Foreword

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Foreword

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Like many other societies at the beginning of the 21st century, Swiss society is having to come to terms with English as part of economic and cultural globalisation. This means coming to terms with:

- being surrounded by a growing flood of English in print, audio and video media;
- giving greater priority to English instruction in the school system, with everything this implies for Swiss national languages;
- hearing and reading an increasing number of English loanwords in the local language.

On the individual level, it frequently means having to acquire competence in English because this represents a considerable advantage on the job market; on the governmental level, it means having to learn to use English for representational purposes, e.g. on federal internet sites and in diplomacy.

Much as the inhabitants of other countries around the world, we here in Switzerland are subjected to an ever-swelling tide of English produced both within and outside the country. We encounter English words and expressions in newspapers, on Swiss radio and television, in conversations with friends and in graffiti. English is also commonly used for commercial purposes, in both product names and advertising. The use of English product names (e.g. *'Juice'* instead of *Apfelsaft, jus de pommes, succo di mele,* etc.) is both politically and linguistically interesting in a quadrilingual country. Although it may or may not be a politically correct solution, English obviously sells.

This raises the topic of English in advertising. The first two articles in this volume deal with the role of English in Swiss advertisements. In the first one, **BONHOMME** analyzes examples from print media in the three major linguistic regions, identifying more functions for the language than have previously been described and showing how English operates on several levels at the same time. In the second article, **SCHALLER-SCHWANER** focuses on a series of billboard advertisements in which deliberately incorrect (and therefore amusing) English translations of Swiss idioms were produced to attract the attention of Swiss teenagers. Part of the effectiveness of these advertisements

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lies in a type of insider misuse of English, which both strengthens the identity of those whom it is aimed at, and at the same time excludes other groups.

The question of exactly who is excluded and who is included by the use of English in Switzerland has not yet been answered empirically. However, close observation of the popular press may contribute to an answer. In her article, **PLASCHY** summarizes the findings of four university theses on linguistic borrowing from English in the German-Swiss press, providing information on frequency of occurrence, use by topic area, and word type, as well as insights into journalists' motivation for using anglicisms.

Although English has made its mark on the lexicon of the national languages, as far as language instruction is concerned, it is still a foreign language in Switzerland. Because of the economic and social advantages it can confer on those who know it, English is often fervently desired as a primary school subject, particularly by parents. The specific issue of whether English should be allowed to precede a second Swiss national language at school has had political repercussions, and has been widely discussed in the Swiss media and political arena. This is the subject of **ACKLIN MUJI's** article, which provides a praxeological analysis of the public debate over English and other languages at school.

Whereas the first four articles in this volume deal with aspects of English in Swiss society as a whole, the second group of articles narrows its scope to report and reflect on English in Swiss education. **STOTZ and MEUTER** report on the results of a two-year study evaluating *Schulprojekt 21*, the partial immersion project in Zurich primary schools whose launching triggered so much of the public debate on the status of English in Switzerland. In their evaluation, the authors look at teachers' implementation of the method chosen as well as learner and teacher classroom behaviour. They also draw conclusions about the nature and length of exposure to English needed to attain the objectives set by the project.

At the other end of the education continuum, **EHRENSBERGER-DOW and RICKETTS** present the results of research on the errors of Swiss students with German or Italian as L1, who were nearing the end of their studies to become English translators. One part of the study investigated the error detection and attribution abilities of three types of evaluator – an expert instructor, non-native speaker peers and automatic error-checking software – while another part focused on a qualitative analysis of errors, with an eye to

improving teaching for advanced students who are being trained to work as translators and editors.

English is also used extensively in many other fields at Swiss universities. However, due to the mainly national scope of legal systems, one would not expect English to be in great demand in Swiss university law faculties. But to what extent is Swiss law still national, and to what extent is it being influenced by European and Anglo-American law? **DINGWALL** presents the results of a study conducted among law students and practicing lawyers, in which she found evidence for an increasing use of and a greater need for English among Swiss legal practitioners.

According to a poll conducted last year by the *Organisation Internationale pour la Francophonie*, 53% of Deutschschweizer, 45% of Romands and 25% of Ticinesi now say they can communicate competently in English, making it the most widely spoken second language in Switzerland. This naturally raises the rather delicate question of whether English might function as a Swiss lingua franca. With even higher percentages of English competence in the northern European countries, English as a lingua franca in Europe is actually more of a fact than a remote possibility, and its widespread use could lead to the emergence of a new non-native variety. In the final article in this volume, **MURRAY** reports on a survey of Swiss English teachers that was designed to capture their attitudes to this new variety and also to changes in the status of native speakers that such a variety would entail.

In closing this brief introduction, it is worth mentioning that the articles published here do not provide a complete picture of English as a second language in Switzerland; other domains where English is important have gone unmentioned. English has, for the last 20 years, played a major role in many Swiss institutions and companies offering adult education courses. More recently, bilingual English secondary and vocational school projects have been set up in a number of cantons, and are approaching a stage where evaluation is in order. Many employees in Swiss firms have also had to become accustomed to English as the new company language. Furthermore and finally, the Swiss government has adjusted to the greater demand for information in English by including English in many of its websites and publications, while at the same time offering advice on how to avoid the overuse of English words in non-English texts. These four examples certainly deserve coverage in this volume of the *Bulletin*, and would have rounded out

the picture of English in Switzerland portrayed here, were it not for deadline pressures.

It remains for me to thank the authors for their cooperation on this project and the permanent editorial staff of the *Bulletin* for their valuable advice and help.