* 'to flirt'. Nontechnical concepts included *backfish* 'budding female teenager', *surprise party*, *snob*, *gangster*; *toast*, *sandwich*; *sweater*, *smoking* (= U.S. 'tuxedo'); *interview*; etc. etc. At the same time, prewar Swiss German was characterized by a considerable number of French borrowings, more wide-

I described it briefly years ago, in *The Linguist* (London), v.2 no. 4, p. 4. This lingo was current in a district of the Swiss capital called Die Matte. As to why the youngsters labeled it 'English', I can only speculate that at the time English was considered typically foreign gibberish. Some of its vocabulary seeped into the slang of local adults also. A few examples of these almost entirely artificial coinages: *giele* 'boys', *modi* 'girls', *tshagge* 'school', *schregle* 'to dance', *khitsche* 'to buy', *nobis* 'no' (but *yes* 'yes'). *Mattenenglisch*, according to my informants, dropped out of use in the 1970's.

¹³ The situation is mirrored in a way by the make-up of the weekly *Swiss-American Review* (New York), aimed chiefly at Swiss nationals in the United States: About a third of its contents is in English (including material translated from German-Swiss newspapers or reprinted from American newspapers); nearly one half is in German, less than a fifth in French, occasionally a bit of Ticino news in Italian, or a brief poem in Romansh. Recent letters from some readers have urged that (even) more space be given to English, as this is the one language all Swiss nationals in the US are likely to understand. Swiss government releases to Swiss nationals in the US also tend to be in English.

spread than in the German of Germany; e.g. *merci* 'thanks', *exggüsi* 'please excuse, sorry', *coiffeur* 'barber'. Inversely, modern German terms were relatively rare in French.

In the wake of World War II, however, and due more to American than British influence, there has been a marked increase in Anglicisms, in the German of Switzerland (as well as of Germany), and similarly in Swiss French (corresponding to what Parisian purists refer to as *le franglais*). For a necessarily incomplete list of such Anglicisms see the article by Charleston, based on a perusal of German-Swiss newspapers and periodicals as of 1959. Here are some typical examples of Anglicisms now increasingly popular (according to Charleston), but rare before the war: *lady*, *gentleman*, *girl* (an approximate substitute for *backfish*, but apparently connoting less naiveté ...), *boy* 'servant', *baby* (replacing the prewar French *bébé*), *farm(er)*, *manager*, *boss*, *job*, *trip*, *sex*, *bestseller*, *hostess*, *city* 'central shopping district', *business-anzug* (a hybrid, with Ger. *anzug* 'suit'). Adjectives now include *fit*, *smart*, *clever*. Charleston also cites loan-translations such as *Gipfel-Konferenz* 'summit meeting', *Schrittmacher* 'pace maker'. From the *Swiss American Review* of 14 September 1983 I glean: *shopping center*, *input*, *weekend* (before the war more often loan-translated as *Wochenende*), *fast food*, *sorry* (instead of prewar *exggüsi*), *stress* 'high-pressure work', *news*.

11. The effect of religious and other cleavages on interlingual relations

To conclude this article, I return to a point made at its beginning: Switzerland is often considered a 'miracle of unity in diversity', inasmuch as four different language groups of very different relative size live together peacefully, in twenty-three semi-autonomous cantons. I have outlined, however briefly, how a plurilingual federal state evolved gradually out of a unilingual league of small territories sharing a will to 'self-determination', including a right to one's own language. But of course self-determination is a relative concept: there can be no complete self-determination for the individual living within a society. We have seen, for instance, how the concept of language 'territoriality', in the Swiss context, puts some limits on language liberty. As to shared habits, some individuals may share the same language but differ in religion, or vice-versa. While language boundaries in the area now constituting Switzerland have remained remarkably stable over the centuries, a different kind of dividing lines evolved from the sixteenth century onward, based on religion (Catholic vs. Protestant). Apart from language and

religion, other divisions within Swiss society necessarily arose out of differences in geographic setting and economic development. This leads us to the question of the interplay between different kinds of divisions; more specifically: how far have relations between language groups in Switzerland been influenced, if at all, by relations between religious, ideological, or socio-economic groups? How far do the relatively sharp language boundaries coincide, or else overlap, with other perhaps fuzzier boundaries?

In the early period of Swiss history (fourteenth to sixteenth century), language differences were no issue for the simple reason that the thirteen original cantons (with the very minor exception of Fribourg) shared the same German language (albeit with minor dialect differences). Viewing this in a broader context we can say that, although the early Confederates shared essentially the same language with certain feudal overlords and the imperial power structure, the bond of language did not prevent them from fighting for their separateness on ideological and economic grounds. Even more obvious was the relative unimportance of language bonds in the case of the territories of Romance speech (French, Raeto-Romansh, ultimately also Italian): these sided with the German-speaking Confederation, at later stages of Swiss history. (This is not to deny that, as McRae has observed, the complete political equality of Romance territories was first 'thrust upon' Switzerland from the outside, viz. by Napoleonic France (McRae (1983:41)). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French-speaking Switzerland felt more akin intellectually to Germany than to Catholic France (cf. Müller (1977: 109–110)).

The first major cleavage had been introduced into the Swiss Confederation by the Reformation, which separated the conservative Catholic cantons (Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Freiburg, Solothurn) from those that espoused Protestantism (Zürich, Bern, Basel, Schaffhausen). The Canton of Appenzell divided into two half-cantons on the religious issue. Only one canton, Glarus, accepted both religions. Religious affiliation of the 'allied' and 'subject' territories came to reflect the situation in the cantons proper: the Italian-speaking Ticino and French-German bilingual Valais clung to Catholicism; but the French-speaking Vaud and German-speaking Aargau, tied to Protestant Bern, adopted the new faith. In Graubünden, where the decision about religious affiliation was up to the communities, Catholic vs. Reformed came to vary from one place to another.

It was not until the late eighteenth century that the notion of freedom of religious choice began to be applied to the individual, rather than to an entire body politic. But inasmuch as religious affiliation has largely remained a

matter of family or communal tradition even in modern times, the distribution of Catholics vs. Protestants has changed relatively little in Switzerland over the past two centuries: half of the modern twenty-two cantons, originally all-Catholic, are still predominantly so; the nine original cantons and 'territories' that adopted Protestantism still have a marked Protestant majority (Schäppi (1971: 27–29, 38–39, 44); cf. also McRae (1983: 39, 43), Schmid (1981: 123)).¹⁴

How do these religious dividing lines (fuzzy as they have become) relate to the lingual dividing lines in contemporary Switzerland? The answer is supplied by the statistics for 1980 (adapted from McRae (1983: 75)) shown in table 2.

Table 2
Switzerland: Mother tongue by religion, percentages, Swiss citizens only, 1980

	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Other	Total
German	40.6	29.0	3.9	73.6
French	9.0	9.5	1.6	20.1
Italian	0.2	4.1	0.2	4.5
Romansh	0.3	0.6	—	0.9
Other	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.0
Total	50.4	43.6	6.0	100

As these figures show, lingual and religious cleavages do not coincide in contemporary Switzerland (and they never did). Instead, they cross-cut or overlap each other. In other words, these divisions tend to balance each other out, rather than reinforcing each other. It can be hypothesized, therefore, that one factor that has prevented major friction to develop between, say, German and French speakers in the country is the fact that a religious bond has held German-speaking and French-speaking Protestants together, a bond that at one time or another may have been felt as strongly, or even more strongly, than the language bond between French-speaking Protestants and Catholics (cf. McRae (1983: 74–78), Mayer (1967: 707)). (It is less clear, I think,

¹⁴ But there is now a large Catholic minority around Zurich and Geneva, original centers of the Reformation; this is due to the migration of Catholics from economically less developed cantons to these more industrial and urban areas. As a matter of fact, the Canton of Geneva adopted the principle of separation of state and church as early as 1907, to accommodate the growing Catholic population. The Canton of Zurich granted equal official status to the Roman Catholic church in 1963 (Mayer (1967: 151)).

whether the bond of shared German language had an attenuating effect on the interfaith conflicts which did characterize earlier Swiss history ...)

A particular case in point are the relatively recent events in the Jura region: When the question of a separate Jura canton for the French-speaking portion of the population of the Canton of Bern came to a vote, it was only the predominantly Catholic North Jura that chose to go its own way; the predominantly Protestant portion of French-speaking Jurassians, farther south, chose to stay with the predominantly Protestant Canton of Bern (see p. 134 above). In other words, in the North Jura case the shared language plus shared religion were mutually reinforcing factors strong enough to lead to secession, on grounds which on the surface were entirely a matter of language. Another situation cited in support of the above hypothesis is the fact that in the trilingual Canton of Graubünden each of the three language groups is almost evenly divided into Protestants and Catholics: but if each language area had ended up (after the Reformation) being either predominantly Protestant or predominantly Catholic, perhaps this diverse canton (originally the Three Leagues) would not have retained its unity (cf. McRae (1983: 220); according to *Thema* (1987: 39), the five different Romansh dialect areas in Graubünden do differ in religious predominance).

What has been pointed out about the cross-cutting of lingual and religious cleavages in Switzerland also applies to divisions in political ideology, or party allegiances: the three major political parties are represented in all language areas, although in somewhat different proportions. The three major language groups also have similar distributions of occupational status. Average incomes are about the same in the German and French parts (but lower in the Italian and Romansh parts) (McRae (1983: 80–83, 111–114)).

So much for interrelationships between language cleavages and other kinds of dividing lines in Switzerland. To reduce all this to the most obvious common denominator: whatever has created and held together the Swiss polity through almost seven centuries of development has proven stronger, so far, than differences in language. Undoubtedly the non-congruence of the different kinds of dividing lines mentioned has contributed to this cohesion; how decisive a factor it may have been is a matter of opinion. The long tradition of local-regional autonomy and of democracy has, I believe, been the most central force permitting interlingual harmony. The major problem as regards the Swiss language situation, at present and in the near future, I see in the diglossic interdialectal variation which characterizes the German-speaking area, and which makes communication with the Romance-speaking areas more difficult. The other obvious problem, of much smaller scope, is the

interdialectal variation and lack (until now) of a written standard in Romansh.

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