

UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE
FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

Master Thesis of Arts in English Language and Literature

**The Face and Voice of SBB CFF FFS:
A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution**

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Abstract

Drawing on observations of passenger attendants on long-distance trains, interviews, publicly available institutional documents and linguistic landscaping in eight stations, this MA thesis examines the construction of language hierarchies and the ideologies behind the management of institutional multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS, the main Swiss national railway company. It aims to understand how language is used to brand the railway company as a Swiss institution, through an exploration of the use, role, status and ideologies associated with English and with the three official languages of Switzerland. The critical qualitative analysis of data reveals that the hierarchies of institutional languages in this company (re)produce the territorial principle of Switzerland. In addition, the national languages are ideologically treated as markers of authenticity and national identity to brand the company as Swiss, while English is adopted as a global language that renders the SBB CFF FFS competitive on the global market. In conclusion, the participants in this study are regarded both as institutional representatives of the SBB CFF FFS and as embodiments of the Swiss national identity through multilingualism on the basis of their privileging the Swiss national languages over English.

Keywords: Switzerland, railway company, multilingualism, branding, language commodification, language ideologies, English Lingua Franca.

1 Introduction



Chaque fois que le contrôleur Froidevaux approche de la gare de Berne, il perd ses moyens et revit les traumatismes grammaticaux emmagasinés à l'école.

Figure 1: Philippe Humbert's 2017 vignette, *Tema Babylonica* 2/2017, reproduced with the author's permission.

"Every time passenger attendant Froidevaux approaches the station of Bern, he loses his nerve and relives the grammatical traumas from his school days."

Presenting a rather hilariously distressed Swiss-French passenger-attendant potato struggling to psychologically survive an announcement in German over the loudspeaker on a long-distance train, Philippe Humbert's vignette (figure 1) serves as springboard to introduce the institution, the participants and the topics of this study. In fact, it is not only directly linked to

the SBB CFF FFS, the national Swiss railway company, and to the passenger attendants that are central to this study, but it also hints at the multilingual reality that characterises Switzerland. The passenger-attendant potato Froidevaux belongs to the Swiss French linguistic minority and has to speak German on the trains due to the linguistic territoriality of Switzerland, which separates the three official national languages (German, French, Italian) in distinct monolingual areas and which sometimes -as the passenger-attendant potato Froidevaux in the vignette would certify- can pose some communicative problems.

Switzerland, and its national railway company, is an interesting context to study multilingualism precisely because it has a rich linguistic diversity concentrated within its relatively small national territory and for this reason it challenges the “classic idea of a nation consisting of one people bound with one language” (Stepkowska 2010: 127). As mentioned above, in accordance with article 70 of the Swiss Federal Constitution (1999), the official languages of the Swiss confederation -German, French, Italian- are organised by the principle of territoriality that clearly separates the three main linguistic regions -Germanophone, Francophone and Italophone- into distinguished monolingual zones. Between these monolingual territories, the Swiss cantons of Fribourg/Freiburg, Valais/Wallis and Bern are French-German bilingual, and Graubünden is trilingual (Romansh, German and Italian). Although the Federal Constitution (1999, art. 70) attributes equal status of official languages to German, French and Italian (Romansh -the fourth national language- not being an official language but “only” a national one), these languages are unequally represented demographically and geographically, which translates in a competition between languages and in their ideological hierarchisation (Berthele 2016).

Despite the existence of internal tensions generated by this unequal power and demographic/geographical distribution, Swiss multilingualism is often ideologically constructed as a marker of Swiss national identity, history and culture, and as such it becomes

a marketing argument involved in the branding of the nation on a global scale (Del Percio 2016a: 83). Nation branding is a political, economic and cultural strategy that mobilises nationalism and national identity to successfully promote the nation globally (Aronczyk 2013, Del Percio 2016a, 2016b).

This already rather elaborate Swiss linguistic picture composed by the coexistence of four national languages is further complexified by the growing presence and importance of English -a foreign language- within the country. English in Switzerland is considered mainly from two contrasting points of view. On the one hand, English is seen as a threat to the Swiss national identity and tradition and as an impoverishment of the linguistic richness that characterises Switzerland (Stotz 2006, Ronan 2016). Those adhering to this perspective underline the importance of keeping the teaching of a second national language in schools for national cohesion and are against the introduction of English as a first (or even only) foreign language at school (see Stotz 2006). On the other hand, English is considered as a useful instrument to facilitate intranational communication between Swiss citizens from different linguistic regions (Ronan 2016, Stepkowska 2016) in addition to being a lingua franca (ELF, English as a lingua franca) with foreigners.

Approaching these topics through the SBB CFF FFS as a nationwide hallmark institution, the aim of this research project is to understand the ideologies and hierarchies attributed to the Swiss national languages and to ELF within this iconic company and the ways in which they are integrated in the branding of it as a Swiss institution in late capitalism. The goal is to grasp the economic, cultural and symbolic values of the Swiss official languages and of ELF as they are constructed by the SBB CFF FFS. Reaching all over the Helvetic territory, connecting all the linguistic regions of Switzerland and embodying its national diversity, this national public transport service becomes an important institution whose role as potential promoter of the nation-state, its values and its identity have been largely neglected in linguistic

research (but see Hohl 1995 and Hausendorf and Mondada 2017). This sociolinguistic study thus represents a unique and up-to-date addition to the academic field because it is firmly anchored in the present Swiss late capitalist context and explores the ideological construction of multilingualism in present-day Switzerland from the highly unexplored institutional context of the national public transport SBB CFF FFS.

My research questions are the following:

- Which are the language ideologies and hierarchies behind the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS?
- How is language used by SBB CFF FFS in the construction of its brand as a Swiss company? In particular, which are the passenger attendants' language practices and ideologies?
- What are the ideologies, the role and the status of English in the SBB CFF FFS? When/where is it used, by/with whom and for which purposes?

To answer these questions, the main informants of this study are the passenger attendants of SBB CFF FFS who work on long-distance trains that cross the borders between Swiss linguistic regions. Defined by the company's slogan "The face and voice of SBB", which gives the title to this *mémoire* project, passenger attendants are -linguistically speaking- the most interesting actors within the institution, because they are the employees most exposed to national and international passengers and languages -especially when they walk through the trains' coaches checking tickets-, because they have the richest linguistic profile, and because they must flexibly adapt to the changes of language occurring when travelling from one Swiss region to the other. They are "the face and voice of SBB" because they represent the institutional reference figure for passengers during their journeys with SBB CFF FFS. Finally, passenger attendants are also key figures for this study because in November 2020 they were

awarded the Oertli Prize for their multilingualism, which highlights that this research on multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS is relevant to and anchored in the present times. On the basis of these characteristics, passenger attendants, with their personal language investments and repertoires, their worker profile and their language ideologies and practices, are prone to provide insight into the values attributed to the various institutional languages -German, French, Italian and English- of the SBB CFF FFS.

Data have been collected through different qualitative methods, including participant observation on long-distance trains, interviews, a research of the company's publicly available institutional documents such as job descriptions and language policies-, and linguistic landscaping of eight major SBB CFF FFS stations -Genève, Lausanne, Fribourg/Freiburg, Zürich HB, Luzern, Bellinzona, Lugano and Chur- located in the different linguistic regions of Switzerland.

After this introduction, the structure of the study comprises five sections. Section 2 details the critical sociolinguistic theoretical framework that helps to understand the role of language as a social practice that constructs social identities and inequalities. Language ideologies as a set of socially constructed ideas and beliefs related to language are central to this framework. Section 3 expands on the Swiss linguistic situation presented above and briefly presents the SBB CFF FFS. This section also reports on two previous linguistic studies on the use of language at SBB CFF FFS (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017 and Hohl 1995). Section 4 is dedicated to the methods adopted in this study. It explains their strengths and limitations and traces the actual process of data collection. Also, this section presents the participants, focuses on the impact caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on the study and ends with a section on the researcher's reflexivity. Section 5 reports, analyses and discusses the results of the study from a critical, qualitative and sociolinguistic perspective. This fifth section is composed of three main parts. The first one, mainly based on the company's language policies among other

institutional documents, focuses on the branding of the company through an analysis of the ideological and discursive construction of institutional multilingualism. The second one, drawing on the analysis of the stations' linguistic landscapes and institutional materials, examines the hierarchies of the company's institutional languages on a national and a regional scale. The third and last part, based on participant observations and declarative data, is dedicated to passenger attendants and reports their language practices and ideologies. Section 6 is the conclusion of the study and answers the research questions, reports the limitations of the research and indicates possible future research directions.

2 Theoretical Framework: A Critical Sociolinguistic Approach to Multilingualism

Understanding language as ideology and practice (Heller 2007) under the conditions of late capitalism in the context of a Swiss institution -the SBB CFF FFS-, this mémoire project aims at unveiling the ideologies and hierarchies behind the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS, the way in which language is used to construct a brand for the Swiss company, and the ideologies, role and status of English within the Swiss railway service. To do so, this thesis draws on multiple concepts within a critical sociolinguistic framework, namely, language ideologies, language commodification and investment and elite multilingualism, in intersection with studies about English lingua franca (ELF) in Switzerland and with the concept of nation branding, which is central in the social sciences. These points are detailed in what follows and together form the theoretical framework of this study.

2.1 Late Capitalism and Language Ideologies

Late capitalism is the historical period that -as many argue- since the oil crisis in the late 1970's has been characterised by the global expansion of markets, which results in the global circulation of people, knowledge and goods, and by the rise of the new service-based economy. This "new economy" relates to the emergence of new technologies allowing the development of new systems of information (Information and Communication Technology or ICT) and new economic transactions taking place on the global scale (Duchêne and Heller 2009: 370). In this economic process of expansion, language has acquired a central importance, "since a variety of related 'services' are based on communication" (Flubacher et al. 2018: 6). This has engendered a shift from an industrial model of "workforce", where physical and manual skills are central to the production of profit, to a model of "wordforce" (Duchêne and Heller 2009: 380, Heller 2010, as quoted in Flubacher et al. 2018: 6), where linguistic and communication competences replace physical strength and manual abilities in the capitalisation of skills, as it happens for example in call centres. This shift, which represents a key development of late capitalism, has rendered language both the tool through which work is accomplished and a product of it (Heller 2010: 104). The concept of "wordforce" relates very much to the services offered by the passenger attendants of the SBB CFF FFS, since their job relies on their linguistic skills. Satisfying the requirements of institutional multilingualism, constant communication with passengers and colleagues, literacy and ICT skills appears in fact key to be recruited as passenger attendant and to be successful in the job.

The context of late capitalism and of the new economy inevitably shapes language ideologies, which is a central and cross-cutting concept in the theoretical framework of this research project. Language ideologies are "the cultural (or subcultural) system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine 1989: 255). Language ideologies "are not only about language", but they are

intrinsically linked to social structures, behaviours and beliefs. More than that, they are influenced by the moral, cultural, political and economic dynamics in a certain setting (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 55) (in this case late capitalism and the new economy in Switzerland), and they are “bound up in ideologies about nation and state” (Heller 2007: 1). They have been defined as “sets of beliefs about language *articulated by users* as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use” (my emphasis, Silverstein 1979, as quoted in Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 57), which underlines the profound embeddedness of language ideologies in social structures and beliefs, and hence also the importance of metacommentary in everyday language practices. In line with this view, Heller (2007) affirms that language ideologies regard “language as a set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose meaning and value are socially constructed within the constraints of social organisational processes, under specific historical conditions” (Heller 2007: 2). The author also argues that discourses attributing values to linguistic forms and practices are associated to “processes of construction of social difference and social inequality” (Heller 2007: 15). This is why “understanding language as a set of ideologically-defined resources and practices constructs language as a fundamentally *social* phenomenon” (original emphasis, Heller 2007: 2). In line with this conception of language, this *mémoire* aims at considering multilingualism as a socially, politically and economically embedded practice (Heller 2007: 1), trying to assess the ideologies underlying the management of multilingualism (mainly defined as national languages and English) in the SBB CFF FFS and the role of languages in the branding of the company as a Swiss institution.

2.2 Language Commodification and Language Investment

Language commodification and language investment are other crucial concepts in this project. In the context of late capitalism and the new economy, language has acquired an exchange value to produce and obtain material goods, especially money (Heller 2010: 102), and the management of linguistic resources is increasingly important to “enter the globalised market” (Duchêne and Heller 2009: 371). Commodified language allows to create or open the doors to niche markets (Duchêne and Heller 2009: 374) and to access different types of resources (symbolic as well as material). For example, being a marker of identity and authenticity, language is tied to the marketing of local products indexing “something recognisable as a place or a social category” (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 11). Duchêne and Heller (2012: 10) explain that “the Romantic idea that nature confers authenticity, whether on things that come from it or on people who live close to it, retains its power to convince”. The authors continue by making clear that the link made by nationalism between nature and nations renders identities - both national, regional and local ones- authenticating symbols that enhance the values of places, goods or people when these are put onto the market (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 10). Duchêne and Heller (2012: 11) exemplify this fact mentioning a Québécois artisanal cheese industry that gave “authenticating names” linked to francophone rural places and historical figures to cheeses, complementing the English texts on the wrapping with French texts. As the authors say, the aim is to promote the cheeses as authentic “‘francophone Québec’ products made and sold by ‘francophones’” (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 11). Language is thus commodified becoming part and parcel of the product, it enhances the product’s symbolic value indexing authenticity and contributes to generate economic profit.

In terms of linguistic skills, language is commodified as a “technical skill” or a “soft skill” to be employed in one’s workplace. Language is a technical (or hard) skill -measurable through language tests and certificates- when “a certain level of language competence is

demanded for a certain position”, while it is recognised as soft skill when communicative competences -like active listening and intercultural communication for example- are involved (Flubacher et al. 2018: 4; see also Urciuoli 2008). As Urciuoli (2008) states, linguistic skills are “commensurable as commodities insofar as they are aspects of productive labour with market value: as aspects of self that enhance their possessors’ worth on the labour market and as product sold” (Urciuoli 2008: 224). In this sense, the commodification of language is strictly related to the concept of “wordforce” mentioned above, since language generates profit as it is placed at the core of economic transactions, and it is “generally understood to be a feature of late capitalism” (Heller 2010: 102). As Heller (2010) also points out, it does not represent a “rupture with the ideology of language as a whole, bounded system, consistent with the territorial boundaries of the nation-state and the historical continuity of a putatively culturally [...] unified nation”, but it rather represents the expansion of this ideology towards more economic frames (Heller 2010: 102).

Very much related to the notion of commodification of language is the key concept of “language investment” (Flubacher et al. 2018), which is also inserted in the late capitalist context. Language investment consists of “individual, institutional, or societal investments in terms of financial resources, time, and energy for the development of language competences that (ideally) can be turned into economic profit” (Duchêne 2016, as quoted in Flubacher et al. 2018: 2). Language investment is based on the conception that the linguistic capital -a Bourdieusian term referring to the set of linguistic skills that positions the individual socially, culturally and economically- can be translated in economic capital (Duchêne 2016: 74) and generate profit, which closely accompanies the idea of commodification of language illustrated above. In this regard, language investment may even be seen as a process involved in the commodification of language. In fact, investing to ameliorate language competences with the expectation that it “will pay off in the future” (Flubacher et al. 2018: 4) in economic terms is a

way to build up the value of the linguistic competences, and therefore to construct the value of the linguistic commodity. This investment is characterised by an aspirational dimension (see below) and does not always pay off, as it is based on the promise of a future -therefore uncertain- economic return. In this sense, language investment is a preparation of the resources (which in this case are the language skills) that might subsequently be exchanged, sold or exploited in the hope of generating profit. Lüdi (2016: 61) provides an example of this mechanism referring to an advertisement promoting English courses for children based on the conviction that knowing English will provide them with a better future. The poster promoting the courses addresses parents with the slogan “Investieren Sie in die Zukunft ihrer Kinder”, which clearly mobilises the idea of language investment for future profit (Lüdi 2016: 61).

It should be made clear though, that not all types of investment value language economically. As Garrido (2020: 76) points out, skills in “non-strategic languages” may in fact produce a symbolic capital rather than an economic one. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, even the symbolic capital resulting from the investment in “non-strategic languages” could pay off in economic terms. As the author explains, for certain professional profiles having a knowledge of “non-strategic languages” can be a valuable “symbolic employability asset” that defines candidates and workers as “efficient communicators who can tackle unexpected linguistic challenges in the [humanitarian] field” (Garrido 2020: 75). Sometimes thus, the investment in “non-strategic languages” for “personal interest” or “as a hobby” (Garrido 2020: 75) and the parallel formation of a symbolic capital make such workers attractive potential employees, and consequently also probable recipients of an economic return. In these cases, it could be said that the symbolic capital might lead to the economic capital of language, since their multilingual, entrepreneurial and flexible personae are likely to produce financial profit. Even though Garrido (2020) refers to humanitarian workers, the discussion can hold true also

for other professions, especially those related to customer service such as the passenger attendants at SBB CFF FFS for example.

The processes of language investment and commodification are based on the various and fluctuating values that different languages have (Berthele 2016, Flubacher et al. 2018:7, Barakos and Selleck 2019). The value of each language depends on the linguistic market, another Bourdieusian concept that refers to the context in which linguistic exchanges are performed by hierarchically positioned social actors in a wide array of social situations (Flubacher et al. 2018: 7, Barakos and Selleck 2019: 367). In Switzerland for example, as Berthele 2016: 43) explains, the most prestigious languages used by the “elite” are the national languages and English, whilst the lower strata of the population demonstrate proficiency in other immigrant languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, Serbian and Croatian. In terms of multilingualism thus, being proficient in two or more national languages and English is considered more prestigious than being multilingual in the immigrant languages (Berthele 2016: 43). As Barakos and Selleck (2019) state, “not all ‘multilingualisms’ are equal” (364). In the case of Switzerland, the unequal linguistic status distinguishing the national languages from the immigrant languages is dictated by the historical, cultural and identity values of the national languages, which constitute also a marker of authenticity and a sense of pride that add symbolic value to the languages (Heller 2010: 102-103, Duchêne and Heller 2012). English in Switzerland is considered a prestigious language because it gives access to the globalised new economy (Berthele 2016: 44, see below and section 3.1 for a discussion on ELF in Switzerland). Nevertheless, the national languages are also classed hierarchically, with German and French being the most spoken and therefore having a stronger status also due to their communicative value, and Italian (and Romansh) being demographically less represented and therefore having a weaker status and communicative value (Berthele 2016: 43-44, Ronan 2016).

2.3 (Swiss) Elite Multilingualism

The different values attributed to different languages construct certain linguistic repertoires as “elite multilingualism” (Barakos and Selleck 2019). “Elite multilingualism” essentially regards language as “an access code to local, national or global perceived elite” and as an instrument to acquire social and material capital, and a sense of belonging, prestige, excellence and privilege (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 362). The central aspect of access to “elite circles” (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 366) provided by language attaches to elite multilingualism “an aspirational dimension”, since it is a sort of promise to which people aspire (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 365) and that pushes people to invest in certain language varieties. Nevertheless, as the term itself suggests, elite multilingualism is a “terrain for exclusion” since not everyone can equally obtain it (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 365). Moreover, this phenomenon is involved in the accentuation of social and linguistic inequalities and hierarchies, and therefore to questions of social power (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 367).

In the case of Switzerland, as mentioned above through the example provided by Berthele (2016), elite multilingualism is constituted by the national languages plus English, since these provide a sense of national belonging and pride (see also Duchêne and Heller 2012) and give privileged access to positions of prestige within the nation-state’s labour market. For instance, the oral linguistic requirements to be met by a passenger attendant at the SBB CFF FFS are to have a C2 level (i.e. native-like competences) in either French or German, and to be ready to learn two additional languages (to be chosen between German, French, Italian and English) up to B1 level orally and A2 level in writing. This example shows the privileged status of the national languages (German and French in particular) and English in mediating access to a job as passenger attendant, therefore underlining the ability of providing access to material resources that certain languages have in specific contexts and the consequent decision to invest

in these specific standard languages, rather than in other languages largely spoken in Switzerland like Serbo-Croatian or Portuguese and Spanish, or in minority language that allows access to fewer resources, like Italian or Romansh.

2.4 English and ELF: Contradictory Language Ideologies

A further main point to observe in this mémoire project is the presence of English in multilingual contexts and its role as lingua franca (ELF). Studies such as Park and Wee (2012) and Giudici, Ronza and Pini (2020) focus on the increasing importance of English in the new globalised economy and on its positive and negative impact on multilingual localities such as Switzerland (see also Stepkowska 2010, 2016). If, on the one hand, English represents the access to the new economy securing a place within the global market and facilitating “the free cross-border flow of goods, finances, ideas, and people that define our global world” (Park and Wee 2012: 3), on the other hand there are discourses of English as a threat that destroys and devalues local languages, cultures and identities (Park and Wee 2012: 3).

These contradictory language ideologies related to English are reflected in Switzerland. On the one hand, ELF represents a useful resource to overcome the internal boundaries caused by territorial monolingualism, which facilitates the spread of English (Ronan 2016: 12). English eases communication not only with tourists, but also between Swiss citizens and places the speakers on the same level with its “non-national” status (Ronan 2016: 20). By using ELF neither of the participants is placed in a disadvantaged position, “because none of the participants would be using their own native language” (Ronan 2016: 20). On the other hand, though, the increasing presence and importance of English within the country is also conceived as a threat to the emotional, cultural and identity values of the national languages (Giudici, Ronza and Pini 2020, Stepkowska 2010, 2016). In fact, the “confederate discourse”, as Stotz (2006) calls it to distinguish it from the globalist discourse on English, establishes that

preferring English over the Swiss national languages breaches the “harmony among the linguistic communities” (Stotz 2006: 260) and hinders the “symbolic effort towards national cohesion” (Stotz 2006: 256). More precisely, the confederate discourse affirms that the spread of English within Switzerland results in an “impoverishment of the relations between the language communities” (Stotz 2006: 252), since being able to actively use the language of other citizens means to acknowledge and valorise their culture and identity and to weave stronger relationships between the linguistic communities (Stotz 2006: 252, 253). In Switzerland, English is mostly used in the working environment, especially by academics, members of the higher level management and independent professionals (Lüdi and Werlen 2005, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 18), and it is more an urban phenomenon rather than a rural one (Durham 2014, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 18). These considerations on English will inform the study of the use and the role of English in the SBB CFF FFS encompassed by this *mémoire* project, which aims to discover the ideologies attached to this language and how often, with whom, in which situations and for which purposes it is used within the company.

2.5 Nation Branding

Moving on to the last main concept framing this research project, nation branding refers to the political, economic and cultural strategies that mobilise nationalism and national identity to successfully promote the nation globally (Aronczyk 2013, Del Percio 2016a, 2016b). As such, nation branding is inscribed in the late capitalist context described above and it consists in marketing culture and national identity for economic and commercial ends (Aronczyk 2013: 31) by advertising certain -ideally unique- characteristics of the nation-state in order to give a successful and appealing image of it. In the context of the new global economy, nation branding “conveys to the world that the nation is not only visible but also well regarded in international circles” (Aronczyk 2013: 17). In relation to Switzerland, Del Percio (2016a) explains that

Swiss historical multilingualism and cultural diversity are constructed by the Swiss government as marketing objects to successfully promote and position the nation internationally (Del Percio 2016a: 86). Despite this, the author also affirms that the commodification of the Swiss diversity has its limits, since also other countries are increasingly realising their internal diversity, which lessens the uniqueness of Switzerland (Del Percio 2016a: 101-102). This research project is concerned with the process Switzerland's promotion in the sense that it aims at assessing how the SBB CFF FFS use language -among other semiotic tools such as their logo for example- to construct a brand as a Swiss company. Being a Swiss historical institution that connects all the linguistic regions of the country, the SBB CFF FFS are easily conceivable as a vehicle for the promotion and the daily (re)production of a particular Swiss image, and as a factor that contributes to the branding of the nation.

2.6 Framing the Picture: Language Ideologies of Pride and Profit as Nexus between Concepts

To conclude, the articulation between the concepts illustrated above form the conceptual framework of this mémoire project. More precisely, language investment and commodification, English lingua franca (ELF), elite multilingualism and nation branding are linked by their common language ideologies of pride and profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012) that stem from the late capitalist context. This claim can be exemplified concretely by taking into consideration the Swiss context under late capitalist conditions.

In Switzerland, the national languages and English are the languages most highly considered by virtue of either symbolic values, their communicative values, or their usefulness to access the local and global market (Berthele 2016). The ideologies attached to the national languages, namely the idea that they grant access to the local market and index to authenticity, national identity and belonging -and therefore likely to national pride too-, and those associated

with English, namely the idea that English is the global language that gives access to the global market, influence the types of language investment and commodification in Switzerland, which primarily relate to the languages in question.

As a consequence, on account of these celebratory ideologies generated within the Swiss late capitalism context, the Swiss national languages and English (as ELF and as global language) become part of a Swiss type of elite multilingualism, which grants access to both symbolic (i.e. educational) and economic (i.e. jobs) capital and to Switzerland's most prestigious circles or simply to the Swiss middle classes. Belonging to this Swiss multilingual elite can thus be ideally conceived as having access to a source of economic profit. More than that, is also arguable that being part of such elite and enjoying its privileges can be considered as generating also a more symbolic value, namely pride, because it can produce a satisfactory sense of personal success and achievement. The language ideologies of pride and profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012) are thus intertwined in the phenomenon of Swiss elite multilingualism as the latter is prone to provide not only an economic return, but also a symbolic one.

Last but not least, on the basis of the ideologies that treasure Swiss multilingualism as an object of national identity and pride (Duchêne and Heller 2012), language is commodified also through the process of the branding of Switzerland (Del Percio 2016a, 2016b), which promotes the nation internationally by marketing Swiss historical multilingualism as a marker of authenticity and added value and therefore generates economic profit. The language ideologies of pride and profit related to the context of late capitalism represent thus the nexus between the phenomena of language investment and commodification, English lingua franca (ELF), elite multilingualism and nation branding and help to define the theoretical framework of this study.

The following section provides an overview of the research context of this study, namely the SBB CFF FFS in Switzerland, and reports on two previous studies on language at SBB CFF FFS.

3 Research Context and Previous Studies: Switzerland and SBB CFF FFS

In order to better understand the results reported and discussed below, it is important to dedicate this section to the historical, economic and linguistic contextualisation of the research setting of this study, namely the SBB CFF FFS in Switzerland. For this reason, a first subsection (3.1) provides an overview of the Swiss linguistic situation and a second one (3.2) briefly presents the SBB CFF FFS. Both of them are supported by case studies previously conducted on similar topics and in similar contexts, and place some of the key concepts reported in the theoretical framework (section 2) in the particular context of Switzerland.

3.1 Multilingual Switzerland: Territoriality, Diglossia, Demography and Linguistic Hierarchisation

As a country with four national languages, Switzerland has its multilingualism inscribed in the Federal Constitution (1999). Article 70 of the latter states that “the official languages of the Confederation are German, French and Italian. Romansh is also an official language of the Confederation when communicating with persons who speak Romansh”. Though this linguistic heterogeneity challenges the “classic idea of a nation consisting of one people bound with one language” (Stepkowska 2010: 127), in the past few years multilingualism has been mobilised in the promotion of Switzerland’s culture, tourism and economy (Del Percio 2016a: 92), and since the late 19th century for Switzerland and especially Geneva to become international

cooperation and humanitarian hubs (Garrido 2021). Del Percio (2016a) explains that “Swiss diversity” -which is extended not only to language but also to culture and religion- is discursively integrated in the national history and identity, which are constructed by the Swiss government as “marketing objects” in the process of nation branding (Del Percio 2016a: 83). According to Del Percio (2016a: 96), Swiss multilingualism in particular has become an ideal promotional feature especially in the context of late capitalism and the new economy (see section 2.1 and 2.5), in which multilingualism takes centre stage. This relates to Duchêne and Heller’s (2012) conceptualisation of language as a marker of authenticity and identity in relation to the nation-state, and as such as a source of national pride. This is inevitably related also to profit, because the authenticity indexed to by national identities is considered a source of symbolic added value and as such it is commodified in the globalised new economy, therefore linking together the tropes of pride and profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 10).

As an illustration of the intertwining of pride and profit, Duchêne (2009) provides the example of a Swiss call centre (Tourism Service Centre, or TSC) located in Zürich that sells Swiss travel products and provides information about Switzerland to both Swiss and European customers (see also Duchêne and Flubacher, 2015). The article claims that recruiting multilingual employees is definitely “a financial advantage for companies as it is cheaper and more practical [...] to have employees who are able to answer phone calls in more than one language” (Duchêne 2009: 30), and that “workers have to perform a certain authenticity connected to the product they are selling: Switzerland” (Duchêne 2009: 42). This authenticity is performed in part through experiential knowledge of the country (Duchêne 2009: 36), but mainly through language (Duchêne 2009: 29). In fact, linguistic characteristics such as Swiss accents or the use of local greetings such as “Grüezi” are considered an identity marker and are perceived by the customers as a form of exoticism and therefore also as a form of authenticity (Duchêne 2009: 43). This example of the TSC call centre shows that the authenticity indexed

by multilingual workers, Swiss accents and local expressions -helvetisms- (“Grüezi” for example), is mobilised “with both promotional and transactional goals” (Duchêne 2009: 28) and it is therefore a source of pride and profit.

Despite the celebratory discourses about Swiss multilingualism, it has to be remembered that “not all Swiss are bilingual, let alone quadrilingual” (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 181). This is due to the principle of territoriality (Stepkowska 2010, Berthele and Wittlin 2013, Ronan 2016, Berthele 2016), which “separates all language groups from one another” (Stepkowska 2010: 131) creating “locally monolingual regime[s] in an officially quadrilingual country” (Berthele 2016: 27). The territorial principle is also included in article 70 of the Federal Constitution (1999), which states that “the cantons shall respect the traditional territorial distribution of languages”. This geographical separation involves also an unequal demographic representation of the national languages, which can be seen in the graph below, taken from the webpage of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) of the Swiss Confederation.

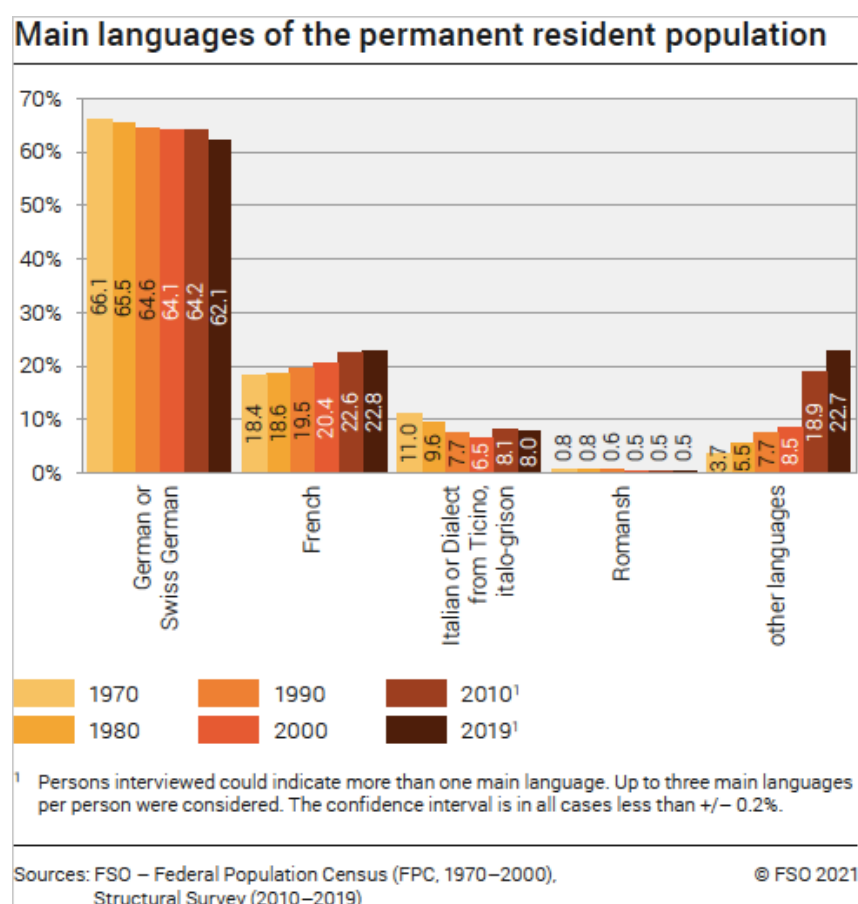


Figure 2: Graph showing the main languages spoken by Swiss residents between 1970 and 2019. Source: Federal Statistical Office of the Swiss Confederation webpage. Accessed on 11.5.2021.

This graph (figure 2) indicates the percentage of people who speak (Swiss) German, French, Italian, Romansch and “other languages” (such as English, Portuguese, Spanish, Albanian, Serbian, Croatian and other languages) as their main languages. More than one language could be indicated.

It is interesting to note that for German and Italian the graph indicates also the dialects, namely Swiss German and Dialect from Ticino (“Dialecto Ticinese”). This underlines the diglossic situation that characterises the Swiss German regions and Ticino, which will be taken into consideration in the section dedicated to the analysis and discussion of results (section 5.3.1). According to Ferguson (1959: 232), the term diglossia refers to a situation where in a speech community “two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers

under different conditions”, such as public and private, written and spoken, or formal and informal. Ferguson (1959: 234) distinguishes between “high” varieties and “low” varieties. The former are normally considered superior and formal, and are characterised by established norms “for pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary which allow variation only within certain limits” (Ferguson 1959: 237-239). The latter are more informal, are learnt by speaking and not by means of formal education, and descriptive and normative studies on them are “either non-existent or relatively recent and slight in quantity” (Ferguson 1959: 236-239).

The diglossia resulting from the coexistence of High German (the “high” variety) and Swiss German (the “low” variety) in the German-speaking regions of Switzerland is particularly interesting, since the great majority of the people who identify themselves as German speakers actually speak Swiss German most of the time, both at work and at home (Steinberg 2015: 141). Moreover, each Swiss canton -and even “each village or region” (Steinberg 2015: 147)- has its own variety of Swiss German, characterised by different “vowel sounds, speech rhythms and frequently its own vocabulary” (Steinberg 2015: 147). This diglossic situation may cause some frustration for those who learn German in Switzerland, as the language that is actually most frequently encountered in real life situation in Switzerland is Swiss German rather than High German (see section 5.3.1). Nevertheless, this feeling is also in part shared in Swiss German schools, where “Swiss German children have to learn to read and to write in what is effectively a foreign language” (Steinberg 2015: 148), whilst adult Swiss German apparently generally clearly distinguish between written language -High German- and spoken language -Swiss German- (Steinberg 2015: 148).

In Ticino, the presence of dialect is not so remarkable as in the Swiss German regions, though it is still spoken regularly, especially in the valleys and in small villages and by the older generations. According to the 2020 “Annuario Statistico Ticinese” (AST) (the document that every year reports the canton’s statistics), speakers of dialect in Ticino represent 20.7 %

of the total canton's population (AST 2020: 39-40). The majority of them (13.5 % of the canton's population) are bilingual with Italian as their main language, and only 1.8% of Ticino's population is monolingual in dialect (AST 2020: 39-40). If in the Swiss German regions two locals would directly start their interaction in Swiss German even without knowing each other, in Ticino people normally approach each other in Italian and not in dialect. Dialect in Ticino, as Steinberg (2015: 250) points out, immediately shifts the conversation to a more informal, friendly and familiar tone. Finally, as the different cantons, regions and villages in the Swiss German area have their own variety of *Schwyzerdütsch*, also the various valleys and villages in Ticino are characterised by their own local variety of "Dialeto Ticinese".

Leaving the diglossic situations of Ticino and of the Swiss German area aside to return to the uneven demographic distribution of Swiss national languages, it has to be acknowledged that this latter translates also in a competition between the national languages and in their ideological hierarchisation (Berthele 2016). Ideologically, (Swiss) German, spoken as main language by the majority of the population (62.1 % in 2019, according to the FSO graph reported in figure 2 above), is the best positioned language followed by French (Ronan 2016: 11-12), spoken by the 22.8% of the population in 2019 (FSO 2019, see figure 2 above). Italian and Romansh have a lower status, because they have a lower communicative and economic value as the national languages spoken by the smallest communities of the country (Berthele 2016: 44), respectively by the 8% and by the 0.5% of the Swiss population (FSO 2019, see figure 2 above). As Ronan (2016) reports, the territoriality principle can also increase "the reluctance to learn other national languages" and encourage the spread of English (Lüdi and Werlen 2005, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 12), especially in academic and working environments (Lüdi and Werlen 2005, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 19) (see section 2.4).

Stating that "multilingual states do not automatically produce plurilingual individuals" (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 184) and acknowledging the tensions sometimes generated by the

unequal distribution of Swiss languages, Berthele and Wittlin (2013) offer an interesting case study concerned with multilingual communication in the Swiss Army. Focusing on this context, they discuss receptive multilingualism as a possible solution to the predominance of German, which generates disparities between the linguistic communities in terms of power and career opportunities (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 184). Receptive multilingualism is a language regime allowing the different linguistic groups to express themselves in their own languages and to be understood by others, it pushes everybody -in turns- to make an effort while the speaker can talk comfortably, it protects linguistic minorities, and it encourages language learning in “real life” situations (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 189). The two main arguments against receptive multilingualism are that it lacks precision and can therefore be risky - especially in the military context of the study- and that sometimes the receptive proficiency is not developed enough, especially in relation to very precise terms (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 189). Despite the validity of these counterarguments, the authors report that receptive multilingualism is generally a positively valued strategy to overcome linguistic disparities and the difficulties occasionally presented by Swiss multilingualism, especially if combined with other strategies, such as code-switching (Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 192) and lingua franca.

As receptive multilingualism, code-switching is also a language regime that is useful to briefly consider in relation to this study, as it is likely to manifest itself in multilingual contexts such as Switzerland and -in particular- the SBB CFF FFS. Simply put, code-switching can be defined as a linguistic practice where one or more interlocutors shift from one language to the other during an interaction, and it is often linked to questions of identity, politics, power relations and hierarchies (Losa 2020: 191-192). Losa (2020) exemplifies the use of code-switching in relation to the Swiss army again. The author reports that code-switching can be used by military instructors to avoid linguistically uneasy situations and at the same time to satisfy the linguistic expectations related to their hierarchical position as officers, thus

legitimising more easily their authority (Losa 2020: 197). The use of code-switching between recruits is less concerned with face-preservation and is more about successful communication in order to be able to efficiently accomplish the required duties. As Losa (2020: 200) claims, cooperation on a functional level is combined with cooperation on a linguistic level. Both receptive multilingualism and code-switching assume that the interlocutors are at least passive bilinguals who can understand the other language and that, in code-switching, they can speak two or three national languages. Despite this, on the basis of their ability to lessen the tensions generated by linguistic hierarchies, receptive multilingualism and code-switching are proposed as two possible solutions to be adopted in multilingual communications taking place in Swiss institutional contexts, such as the SBB CFF FFS.

The use of a lingua franca represents a further solution to overcome potential communicative problems and tensions sometimes characterising multilingual contexts such as Switzerland. As reported by Ronan (2016) and by several contributions to her edited volume, English is often adopted as lingua franca (ELF) between Swiss of different linguistic regions because it is ideologically conceived as neutral (Ronan 2016: 18, see also Stepkowska 2016), contrary to the other Swiss national languages which would in most cases favour one of the speakers. In fact, “when using English, none of the participants of a putative conversation between speakers of different L1s would be at disadvantage because none of the participants would be using their own native language” (Ronan 2016: 20). The success of ELF in Switzerland is not only highly likely based on the territorial principle that organises the country in separate monolingual regions, but also on its “economy of expression” (Durham 2014: 41-44, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 20) and its being considered by Swiss language learners “an easier language to use” (Ronan 2016: 20) and possibly also to learn. Despite all the counterarguments addressed to the use of ELF in Switzerland, which refer mainly to the impoverishment of the Swiss cultural, linguistic, traditional and historical diversity and to the

consideration of ELF as a threat to the Swiss national identity (see section 2.4, Stotz 2006, Stepkowska 2016, Giudici, Ronza and Pini 2020), ELF -for the reasons illustrated above- could represent a further valuable option to overcome the difficulties and the tensions potentially arising in a multilingual context.

This brief review on the Swiss linguistic situation and to three strategies that can be adopted in communication in multilingual contexts has paved the way for a concise presentation of the iconic Swiss railway company. With their multilingual language policy and their railway network expanded all over the nation's territory, the SBB CFF FFS have contributed over the years to connect the different areas of Switzerland and to render the boundaries between the linguistic regions more porous, which has rewarded them with the Oertli Prize in November 2020.

3.2 SBB CFF FFS: A Brief Presentation of the Company and Two Case Studies

This subsection includes key information about the Swiss national railway company with the aim of providing some context in terms of history, facts and numbers, and presents two case studies about the SBB CFF FFS that analyse the use of language within the company.

3.2.1 Travelling with the SBB CFF FFS from 1902 to 2021

The SBB CFF FFS as national railway company were born in 1902 from the union and the nationalisation of four of the five main railway lines of Switzerland: the Centralbahn, the Nordostbahn, the Jura-Simplon-Bahn and the Vereinigten Schweizerbahnen. These were joined in 1909 by the Gotthardbahn (Jung 2019: 359). At this moment, the four linguistic regions of Switzerland were already connected by SBB CFF FFS. The development of the railway system had a crucial role in the modernisation and the economic growth of Switzerland. To cite one of the most important examples, the inauguration of the Gotthard railway tunnel in

1882 represented a more rapid connection between the North and the South of Switzerland and of Europe. With its 15 kilometres making it the longest tunnel of the world, the Gotthard railway tunnel eased the circulation of goods and people, rendered it less expensive and provided new and more favourable commercial opportunities, which linked the Swiss economy to the European market. Moreover, the early -in comparison with other countries- electrification of the Swiss railway system rendered Switzerland more independent and efficient, since it happened during the two World Wars, when the SBB CFF FFS were the “*épine dorsale de la défense de la nation*” (“the backbone of Switzerland’s defence”) and coal was rare and very expensive due to the needs dictated by the wars (Finger 2019: 21). This is why around the middle of the 20th Century, the SBB CFF FFS were considered “indispensable” to the Swiss economy, state and population (Kirchhofer 2008, as quoted in Finger 2019: 23), and became to represent a symbol of the nation’s success and identity. After the two World Wars, the SBB CFF FFS did not cease to develop, improving their technology and efficiency all over the country on a national and a regional scale.

According to “The 2017 European Railway Performance Index”, the SBB CFF FFS are the leading railway company on a global scale in terms of intensity of use, quality of service and safety and Swiss are the world champions of train travelling. Finger’s (2019) definition of the SBB CFF FFS as “*institution quasi identitaire pour les Suisses*” (“an institution that is almost an identity for Swiss”) is also based on the importance of train travel for the Swiss. Moreover, this definition is also linked to the crucial role that the SBB CFF FFS had for the development of the nation outlined above, which probably contributed to the -almost emotional- attachment of the Swiss population to its railway company and to the identification of this latter as a symbol of national success. This is also due to the fact that, according to the official website of the company, the SBB CFF FFS nowadays are -since long ago- one of the most important employers of the country, with a total of 33’498 employees. Among them,

1'708 are employed in the division dedicated to sales and customer service, which includes also passenger attendants. In terms of passengers, in 2019 Jorio (2019) reported that the SBB CFF FFS transported around 1.25 million people daily, whilst according to the federal department DATEC, in 2020 this number shrank to 0.84 millions of passengers per day. The decrease in the traffic of passengers in 2020 may be due to the Covid-19 pandemic (see section 4.4). Despite this, the Swiss are the world champions of train travelling, with more than 2400 km per capita annually (Swiss Travel System AG 2020, Jorio 2019, ats 2009).

3.2.2 Two Previous Studies on Language at the SBB CFF FFS

To date, there are few previous studies on the SBB CFF FFS from a (socio)linguistic perspective. Here I report the studies of Hausendorf and Mondada (2017) and Hohl (1995), which respectively focus on openings at the SBB CFF FFS station counters from a conversation analysis perspective and on the oral and written use of English in the customer-oriented practices of the Swiss railway company.

Despite the very different approach and research goals, Hausendorf and Mondada (2017) provide relevant information on the context of the SBB CFF FFS for this study, especially regarding the institutional nature of the exchanges taking place at the counters of the SBB CFF FFS stations. In particular, the authors highlight that these exchanges are a form of institutional talk that presents highly standardised service and a personification of that service (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017: 5). This means that the interactions often have “a flavour of institutional courtesy” (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017: 32) and are conducted with professionalism by the SBB CFF FFS employees (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017: 65). To this first observation, the authors add that the encounters considered are deemed interesting because they “emanate from an institution that is nationally present on the Swiss territory and, at the same time, specific to the national languages and cultures” (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017:

5). Finally, the article highlights that more often than not these interactions at the counters rely on the exchange of a variety of material -as for instance train tickets, personal documents, money, and several digital devices- (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017: 5), which is also the case during the interactions on the trains between passenger attendants and passengers considered in the present study. The exchange of such material often shapes the interactions by being at the centre of the attention of the interlocutors, who sometimes barely look at each other. Therefore, the study by Hausendorf and Mondada (2017) is informative for this study mainly because it highlights these characteristics of institutional talk at SBB CFF FFS, which are central to the discussion of the data gathered through participant observations reported below. In fact, this *mémoire* goes beyond their findings about the details of the conversations at the counters to produce an ethnographic account of SBB CFF FFS through the perspective of passenger attendants on moving trains.

Even though it refers to language practices of more than twenty-five years ago, the article by Hohl (1995) is more directly related to the research on language practices and policies at SBB CFF FFS approached by this *mémoire*, more precisely to the question on the presence and the role of English within the company. Hohl (1995) reports that in the early 90's (when the study was conducted) the demand for English at SBB CFF FFS was augmenting, also due to the increasing global mobility of people and the needs of SBB CFF FFS foreign customers that often went beyond the strictly railway-specific context, stretching from the entire transport system to local knowledge and to tourism services. Being able to offer proper explanations to these clients was -and still is- crucial to the success of the marketing of the railway company (Hohl 1995: 261). The author reports also that English was used both orally and through written texts, especially in promotional leaflets addressed to foreign travellers (Hohl 1995: 264). Despite this, the quality of the written language is reported as rather low, with the exception of the signs at Zürich Airport station which were basically error-free (Hohl 1995: 264-265). The

article also tackles the topic of the employees' language training, reporting that the SBB CFF FFS did not have their own language training program for the various languages required (the national languages), as the language training was carried out by external schools (Hohl 1995: 263). As the oral use of languages during the announcements over the loudspeaker on the trains is concerned, Hohl (1995: 265) says that the choice of language very much depended on the initiative of the passenger attendants. In these regards, the author provides an example of a passenger attendant who happened to be able to speak fluent Japanese, and seeing that there were several Japanese tourists aboard, did the announcement at the loudspeaker in Japanese as well (Hohl 1995: 265). Several of these points made by Hohl (1995) about English and other languages are still relevant today as will be discussed below (section 5).

This brief review of Hausendorf and Mondada (2017) and by Hohl (1995) helps to anchor this present study on the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS to previous research about the same institutional context. The next section focuses on the methodological approach of this *mémoire*, presenting the participants, explaining the strengths and limitations of the methods adopted, the process of data collection, the impact of the pandemic and my own positioning within the study.

4 Methodological Approach: A Sociolinguistic Ethnography “On the Go”

This sociolinguistic study adopts a qualitative, ethnographic approach in order to analyse the various language ideologies that influence the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS, that help to construct a Swiss brand for the company and that shape the social and linguistic practices within it. This section presents the participants' profiles, justifies the choice of the various methods considering their strengths and limitations, describes the practical process of data collection and explains how data are treated and analysed. Moreover, it reflects

on the impact and limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on the study, and it finally examines my positioning as a researcher in the field.

4.1 Participants: Passenger Attendants in Ticino and Romandie

Passenger attendants working on long-distance trains that cross the borders of the different linguistic regions of Switzerland were chosen among all the other professions at SBB CFF FFS because they are required to have the richest linguistic profile within the company. This is due to their being in constant and direct contact with national and international travellers and their various languages. In fact, as stated in the list of requirements available on the official website of the company, passenger attendants must have “very good verbal language skills in either German or French (at least level C2)” and -by the end of their professional training- must know “two additional foreign languages (German, French, Italian or English) to level B1 verbal and A2 written”. In linguistic terms, the customer assistants available at the stations’ counters would have also been potentially interesting candidates as participants in this study, as they are required to have “Good German, French and English language skills, [and] a general enjoyment of foreign languages”. Nevertheless, passenger attendants working on long-distance trains are more relevant not only because they are inevitably exposed to people coming from different linguistic backgrounds, but also because their mobility through the linguistic regions of Switzerland forces them to be flexible and to adhere to the local linguistic hierarchies of the different Swiss regions. On the contrary, customer consultants are immobile and always work in the same linguistic environment and are exposed “only” to customers -and their languages- who choose or need to come to the counter.

Six passenger attendants participated in the study. In order to guarantee their anonymity, their names have been changed while trying nevertheless to maintain a certain similarity with the original name. For example, French names were substituted with other

French names and the same happened with Italian and German ones. The choice of participants -among those who volunteered to participate to the study- was based on the attempt of having a quite heterogenous sample in terms of age groups, years of service at SBB CFF FFS and languages spoken. Moreover, since the passenger attendant profession is a quite male dominated one, I actively tried to select participant to also represent female workers. Table 1 below details the pseudonyms that will be used to identify the participants, reports on the key information that they shared when they volunteered for this study, and indicates the date and the time of when the observation took place, as well as the route covered during the participant observations. The underlined languages in the table correspond to the language(s) that the participants indicated as the one(s) they speak at home. The table also represents Marie and Giulio, who accompanied respectively Sébastien and Gloria during their shifts and whom I could also observe with their informed consent. The question marks in the cells of their profile indicate that I am not sure about their age group. The languages I noted in their cases are those I am sure they can speak, either because I heard them or because they told me. In relation to the passenger attendants from Ticino, it has to be highlighted that no one mentioned “Dialecto Ticinese” (dialect of Ticino) as part of their linguistic repertoires, though all of them repeatedly used it, either with colleagues, passengers, myself or when thinking aloud. Along the same lines, none of the participants, both from Ticino and from Romandie, mentioned Swiss German, though at least four out of six of them used it more often than German. This may indicate that they are considered as variations of respectively Italian and German (see section 3.1 for a discussion on diglossia in Switzerland).

Table 1 : Participants' profiles and information on observations

Name	Gender	Age Group	Years of service	Languages (spoken and understood)	Route covered	Date and time of observations
Sébastien	Male	55-65	42	Italian (railway jargon) German <u>French</u> English <u>A South Asian language</u>	Genève-Basel SBB- Bern-Genève	21.1.2021 6.12am - 5.30 pm ¹
Gloria	Female	35-45	10	<u>Italian</u> German French English	Genève-Domodossola- Genève Genève-Luzern-Genève	22.1.2021 7.39am-4.30pm 11.2.2021 7.59am-4.10pm
Erika	Female	55-65	18	Italian <u>German</u> French English Basic Arabic Basic Spanish	Genève-Luzern-Genève	4.2.2021 7.39am-4.10pm
Lizbeth	Female	45-55	12	<u>Italian</u> German French English	Castione/Arbedo- Bellinzona-Locarno- Lugano-Chiasso- Mendrisio- Cantello/Gaggiolo (I)	26.2.2021 6.04pm-10pm 27.2.2021 1.50pm-10.05pm
Patrick	Male	18-25	2	<u>Italian</u> German French English	Lugano-Zürich HB- Lugano	17.3.2021 8.30am-1.31pm
Giuliana	Female	45-55	30	<u>Italian</u> German French English	Bellinzona-Zürich HB- Bellinzona	10.3.2021 7.14am-11.14am
Marie (Sébastien's colleague)	Female	25-35 (?)	1	French English Basic German	Genève-Basel SBB- Bern-Genève	21.1.2021 6.12am - 5.30 pm
Giulio (Gloria's trainee)	Male	25-35 (?)	3 months	French English Basic German Basic Italian	Genève-Luzern-Genève	11.2.2021 7.59am-4.10pm

¹ Sébastien's and Marie's extremely long shift was due to a problem on another route, which caused delays and train cancellations and made us go back to Genève through Bern, Romont, Palézieux and Lausanne.

4.2 Methods of Data Collection: Strengths and Limitations

This subsection illustrates the strengths and limitations of the methods adopted in this qualitative sociolinguistic study and it discusses how the triangulation of different data types helps to ensure the validity of the analysis.

Passenger attendants were the focus of participants observations and interviews, which produce observational and declarative data. Participant observation is “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:1, as quoted in Papen 2020: 143). As Peer, Zyngier, Hakemulder (2012: 73) explain, participant observations allow to “get an insider’s perspective” on the studied problem and to “observe things that remain hidden to external observers”. Participant observations has thus been selected as a method of data collection for this study because shadowing passenger attendants on long-distance trains during the entirety of their work shifts allowed me to get an insight on their language ideologies and to observe their linguistic behaviours in various situations, both with passengers and with colleagues. It provided a first-hand sense of their habitual professional linguistic reality and practice as well as of their opinions and metalinguistic commentary about languages in the framework of their job in the present Swiss context.

Field notes were taken while shadowing passenger attendants to record the most important information. Field notes registering what is observed and how it is observed are “core data for the ethnographer” and are “the basis on which ethnographies are constructed” (Walford 2009: 117, as quoted in Papen 2020:146). Their main limitation is that they cannot register everything and they are mainly brief jottings and key words (Papen 2020: 146). Especially during the first observations in the field, even if the observation should of course be framed by the research questions (Papen 2020: 144), the quantity of information can be overwhelming.

To overcome this difficulty, an observation grid (see Appendix 1) was designed before the shadowing on the basis of the research questions and preliminary observations, in order to focus on particular aspects and note only relevant points. Despite this, as it was not always possible to take notes immediately, some details may have been forgotten. After leaving the field, the notes have been reworked and expanded through the fundamental process of reflexivity (see section 4.5 dedicated to it below). As Papen (2020: 145-147) suggests in fact, working on field notes, fleshing them out and remembering the observed event is a process that “involves a lot of thinking and reflecting”. During this process “the researcher needs to become aware of their experiences and of how the conditions of their participation, including their relationship with their research participants, shape their own developing understanding of what they take part in” (Papen 2020: 145).

A further method selected to collect data are individual interviews, which -when conducted after participant observations- can be very useful to explore more in depth some details previously observed. One of the advantages of one-to-one interviews is that the researcher leaves the interviewees in full control of their answers (Codó 2008: 161-162) while they express their opinions and unveil their attitudes and beliefs -in the case of this study- about languages. According to the original plan, interviews were to be conducted with all the passenger attendants who participated to this study, but probably due to the pandemic (see section 4.4 below) and to the fact that participant observations took longer than expected, I only conducted one interview with Sébastien. The interview with him was semi-structured in order to ensure that the most important topics were discussed, while giving Sébastien the opportunity to expand his thoughts within the frame offered by the main questions (see Codó 2008: 165). Even if I could not conduct interviews as I had originally planned, during the participant observations on the trains, when the participants were not busy checking tickets or solving technical problems, I had the time to discuss with them their job, their experiences,

their language practices and their ideas about the management of multilingualism within the company. These exchanges can be considered as informal interviews, since they represented an extremely rich source of data.

In addition to the methods of data collection with participants, this study included also the analysis of the linguistic landscapes of the SBB CFF FFS stations of Genève, Lausanne, Fribourg/Freiburg, Zürich HB, Luzern, Chur, Bellinzona and Lugano.



Figure 3: Swiss map showing the four linguistic regions and the eight cities where the main stations studied are located. Source: *L'importanza di essere Svizzera* 3 (2011), available on Limes official webpage. Accessed on 15.5.2021.

Figure 3 shows both the location of the eight cities² whose main stations were considered for the linguistic landscape research and the four linguistic regions of Switzerland. The violet part represents the French-speaking region, the yellow one represents the Germanophone territory, the orange zones the Italian-speaking regions, and the purple zones are those where Romansh

² The map represents the Italian names of the cities: Ginevra (Genève), Losanna (Lausanne), Friburgo (Fribourg/Freiburg), Zurigo (Zürich), Lucerna (Luzern), Coira (Chur) and Bellinzona and Lugano.

is spoken. The study of linguistic landscapes was included in the methodological approach because a linguistic landscape “not only reflects the status of different languages in society, but [...] it also acts as a force shaping how languages are being perceived and used by the population” (Cernoz and Gorter 2006, as quoted in Papen 2012: 58). With a focus on the use of official languages on top-down written signs in Switzerland’s four linguistic regions, a linguistic landscape study was deemed helpful to examine the hierarchisation and the territorialisation of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS. The top-down signs, produced by the company itself, constitute official material that can provide insight into the company’s management of multilingualism. Visiting all eight sites required some early planification, took some time and cost some money. Fortunately, I have both the SBB CFF FFS half-price subscription and the “Seven25” pass, which gave me access to discounted tickets if I wanted to travel during the day and allowed me to travel for free after 7 pm.

The last method in this study consists in the collection and the analysis of publicly available institutional documents issued by the railway company. These documents include the language policies (2014, 2017) listing the rules to follow when writing and talking on behalf of the company, and the workers’ profiles which include their job descriptions, the linguistic requirements, and the ideals that they should represent. This material was found primarily through a search on the official SBB CFF FFS website and in the stations targeted for the linguistic landscape research. Moreover, my contacts contributed to the collection of this material, since they occasionally sent me news, articles or pictures related to the SBB CFF FFS that they encountered. The criteria to select the different items were related to their date of publication, as I selected only recent material. The languages used in this material are mainly the three official national languages and English. The drawback of this method is that it inevitably has to be limited in time and scope, especially in the framework of a MA thesis. For the purposes of this study, these documents reveal the construction of the company’s

institutional profile and they are useful to reflect on the branding of the company and on the role of language in it.

The triangulation of the various types of data collected by means of the methods outlined above allows to conduct and produce a critical, qualitative and nuanced analysis of the studied phenomenon. According to Turner and Turner (2009: 171), “triangulation is the means by which an alternate perspective is used to validate, challenge or extend existing findings”. The authors explain also that “data triangulation involves the use of heterogeneous data sources” that -when combined- can “bring to light revealing atypical data or recurrent patterns[,] both of which may improve the confidence in the findings” (Turner and Turner 2009: 171). With its heterogeneity of methods and standpoints therefore, triangulation is extremely valuable to qualitative, ethnographic research such as this one. In the case of this study, merging the data gathered through participant observation with those from (informal) interviews, linguistic landscaping and official documents for triangulation purposes helps to produce “a more detailed and balanced picture” (Altricher et al. 1996: 117, as quoted in Turner and Turner 2009: 171) of the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS.

4.3 Process of Data Collection: My Ethnographic Journey

This subsection justifies the choices of the Romandie and Ticino for this study and illustrates the actual process of data collection in relation to each method mentioned above.

The two linguistic regions chosen were since the beginning the Italian part of Switzerland, more precisely Ticino, and the French part of Switzerland, Romandie. This choice relies on several reasons. First of all, they are the two areas inhabited by the two main linguistic minorities of the country, namely those speaking Italian and French. The assumption was that due to this reason passenger attendants in these two regions would probably have particular opinions worth exploring about the researched topic -multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS-,

especially due to their point of view as linguistic minorities. Second, my personal linguistic competences allow me to function proficiently in French, Italian and English, whilst I only have a basic knowledge of German, which I would not consider good enough to properly interact with German speaking participants. It is true that as passenger attendants working at SBB CFF FFS, even participants from the Swiss German regions should be able to speak at least one of the other national languages and English, but asking them to speak a different language for me would have meant to influence even more their behaviour with my presence (see Peer, Zyngier, Hakemulder 2012: 73-74, Codó 2008: 162), thus altering the results to a greater extent. My wish was to let them speak in the language of their “*dépôt*”, i.e., the language of their base station. The gatekeepers in Ticino and Romandie, who were kindly identified, informed about my project and given my contact details by my supervisor’s partner, actually asked their colleagues in the Swiss German part of Switzerland if they wished to participate to the study, but they did not. Thus, even if I had wanted to extend my research project to the Swiss German regions, I could not have done it. Graubünden, a trilingual canton with German, Italian and Romansch as official languages, was not taken into consideration mainly because of the limited scope allowed by a Master thesis -especially in terms of time- and due to the fact that I cannot speak neither Romansch nor German, which would have prevented me to fully engage in participant observations with the locals.

To request permission for the collection of declarative and behavioural data from the participants, the first meetings with the gatekeepers -one in Ticino and one in Romandie- took place in early autumn 2020. Both of them responded very positively to the project and to the qualitative methods proposed. They both granted me access to the SBB CFF FFS and put me in contact with the targeted participants in their respective regions.

At the beginning of January 2021, the passenger attendants based in Chiasso and Bellinzona, and in Geneva and Lausanne were contacted. The gatekeepers shared with them

an email that I had previously prepared to request their voluntary participation for the shadowing during one of their work shifts on the long-distance trains. This email explained that I would accompany them discretely taking notes and without recording anything, and it contained a brief presentation of myself and the information sheet (see Appendix 2) about the research goals, methods and ethical commitments. Interviews at a later stage were also mentioned, but the focus was definitely on the shadowing. To participate, passenger attendants had to contact me through a form available both in French and in Italian. The form was meant to collect some basic information about the participants, such as their name, age group, gender, contact details, namely station of reference, years of service at SBB CFF FFS and languages spoken and understood, both at work and in their private life. These pieces of information would have helped me to select the participants in case I had too many.

Within a week after the email was sent, eight passenger attendants from the “dépôt” of Geneva and three from the “dépôts” of Bellinzona and Chiasso answered, whilst nobody ever answered from Lausanne. The three passenger attendants from Ticino -Giuliana, Lizbeth and Patrick- and a selection of three passenger attendants from the eight from Romandie -Sébastien, Gloria and Erika- (see section 4.1 above) were contacted individually to organise the observations. Four participants -Sébastien, Erika, Giuliana and Patrick- were shadowed once and two of them -Gloria and Lizbeth- twice. Each observation lasted one of their entire shifts, averaging between eight and ten hours. In total, the participant observations took eight days (four observations in Ticino and four in Romandie) and totalled around fifty-four hours of participant observation. Between the 21st of January and the 11th of February 2021, I conducted the four observations in Romandie, and between the 17th of February and the 10th of March 2021 I conducted the four observations in Ticino.

Before each observation, I asked every participant to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) that stated the ethical commitments of data anonymity and voluntary participation to the

study. During the shadowing I took field notes on a notebook about their use of language with passengers and colleagues and during the announcements indicating the next stations and the connections available. I also noted what they told me during the “informal interviews” between the rounds of ticket-checking. Notes were also taken on my phone during toilet breaks, especially during the breaks between the journeys. On the trains, I mainly observed the cues for language choice, the ways of negotiating language with passengers and colleagues and the ordering of different languages during multilingual announcements.

During the interview I conducted with Sébastien, which took place via Microsoft Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I took the occasion to elaborate on some details I had observed and on some anecdotes that he had shared with me while I was shadowing him. I also asked him to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4). The interview was semi-structured (see guidelines in Appendix 5) and lasted one hour.

To analyse the linguistic landscapes of the stations of Geneva, Lausanne, Luzern, Zürich HB, Chur, Bellinzona and Lugano, I visited these sites between the 18th of October 2020 and the 14th of February 2021. The texts targeted were first and foremost the railway company’s official top-down signs and the posters advertising offers and products, both inside and outside the stations. To document the linguistic landscapes, I took pictures with my mobile phone and a few notes on my notebook, especially about the placement of texts in the stations. The site inspections were normally done during the day to assure the collection of high-quality data. The only exception is Luzern, which I only had the occasion to visit one cold evening of November while commuting from Lugano to Lausanne. Due to the darkness and the biting cold that made me proceed quite rapidly, the inspection of this site may be slightly less accurate than the others, though I was very careful to examine all the platforms, underground corridors and entrances of the stations, in addition to -of course- the main central hall and its internal

balcony. Data were also collected on trains to document the multilingual signs characterising those “moving spaces”.

Official documents issued by the SBB CFF FFS were sporadically collected between the end of August 2020, as soon as the idea for this project was consolidated, and the end of January 2021, when the participant observations started. As mentioned in the previous subsection (4.2), this material derives primarily from the official website of the company, but also from the linguistic landscapes of the various stations, from social media such as Instagram and Facebook and from my -contacts’ - contacts.

4.4 Covid-19: Impact and Limitations

Though the pandemic of Covid-19 did not prevent the accomplishment of this study, it has inevitably imposed some changes on its planned procedure. Luckily, even during the most critical periods of the pandemic crisis, the SBB CFF FFS, being Switzerland’s most important railway company, remained functional. Despite this, the company registered both a significant decrease in terms of passengers and an important change in the clientele in response to the several lockdowns declared by the confederation and by most states worldwide, and due to the mobility restrictions and the adoption of home office by many companies. In fact, according to the participants to this study, during Covid-19 times customers of the SBB CFF FFS were mainly local commuters or Swiss tourists who travelled within the borders of the country, while foreign travellers and tourists were scarce.

These changes due to the pandemic inevitably had an impact on the quantity of data collected for the purposes of this study. Most importantly, they caused a reduction of the number of observable interactions between passenger attendants and passengers. As several participants explained, they normally interact a lot more with tourists and travellers from abroad rather than with Swiss passengers. In fact, these latter usually already know the details

of their trajectories or where to find the latest information about their travels, namely on the company's application, whilst strangers may be unfamiliar with it and may feel more easily lost, therefore needing more assistance from the company's personnel. With fewer passengers and especially with fewer foreigners aboard, the range of languages used by passenger attendants also shrank. In fact, most interactions were conducted in the national languages, and only a restricted number of them in English or in "immigrant languages" (Berthele 2016: 43) such as Spanish and Arabic. In spite of the aforementioned disadvantages owing to Covid-19, it can be said that this situation allowed to focus more closely on the passenger attendants' use of the Swiss national languages.

Reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on the nature and quantity of data, also the rather uncomfortable working conditions of the passenger attendants have to be considered. The modest number of replies from passenger attendants willing to participate to the present study is highly likely connected -at least in part- to the critical presence of the virus. Being constantly in contact with many people in a time when social distancing is compulsory and relative social isolation is strongly encouraged, passenger attendants are often stressed, under pressure and confronted with relatively mentally tiring situations due to what is demanded from them. In their position of authority for example, they have to remind reluctant passengers time and again to respect the precautionary measures, especially the need to properly wear a sanitary mask. Sometimes the passengers' reactions are quick and cooperative, whilst in other occasions the response is less positive and can lead to unpleasant discussions. Considering all this, it is quite understandable that many passenger attendants preferred not to participate to the study in order to avoid an additional presence -the researcher's-, which as discrete as it might have been would still have represented a supplementary load on their habitual work.

The methodological design of the research project had to be rearranged according to passenger attendants' reluctance to take part in the study, which was partly due to the pandemic.

The major modification of the original methodological approach was the impossibility to conduct focus groups, which would have been conducted via Microsoft Teams after the shadowing. It is possible that passenger attendants were put off by the eventuality of interruptions and misfunctions of the internet connection that could happen during an online conference lasting for a relatively long time (the estimated duration of a focus group was of 90 minutes). It has also to be recognised that online and face-to-face interactions are characterised by very different dynamics, and it is often easier, more comfortable and less stressful or frustrating to interact with someone sharing the same physical space. This is particularly true when the participants in the conversation group do not necessarily know each other, as it would have been the case with passenger attendants participating in the focus groups. This method was initially envisaged because it would have been a source of rich and unexpected data since participants share beliefs, opinions, feelings, and similar experiences as they respond to each other's contributions (Codó 2008: 163; Peer, Zyngier, Hakemulder 2012: 86). The Covid-19 pandemic has thus impacted both directly and indirectly the implementation of this study, fortunately without impeding its completion.

4.5 Reflexivity and Positioning

As Papen (2020: 149) states, “the fact that the researcher herself is the central data collection tool in participant observation can make it [ethnographic observation] open to accusation of lacking in rigour and ‘objectivity’”. While observing participants, taking fieldnotes and conducting interviews, the researcher acts as a sort of filter, selecting -consciously and unconsciously- the details to register and report. To counter this criticism related to the centrality of the researcher, it is necessary that this latter “[brings] to the fore the process of knowledge creation in the research”, taking into account one's own experiences, attitudes and cultural background, as well as one's own presence during the observation (Papen 2020: 149).

This is precisely the aim of this subsection. After illustrating my background as “Ticinese” and as a lifelong SBB CFF FFS client, I am going to clarify my positioning as researcher during the process of data collection -especially participant observations-, considering my relationship with the observed participants (Papen 2020: 145). This crucial reflective work is fundamental for a transparent and honest procedure of knowledge creation.

4.5.1 Personal Experiences as Ticinese and Cultural Background

I look at Swiss multilingualism from the perspective of a young Swiss Italian woman from Ticino studying at the University of Lausanne. In Ticino, there is a widespread need to learn at least another national language in order to open the door to the possibility of completing an academic degree in other linguistic regions of Switzerland -as there is only a young university in this canton, namely in Lugano- and to widen the horizons of professional opportunities in the rest of the nation-state. In terms of national languages, individual multilingualism -or at least bilingualism-, is quite common in my canton. As Berthele (2016: 39) says, “the highest proportion of individual multilinguals is found in the Italian-speaking territories”. This multilingualism, however, does not come without a set of questions related to power and inequality that highlight the differences between “Ticinesi”, Swiss Germans and Swiss French in terms of language learning and use. These discourses about national languages took a further nuance once I arrived at university in Lausanne and became friends with many people from different cantons (mainly French-speaking ones). In fact, in my group of friends there has always been a sort of playful rivalry between people from different linguistic regions, a sort of pride in defending and promoting one’s own linguistic identity. On the basis of these discourses that have accompanied me since a relatively young age, with my *mémoire* I wished to explore more in depth and from an academic point of view the phenomena of Swiss multilingualism

and of English lingua franca, the ideologies behind them and the hierarchisation of the different languages.

In order to explain how I decided to conduct a study on multilingualism in Switzerland and on the presence and the role of English in the country, I also have to report the interest that some of my BA linguistic classes sparked during my academic experience at the University of Lausanne. These courses were sometimes concerned with the presence -and its consequences- of English in multilingual contexts -such as Switzerland- and some other times were related to the relationship between language and identity, studying how the latter is constructed through the former. In both cases I could not help making links with Switzerland, with my personal experience of Swiss multilingualism and with my own identity as “Ticinese” and as Swiss.

The selection of SBB CFF FFS as site to study these phenomena was also based on my personal experience. In particular, the iconic multilingualism of the company -especially the multilingual announcements by passenger attendants- has always been something characterising train journeys in Switzerland. I remember that as kids, we used to have fun reciting the announcements in the different languages. Especially being able to mimic the openings “Meine Damen und Herren, wir treffen in Arth-Goldau auf Gleis vier ein, Ausstiegsseite in Fahrtrichtung links” and “Mesdames et Messieurs, nous arrivons à Lausanne sur voie une, veuillez descendre à gauche dans le sens de marche” gave us a sense of pride as we had the impression of being able to “speak French and German”. With these memories in mind and regularly travelling by train between Lausanne and Lugano (which entails passing through all the three linguistic regions of the country) while looking for a research site, the SBB CFF FFS revealed themselves a very suitable choice.

Due to these connections with my identity as “Ticinese” and Swiss and with my personal experiences, I was interested and curious to discover and understand a bit more about the coexistence of different languages in my country, and in particular in its emblematic

railway institution. Reflecting on myself, my past, my memories and my academic trajectory as I have been doing -a reflective process that I have tried to synthesise here above- was precisely how I came to ask the research questions that guide this study.

4.5.2 My Positioning during Participant Observations

The interaction between the ethnographer and the observed participants inevitably influences the behaviours of both parties. This is because reality is socially constructed and the course of interactions depends deeply on the interlocutors' performance and negotiation of social identities (see Codó 2008: 162-164), within a given social, economic and historical context. This acknowledges the co-construction of situation between the different social actors, which in this case are the researcher -myself- and the participants -the passenger attendants who volunteered to participate in this study-. Not being able to be a complete observer ("a fly on the wall") -because my presence still participated in the construction of the observed situation- nor a complete participant (Mason 2002: 92) -since I was not another passenger attendant- I positioned myself as a sort of "observing participant" on the "participant-observer continuum" of the research (Mason 2002: 87, 92). This means that I consider myself as one more participant in the interactions analysed and that therefore, while analysing and discussing the results, I must take into account not only the words, the actions and the trajectories of passenger attendants, but also my own behaviour during fieldwork, my words and actions, as well as my personal and academic trajectory and linguistic profile on the generation of data.

The project itself was presented to gatekeepers and participants alike as my Master thesis, namely as the final work that crowns my university studies. I do not think to be exaggerating when I say that some of the participants -Sébastien, Lizbeth and Erika in particular- felt rather proud and important to be part of this kind of research. In fact, knowing that I was there to research and document their use of language, sometimes they acted

unnaturally putting on several times a “multilingual show”, showing off their language skills for me while bantering with passengers. This relates to the issue of “truth” mentioned by Codó (2008: 162) in relation to interviews, though it is extremely pertinent also in relation to participant observations. The issue of truth refers to the fact that informants can modify their usual behaviour “because they either want to please the researcher [...] or aim to project a given image for themselves” and for the company (Codó 2008: 162). Whenever I detected the “multilingual show”, I registered it in my notebook, so that during the process of analysis of data I could better nuance my claims.

In order to be granted bottom-up access to the railway institution, I presented myself to the gatekeepers and to the participants not only as a student interested in researching the language practices within the SBB CFF FFS, but also as a Swiss and as a “Ticinese” who is curious to better understand the ideologies and the relations of power hidden behind the management of the national multilingualism by the iconic Swiss railway company. I believe that this latter image that I presented was perceived as a common ground and as a shared interest by most of my interlocutors at SBB CFF FFS. This helped me to construct a good rapport with them all despite my often much younger age. All of them showed a lot of interest in the topic and encouraged me to pursue my research.

I feel that my presence as researcher was recognised and accepted by the participants in all the observations, but it is worth recognising that in most cases my relationship with the passenger attendants evolved during the course of the shadowing. During the first moments of the ethnographic observations, the exchanges with my participants were a lot more formal. More than once, I had the impression that my presence made some participants feel self-conscious, since some of them -Giuliana, Patrick and Erika in particular- actually told me at the beginning of the observations that their language skills were not exemplary nor particularly remarkable. Though I made very clear that I was not there to judge their linguistic skills but to

observe their use of language, I sensed that -initially- being observed made some of them feel slightly uneasy, as they probably positioned me as “the language expert” from a university environment. Even if I do not think that this has produced major alterations in the participants’ behaviours, it is still worth to keep it in mind while discussing the results. Throughout the shadowing nevertheless, we started talking more freely, we also exchanged more personal information and joked.

The participants from Ticino, Giuliana and Lizbeth in particular, expressed a feeling of solidarity with me, identifying me as “one of them” -against “the other Swiss”- on the basis of my being from Ticino and being able to understand and speak “Dialecto Ticinese” (dialect of Ticino). This dimension was also present with Patrick, but to a lesser extent. In fact, the process of building rapport with him was different in the sense that we are peers in terms of age. If older passenger attendants occasionally tended to identify me as a sort of daughter figure -to which I turn below-, Patrick sometimes acted “gentlemanly”, insisting on paying the coffee for me during our break in Zürich HB, sometimes opening (train) doors for me and letting me go through them first. I do not believe he was trying to flirt, he was just being kind and welcoming.

As far as the participants aged between 45 and 65 are concerned, namely Sébastien, Lizbeth, Giuliana and Erika, as hinted above I had the impression that they tended to identify me as a sort of a daughter figure. All of them, with no exception, spontaneously told me about their children, who are more or less my age, and on some occasions compared me with them. This relationship, maybe also in accordance with my young age, at times caused me to feel slightly patronised and treated with condescension. At the same time, it induced them to parade their multilingualism and their being experienced, both professionally and in life. The dynamic was that of a relationship between an older experienced person and a younger novice, as I was there to learn about the company and their jobs. To their occasional slightly patronising tone I normally reacted quite neutrally, just taking note of their tone in order to construct a better

understanding of their personality, which have later helped me to analyse the data collected through them. At the end of each observation, I offered a box of chocolates to all the six “official” participants and to Marie in order to thank them, to which they responded gladly and underlined that they remained available if I needed their help again for my study at SBB CFF FFS.

It is important to keep in mind the points raised in this subsection on reflexivity during the presentation and the discussion of results of the following section, because as I am “the central data collection [and analysis] tool” (Papen 2020: 149), they are likely to partly shape the ways in which I understand and report the main findings. For this reason, in the following section dedicated to the analysis and the discussion of the results of this study about the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS, I attempt to monitor my interpretations through reflexivity, keeping in mind my being another participant in the study, my relationship with other participants and the influence that my presence might have had on their behaviours. In addition to triangulation, a reflexive stance helps to produce a more nuanced analysis and discussion of results.

5 Presentation and Discussion of Results: The Management of Multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS

This section reports on and discusses the main findings of this qualitative research study on multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS. The management of multilingualism by the iconic Swiss railway company, with the language ideologies, hierarchies of languages and promotional efforts that underlie it, is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. In order to answer the

research questions through a nuanced analysis and the triangulation of the data gathered, the analysis and discussion of results are organised in three sections.

The first one (5.1) is dedicated to the role of multilingualism in the branding of the SBB CFF FFS as a Swiss institution. On the basis of an analysis of the language policies of the SBB CFF FFS (2014, 2017), it illustrates how the institutional multilingualism is ideologically and discursively constructed to position the company on a competitive market and it shows that multilingualism is imagined in relation to a diverse -but limited- clientele. A first subsection (5.1.1) explains that (Swiss) multilingualism is ideologically mobilised as a marker of Swiss authenticity and as such as a source of symbolic value. This ideology is related to the Swiss national identity as it indexes the natural rootedness of certain symbols or elements -in this case multilingualism- in Switzerland. A second subsection (5.1.2) discusses how multilingualism is ideally conceived as an instrument providing the company's imagined clientele with a pleasurable customer experience and as such as a marketing tool.

The marketing discourses analysed in the first section are contrasted with the actual language practices explored in the second section (5.2) of this analysis, which moves from the ideologically constructed top-down discourses produced by the company to their practical implementation in linguistic landscapes and language practices. The second section thus gives insight into the hierarchies of institutional languages on the national and the regional scales (5.2.1) and shows how the predominance of the Swiss majority languages -especially German- generates patterns of inclusion and exclusion (5.2.2). The second section is based on the analysis of the top-down signs issued by the SBB CFF FFS located in the linguistic landscapes of the stations of Genève, Lausanne, Fribourg/Freiburg, Zürich HB, Luzern, Bellinzona, Lugano, Chur, on the declarative data gathered while shadowing participants and on newspaper articles.

The third and final section (5.3) zooms in on passenger attendants and their language practices and ideologies. On the basis of the data collected during participant observations, this third section provides a discussion of the appropriation of the discourses on multilingualism produced by the company considered in the first section (5.1) and focuses on the individual participants' language ideologies and practices in connection with institutional policies and discourses.

5.1 Branding the SBB CFF FFS: Multilingualism as Marker of “Swissness” and as “Welcoming Strategy”

This section analyses the role played by Swiss elite multilingualism -the official national languages and English (see section 2.3)- in the branding of the company from two different perspectives. On the one hand, multilingualism as an authentic Swiss feature is central to the promotion of SBB CFF FFS as a Swiss institution, anchored in the country's tradition, history and culture. On the other hand, it is arguable that multilingualism constitutes a “welcoming strategy” that aims to broaden the company's clientele and to enhance the customers' experience of the SBB CFF FFS brand. The discussion of these two points, which despite their close interrelation are approached separately for clarity's sake, are based on a combined analysis of the company's language policies, official website, mobile application, and top-down signs produced by the SBB CFF FFS located in the main stations.

5.1.1 Multilingualism as Marker of “Swissness”

Multilingualism is central to the branding of SBB CFF FFS because it signals the company's mobilisation and appropriation of Switzerland's national identity. Swiss multilingualism is in fact considered one of the national symbols of the country and one of the elements that constitute the Swiss imagined national identity (see Del Percio 2016a and 2016b). By officially

adopting this historical and traditional peculiarity of the nation, the railway company underlines its “Swissness”, a term that “intends to designate and define national identity” (Del Percio 2016a: 93). “Swissness” plays an important role in the promotion of the company by adding a symbolic value, namely authenticity, to the brand of the SBB CFF FFS. Authenticity in this context is “a matter of local rootedness” (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 17), of identity expressed through languages. For this reason, authenticity is likely to mobilise feelings of national pride and membership (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 5) also in the context of SBB CFF FFS. Swiss multilingualism and its symbolic value are thus commodified for the branding of SBB CFF FFS as a Swiss institution, generating economic profit by promising and selling authentic “Swiss-quality” services and by generating feeling of national identification in the SBB CFF FFS. This association between the SBB CFF FFS and Swiss authenticity is particularly well exemplified in the design of the company’s logo and in its language policy providing the guidelines for writing texts for the SBB CFF FFS (SBB CFF FFS, 2014).

As far as the logo is concerned (figure 4), it immediately advertises the “Swissness” of the company not only through the red and white icon that clearly recalls the Swiss flag, but also by representing the iconic multilingualism of the country using its three official languages.



Figure 4: SBB CFF FFS logo

In fact, the text that follows the red and white image, “SBB CFF FFS”, stands for “Schweizerische Bundesbahnen”, “Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses” and “Ferrovie federali svizzere”. The combination of these two powerful national symbols manifests the profound bond existing between the national railway services’ identity and the Swiss national identity,

which are almost blended together in the SBB CFF FFS' emblem. Thanks to this association, the SBB CFF FFS are endowed with a symbolic value that distinguishes them from other transport companies and that renders them an element of national identification as well as a source of national pride for Swiss passengers and citizens. It is arguable that even if they cannot feel this national pride, foreign passengers can also appreciate and benefit from the symbolic value generated by the blending of the two identities -the Swiss national identity and the SBB CFF FFS' identity-, as they can recognise and identify in the SBB CFF FFS the qualities connected to "Swissness", namely exclusivity, innovation, high quality and cultural diversity (Del Percio 2016b: 1-2). For this reason, the SBB CFF FFS' logo can be seen as the embodiment of the mechanism that uses -in this case national- authenticity, identification and pride as a source of economic profit. By representing Swiss multilingualism in association with the national symbol of the Swiss flag in its logo, the Swiss railway company seems to capitalise on the nation's characteristic linguistic make-up in order to produce and sell distinction through (often stereotyped) authenticity and national identification. As a consequence, the idealised authenticity related to Swiss multilingualism and to Swiss good qualities, constitutes also an attraction for customers -both the imagined Swiss customers and the foreign ones- and hence produces economic profit (see Duchêne and Heller 2012, Del Percio and Duchêne 2012). In sum, through the company's logo, Swiss multilingualism is marketed by the SBB CFF FFS and therefore becomes a selling point because it inscribes authenticity and identity in it (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 8).

On the other hand, as far as the SBB CFF FFS language policy addressed to those who write for the company (SBB CFF FFS 2014) is concerned, that the company capitalises on its association to the Swiss national identity through language is also made clear. This language policy, available in the three official national languages, encourages the use of helvetisms. The passage on these latter is specific to the language in which the language policy is written. In

other words, the Italian version of the language policy refers to helvetisms of the Swiss Italian reality (“ticinesismi” in particular, namely typical words used in Ticino that have a different Italian correspondent), the French version to helvetisms typical of Romandie, and the German version to helvetisms of the Swiss German part of Switzerland. Despite the different languages, the paragraph dedicated to helvetisms opens in the same way in the three versions. The following excerpt is the paragraph on helvetisms from the French version of the language policy for written institutional production (SBB CFF FFS 2014: 5):

Les CFF font partie de l’identité nationale suisse. Cela peut se refléter dans notre expression. Les helvétismes communément connus en Suisse romande sont admis: ils confèrent une personnalité aux CFF. Nous parlons par exemple de pendulaires, et non de navetteurs (belgicisme).

(SBB CFF FFS, French version, 2014: 5)

The SBB CFF FFS are part of the Swiss national identity. This can be reflected in our language. The helvetisms commonly used in Romandie are accepted: they give to the SBB CFF FFS a personality. For example, we speak of “pendulaires” and not of “navetteurs” (a Belgian term) (“commuters”).

(My translation)

The emblematic opening statement, which alone serves as evidence of the fact that language is actively recognised by the SBB CFF FFS as a vehicle to demonstrate their “Swissness”, precedes an encouragement to use helvetisms because they confer a particular -Swiss- personality to the company. The examples of helvetisms provided in the Italian and the German versions, are respectively “scambio” (deviation) rather than “deviatoio”, and “Perron” (platform) rather than “Bahnsteig”. These helvetisms distinguish the Swiss railway language from those operating in other nations that speak the same languages (e.g. Austria, France, Belgium). They are “a constitutive manifestation of local identity” (Del Percio and Duchêne 2012: 49) and as such they are markers of authenticity that augment the symbolic value of the

SBB CFF FFS' *Swiss* brand. In the context of their study of language in the football industry, Del Percio and Duchêne (2012) affirm that “language plays a central role in creating a football club as a product, and in their supporters' identification with the local-national product” (49) by being “a marker of authenticity” (49). Though the authors do not refer to helvetisms, these latter arguably play the same role for the construction of the SBB CFF FFS as a selling “local-national product”, themselves operating as markers of authenticity and as instruments of distinction and community (Del Percio and Duchêne 2012: 50). A similar example of language use as a marker of commodifiable authenticity is provided by Duchêne (2009) in his study of language practices in a call centre located in Zürich, where workers have to perform “a certain [Swiss] authenticity” (Duchêne 2009: 42) by using Swiss accents and greetings (see section 3.1).

Language, both in terms of Swiss multilingualism and of helvetisms, is part and parcel of the branding of SBB CFF FFS as a Swiss institution, because its symbolic value attests the company's “Swissness” and enhances the symbolic worth of the product it sells -the SBB CFF FFS-, indexing to the good qualities usually associated to the Swiss brand. The following section takes another perspective on the celebratory discourses of multilingualism and it explains how it is ideologically and discursively included in the branding of the SBB CFF FFS as a “welcoming strategy” that aims at accommodating the various linguistic needs of the Swiss company's imagined clientele.

5.1.2 Multilingualism as “Welcoming Strategy”

This section focuses on how multilingualism is ideologically constructed by the SBB CFF FFS as an instrument to meet and accommodate their imagined customers. These latter, as it is deducible through the language policy of the company, appear to be either local passengers speaking one of the official national languages (German, French or Italian), which is related to

the principle of territoriality stated in article 70 of the Swiss Constitution (see section 3.1 above and Berthele 2016: 27), or generic “non-national” others able to speak English Lingua Franca (ELF). In particular, this section focuses on the SBB CFF FFS language policy (2017) and explores how it supports the company’s discursive and ideological construction of multilingualism as a “welcoming strategy”. By considering multilingualism as a “welcoming strategy” for the branding of SBB CFF FFS, I mean that its use is directed at acknowledging and accommodating the various linguistic needs of the different -imagined- customers. Through this ideological construction of multilingualism, this latter is attributed an inclusive effect that strives to make the company’s imagined clientele feel recognised, considered and accepted in its -limited- linguistic heterogeneity. This effort to meet the linguistic exigencies of the company’s imagined customers aims to provide them with a positive experience. In this way, multilingualism is conceived as a “welcoming strategy” and plays an important role in the promotion of the SBB CFF FFS.

As mentioned above, this interpretation of multilingualism is profoundly rooted in the company’s general language policy (SBB CFF FFS 2017) that provides guidelines on how to speak, write and collaborate between employees. In fact, the slogan of this language policy (SBB CFF FFS 2017), which is actually also the title of the document, is “Unterwegs zuhause”, “En route, comme chez soi”, “In viaggio come a casa propria”, which could be translated as “on the road as if you were at home”. This slogan is defined as “the heart of the company’s brand and the promise to its clients that travelling with SBB CFF FFS they will feel at home” (my translation from Italian, SBB CFF FFS 2017: 3). According to the language policy (SBB CFF FFS 2017), this slogan applies to both oral and written communication, and it produces, through institutional language practices, the feeling of comfort and safety that is often associated with one’s own home. As far as oral communication is concerned, the language

policy, as the emphasis added in the following excerpt demonstrates, suggests that this is achieved by addressing customers in their own language (SBB CFF FFS 2017: 4):

Il nostro obiettivo è di trasmettere, con le parole, la sensazione “in viaggio come a casa propria”. Per fare questo la persona deve essere posta al centro. Diamo ascolto alle esigenze del nostro interlocutore e *parliamo la sua lingua*.

(My emphasis, SBB CFF FFS 2017: 4)

Our aim is to convey, with words, the feeling “on the road as if you were at home”. To do this, the person must be placed at the centre. We listen to our interlocutors’ needs and *speak their language*.

(My emphasis, my translation)

The excerpt demonstrates that passengers are constructed as monolinguals as employees are encouraged to speak the customer’s “language” (“la sua lingua”), in the singular, even if actually many passengers are multilingual. In the case of the Swiss imagined clients - monolinguals in one of the official national languages- this principle is met by using either German, French or Italian. This is of course linked to the principle of territorial multilingualism reported in article 70 of the Swiss Constitution (1999) (see section 3.1), which as Berthele (2016: 27) claims, “represents a locally monolingual regime in an officially quadrilingual country”. The SBB CFF FFS, adopting German, French and Italian as three of their four institutional languages, guarantee to all imagined Swiss customers -monolingual, or at least most at ease, in one of the official national languages- the comfort and the right to communicate in their own national language anywhere in the country. In relation to this, the Italian and French versions of the language policy (SBB CFF FFS 2017: 3) state that clients should feel at home “sur toute la ligne”, “su tutta la linea”, namely anywhere in the SBB CFF FFS railway network. The German wording of this concept is a bit different, “Gut ankommen”, which

literally means “arrive well”, but the meaning is the same, as it is intended that the customer must travel comfortably all along the journey. In terms of languages, this comfort is given by the possibility of speaking their own language, considered as being one of the official national languages, with the SBB CFF FFS customer service employees. Therefore, theoretically, regardless of the linguistic region a customer is from, this customer should always have equal opportunities to use German, French and Italian when dealing with either the company’s employees or its public material (such as the ticket machines for example). Using multilingualism as an instrument of recognition and inclusion, the SBB CFF FFS attempt to prevent their Swiss customers to feel estrangement in their own country even if they are outside the boundaries of their linguistic territory and they fulfil their promise to make clients feel at home “sur toute la ligne”, “su tutta la linea”, everywhere within their reach.

This promotional discourse reminds of a similar massive marketing campaign launched by SWISS airline in August 2016 and also addressed to their imagined Swiss clientele. The campaign suggested that flying with them was being at home both on board and abroad, as SWISS assured to offer its clients “Swiss quality” services -namely characterised by high-quality, exclusivity, excellency, distinction, innovation, reliability and punctuality (see Del Percio 2016b: 1-2)- throughout all their journey and during their stay abroad. The following excerpt, taken from the media release announcing the campaign posted on the media webpage of the SWISS airlines’ official website, illustrates this similarity with the SBB CFF FFS’ slogan “Unterwegs zuhause”, “En route, comme chez soi”, “In viaggio come a casa propria”:

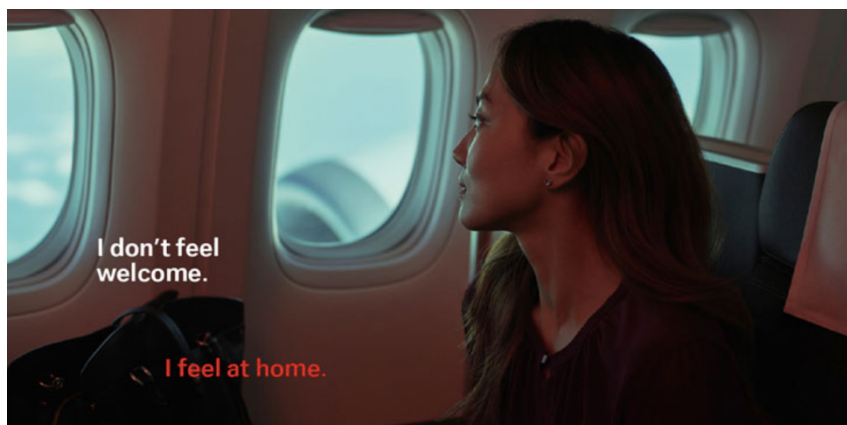
So sollen sich SWISS Fluggäste während der gesamten Flugreise *wie zu Hause fühlen*, anfangen bei der Begrüssung an Bord, beim Genuss der vielfältigen regionalen Kulinarik oder der beliebten SWISS Schokolade.

(My emphasis, “SWISS mit neuem Markenauftritt ‘Made of Switzerland’”, 4.8.2016, SWISS official website, accessed on 7.5.2021)

SWISS passengers *should feel at home throughout their flight*, starting with the welcome on board, when enjoying the diverse regional cuisine or the popular SWISS chocolate.

(My emphasis, my translation)

Also, the iconic posters of the SWISS airline marketing campaign underline the link with the SBB CFF FFS' slogan, as they highlight the construction of SWISS as a company that makes customers feel at home and that expands the "safe space" of Switzerland with its high-grade products outside Switzerland itself. A selection of four of these advertising posters is provided below (figures 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d).



Figures 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d: Selection of posters of SWISS airlines' 2016 marketing campaign.

Accessible on Marvin Hugentobler's webpage (no date). Last accessed on 7.5.2021.

This effort of making -imagined- clients feel at home when travelling by promising them the good qualities normally associated to the Swiss brand mentioned above is thus shared by SWISS and SBB CFF FFS, which both play with the idea of “Swissness”. As seen above, the SBB CFF FFS does this in particular by ideologically constructing and mobilising multilingualism as an authenticating symbol and as a key element to produce a homely feeling, by promising its Swiss imagined clientele the luxury -and the right, according to article 70 of the Swiss Constitution (1999)- to communicate in the national language they prefer in the whole of Switzerland thanks to the ideal multilingual worker profiles of its employees - especially of passenger attendants-.

Through this institutional and ideological discourse on multilingualism, the SBB CFF FFS construct the Swiss customers as monolingual individuals in one of the official national languages and recognise the different linguistic regions as their “linguistically safe spaces”, positing that outside their boundaries these imagined Swiss customers would not easily “feel at home”. At the same time, both metaphorically and practically, the SBB CFF FFS seem to aim at expanding the limits of these “safe spaces” to the whole of Switzerland precisely through their idealised construction of multilingualism. In this way, the company seems to present itself as going beyond the territorial principle and as being able to render the boundaries between the linguistic territories more porous. In this light, multilingualism seems to acquire an inclusive effect, which gives every imagined Swiss(-based) client (which entails the exclusion of all the other Swiss residents who do not speak any of the national languages) equal opportunities to use their -official national- language anywhere in Switzerland within SBB CFF FFS environments. This is likely to make customers feel recognised, considered and therefore welcomed in their -limited- Swiss linguistic diversity.

If the SBB CFF FFS consistently use the Swiss official languages as a way to welcome imagined Swiss from different linguistic regions in the rest of the country, the same can be said

for English in relation to their imagined foreign customers, the unspecified non-national others who can speak ELF. The language policy does not state that English is to be used exclusively with clients from abroad, though this is deducible from the fact that with Swiss customers the company's employees are ideally required to use the Swiss language that the customer speaks (see excerpt from general language policy above, SBB CFF FFS 2017: 4). This point, moreover, is confirmed by the passenger attendants who participated in this study, who declared that they normally use English exclusively with tourists who do not speak any of the Swiss national languages. Sébastien underlined this point also in the interview I could conduct with him, saying that “la langue anglaise c’est vraiment la langue touristique” (“the English language is really the tourism language”) used with “la clientèle étrangère” (“the foreign clientele”). He added also that English “permet qu’un voyageur d’étranger puisse venir en Suisse pour voyager” (“allows to a foreign traveller to come to Switzerland to travel”) and that if travellers arrive in Switzerland and do not understand neither German, nor Italian nor French, they can ask for information in English, which implies that the imagined foreign traveller can speak ELF.

The astonishing fact that must be underlined though, is that the language policies (2014, 2017) do not mention English directly, if not just to say that it is one of the institutional languages. In fact, English is only mentioned in the paragraph dedicated to multilingualism in the sentence that states “Comunichiamo in italiano, tedesco, francese e inglese” (“we communicate in Italian, German, French and English”, my translation from Italian, SBB CFF FFS 2014: 5). The only specific rule regarding the use of English in the institutional documents that I could access appears in the passenger attendants’ list of prescriptions regulating the announcements over the loudspeaker (see figure 26 in section 5.3.4 below) and states that an English announcement must be done before the stations of Genève and Zürich HB as they offer international connections.

This practice of reserving English for the communication with foreigners relies on “the growing belief that English has become the language for global communication” (Park and Wee 2012: 3), the international language of mobility and the new economy. In fact, being spoken all over the world and facilitating “the free cross-border flows of goods, finances, ideas, and people that define our global world” (Park and Wee 2012: 3), English acquires the “superior status” of international language (Berthele 2016: 44). At the same time, as mentioned above, this use of English constructs the non-national customers as a homogeneous category that is capable of speaking ELF, which is not necessarily the case. Though there is a lack of declarative data to support this, when foreign passengers -or even Swiss residents- cannot speak neither of the national languages nor English, maybe they have other languages in common with the passenger attendants, who sometimes have a very rich multilingual profile (as Gloria told me, some of her colleagues can speak or at least understand up to seven languages) or have basic (either passive or active) knowledge of other languages that could facilitate interaction.

An episode that could serve as an example to illustrate this eventuality happened while I was shadowing Erika on the route between Luzern and Lausanne. At a certain point a passenger rushed in the door area of the train where Erika and I were standing, asking Erika something about the direction of the train in Spanish. The fact that this passenger did not even try to speak neither of the institutional languages could be interpreted as meaning that she did not know any of them (or that she did not want to make a little effort to speak them). Fortunately, Erika -helped also by her little knowledge of Italian- could answer to the need of the woman by mobilising the few words of Spanish she knows. In this way, communication was successful even without resorting to the institutional languages. I could observe a similar instance accompanying Giuliana on the route from Zürich HB to Lugano, when due to a problem of a door she had to ask to every single passenger to move to the front train (the train was part of a “doppia composizione”, literally meaning “double composition”, which refers to

two trains attached together). On some occasions, the passengers did not speak any of the institutional languages, and Giuliana, as Erika in the previous example, successfully tried a few words of Spanish too. Thus, when the SBB CFF FFS' ideological construction of ELF as the language to be used with their imagined and undefined foreign customers is not applicable because the customer does not speak English -or any of the other institutional languages-, the passenger attendants' personal -and sometimes very rich- linguistic profiles are mobilised to meet the necessities of the clients. Nevertheless, ideally, English remains the institutional language of the SBB CFF FFS to consider, open the doors to and ease the communication with their imagined foreign clientele.

In terms of oral communication, the company's idealised construction of multilingualism augments the chances of providing a positive experience for the SBB CFF FFS imagined clients also because it reduces the risk of generating distress, embarrassment and failure in communicating one's needs. In fact, offering a multilingual service and therefore leaving to the customers to choose the institutional language they feel most comfortable speaking, helps avoiding -or diminishes- awkward situations in which clients unsuccessfully struggle to explain themselves in front of a puzzled employee. This would negatively affect the customers' experience of the SBB CFF FFS and therefore negatively affect the branding of the Swiss railway company. Offering multilingual services is part of the overall "welcoming strategy" also because it can be considered as a form of politeness towards the clients. Gloria confirmed this interpretation of the SBB CFF FFS' multilingualism affirming that she personally finds it very polite to speak the language of the clients or to give them the choice between the four institutional languages, as she believes this to be a way of improving their comfort by accommodating their preferred language. This point on politeness is also true from a pragmatic point of view, since the augmented probability of a successful interaction offered

by multilingualism as a “welcoming strategy” helps to preserve the clients’ face, and therefore -in other words- to make them feel at ease.

This “welcoming strategy”, on the oral level, is possible because the SBB CFF FFS employees at the customer service are required to have oral and written knowledge of at least three institutional languages. For example, as the language requirements listed on the official website of the company state, customer consultants working at the stations’ counters must have “good German, French and English skills”, and passenger attendants “must have very good verbal language skills in either German or French (at least level C2)” and “must be prepared to learn two additional foreign languages (German, French, Italian or English) to level B1 verbal and A2 written”. Of course, not all employees can offer all the institutional languages and -realistically- their linguistic competences are not the same in all the languages in their personal linguistic repertoires. Moreover, it has also to be considered that in order to adhere to the “welcoming strategy”, these requirements change partly according to the linguistic region. In fact, even if it is not stated in the list of requirements reported above, which is probably generic for the entire country, it seems pretty logical -from the perspective of a territorial ideology of multilingualism that associates one region with one language- that employees should master perfectly the language of their station of reference. For example, if a customer consultant works at the counters of the station of Lugano, it will not be enough to just have “good German, French and English skills”, but a strong knowledge of Italian will also be expected in addition to the other required languages. Satisfying these requirements, the employees of the customer service are ideally able to flexibly adapt to the languages of the imagined customers, which gives to the institutional interactions “a flavour of institutional courtesy” (Hausendorf and Mondada 2017: 32) -or politeness, as indicated in the previous paragraph- and which renders them valuable agents in the “welcoming strategy” of the company.

Looked at from this perspective, SBB CFF FFS' employees are constructed as a commodifiable "bundle of skills" (Urciuoli 2008), as they combine their multilingual skills with other soft -but also hard- skills in order to provide a positive customer experience through their flexibility, which according to Urciuoli (2008) is a key element in the new economy. Soft skills refer to "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees" (Menochelli 2006, as quoted in Urciuoli 2008: 215). The following excerpt, taken from the page dedicated to passenger attendants' job profile in the SBB CFF FFS official website, outlines the soft -and hard, as they are also technical- skills that a passenger attendant is required to have:

As a prospective SBB passenger attendant, you must have an *excellent customer focus*, *strong communication* and conflict management skills as well as psychological and physical resilience. You must be happy to work independently, take on responsibility and to show assertiveness. You must be able to use a range of digital tools and applications and be willing to continually learn and develop your skills.

(My emphasis, passenger attendants' job requirements, SBB CFF FFS website, 5.5.2021)

Ranking high in this cluster, especially having "an excellent customer focus" and "strong communication [...] skills", which according to Urciuoli (2008: 217) are the "defining soft skills of the contemporary workplace", is crucial for an employee of the customer service, because it helps to guarantee a pleasant customer experience and -therefore- to maintain the company's good reputation. For this reason, it is arguable that the "bundle of skills" that the SBB CFF FFS employees are is commodified for branding purposes because it takes part to the "welcoming strategy". To summarise, multilingual employees with good soft skills, notably communication, are central to the "welcoming strategy" of SBB CFF FFS. Being able to satisfy the customers' needs, flexibly adapting to their language choices and thus producing a

“pleasant customer experience”, SBB CFF FFS employees contribute to the consolidation and the maintenance of the good reputation of the company. Through their oral communication, multilingualism is part of the “welcoming strategy” and as such it is commodified for the branding purposes of the SBB CFF FFS.

The ideology of multilingualism as a welcoming instrument -that as seen above excludes all those who do not adhere to the imagined clientele- applies also to written communication and information. This becomes evident through the analysis of the company’s official website and mobile phone application (called “SBB Mobile” in German and English, “Mobile CFF” in French, and “Mobile FFS” in Italian), as well as some top-down multilingual texts that characterise the linguistic landscape of SBB CFF FFS main stations and moving trains.

In fact, both the SBB CFF FFS official website and their mobile phone application are almost entirely available in the four institutional languages.

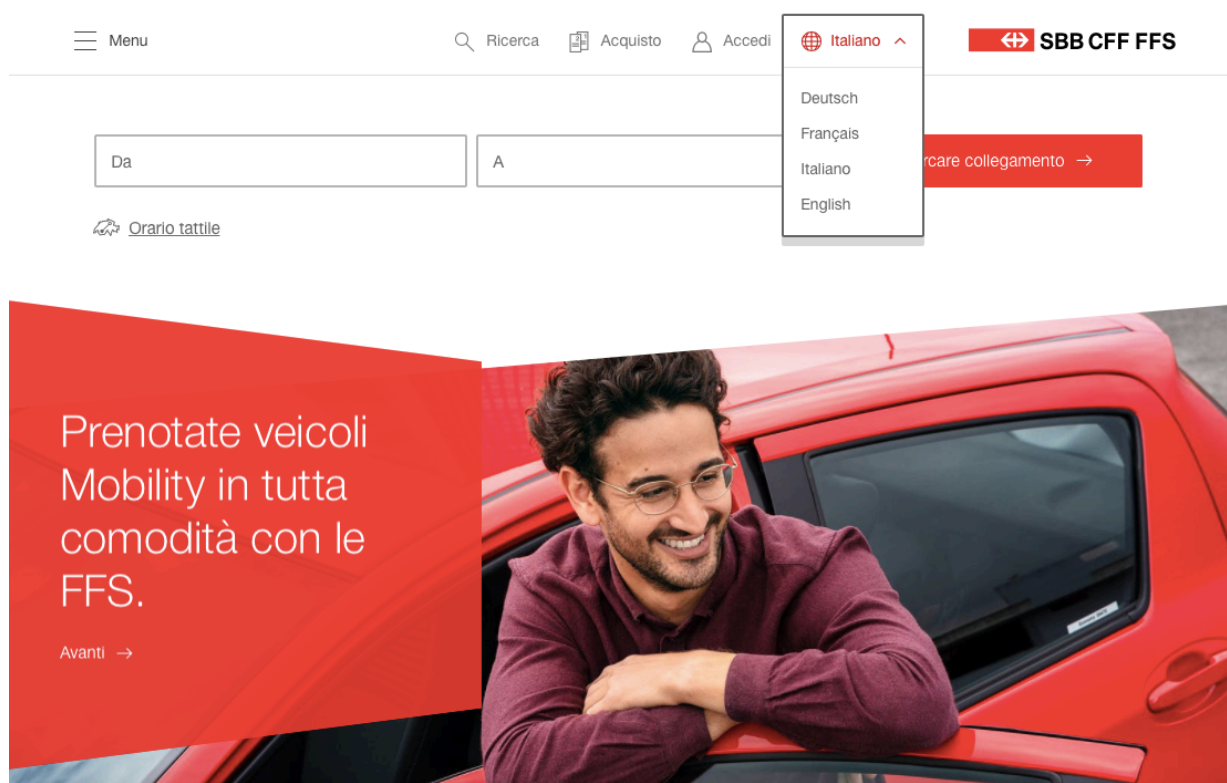


Figure 6: Language menu on SBB CFF FFS official website, 26.4.2021.

On the SBB CFF FFS official website, as exemplified in figure 6, customers have the possibility of selecting the language of their choice through the drop-down menu that appears at the top or -if the window is smaller- on the left-hand side of the web page. In both cases, the language menu is easily visible and accessible, which underlines the importance that the company gives to the various linguistic needs and preferences of its clients and the effort to satisfactorily and straightforwardly meet them. Through this language menu it is possible to convert almost every page of the SBB CFF FFS website in the four languages of the company (for exceptions and particularities see section 5.2.2 below on language hierarchies, inequalities and ideologies). The mobile application is also available in the four institutional languages, but it does not present the language menu as the website does. The language of the application depends on the language settings of the digital device that supports the application, thus immediately and automatically satisfying the linguistic preferences of the potential customer. For example, if the main language of the mobile phone is either German, French, Italian or English, the SBB Mobile application will appear automatically in respectively German, French, Italian or English. Interestingly enough, if the digital device is set on a language other than the four institutional languages, the SBB Mobile application appears in English. This proves and reinforces the ideology of English as global language discussed above and the construction of the foreign clients as a homogeneous category proficient in ELF, and at the same time it represents a form of exclusion towards all those foreign customers who are not proficient in ELF.

The SBB CFF FFS not only use English to expand the reach of their brand and services to their imagined foreign clients by using it as lingua franca, but they also use it as a marketing tool. In fact, English is used to give captivating names to the travelling offers the SBB CFF

FFS sell. For example, appealing and catchy names such as “RailAway” and “EasyRide”³, which both designate promotions that facilitate and provide discounts to their users’ travels, arguably improve the success of the product. In this case, English is connected to an idea of being fashionable and advanced (Sayer 2010: 147), and serves marketing purposes by wording these names in a trendy and funny way and by indexing modernity and sophistication (see Leeman and Modan 2010: 184 and Papen 2012: 66). Moreover, in her discussion of multilingual advertising, Piller (2001: 157) points out the interrelationship between English and success in international and global markets. Therefore, the SBB CFF FFS can be perceived as a “global player” (Piller 2001: 161) within the game of the new global economy not only because they use English as the global language to address the idealised foreign speaker of ELF, but also because they use it in their marketing communication through these fashionable names.

As far as the linguistic landscapes are concerned, the company’s multilingualism appears consistently through the multilingual texts that characterise the signs located on the



Figure 7: Sign between the railway lines, Bellinzona, 27.11.2020.



Figure 8: Ticket machine, Freiburg/Fribourg, 7.12.2020.

³ The name of this promotion and its advertisement allude to and therefore draw their appeal from the 1969 film “Easy Rider” directed by Dennis Hopper.

trains, between the railway lines, on the ticket machines and on some screens displaying the timetables. Figures 7 and 8 provide an example of these signs. It is worth noticing that these multilingual texts can contribute to acknowledging and responding to the idealised customers' linguistically diverse needs, by including all the four institutional languages (see section 5.2.1 for a more thorough analysis of the linguistic landscapes of the stations). For this reason, though the SBB CFF FFS language policies (2014, 2017) do not refer to these signs, these multilingual texts can be interpreted as playing an important role in the "welcoming strategy" that is part of the branding of the SBB CFF FFS discussed above.

Thus, the SBB CFF FFS's ideological discourses on multilingualism, considered both in an oral and in a written form, construct it as an instrument of inclusion (which, as seen above, inevitably entails also a form of exclusion). This seemingly aims at embracing a wider imagined clientele, at welcoming its heterogeneous linguistic needs while still limiting the scope to the four institutional languages, at facilitating the everyday communication on moving trains and at the stations, and at avoiding embarrassing and distressing situations -through the discourse of politeness-. For these reasons, multilingualism is central to the welcoming discourse analysed above, and as such occupies an important position in the branding of the company, which recalls the mobilisation of multilingualism also in other domains, such as in nation branding on an international scale (see Del Percio 2016a and 2016b for examples on Swiss multilingualism). As illustrated in the previous section (5.1.1), the SBB CFF FFS seem to advocate for their authenticity as a *Swiss* railway company, thus indexing at the "Swissness" of the company through their ideological discourses on multilingualism, which defines a celebratory form of Swiss multilingualism -or "confederate multilingualism"- composed by the three official national languages. This ideology is also evident in their construction of their Swiss imagined customers as monolinguals in, or habitual speakers of, one of the three official national languages and by defining the ideal profile of their customer service workers as

multilingual in the national languages and English. This idealised Swiss multilingual authenticity is thus embedded in the construction of multilingualism as “welcoming strategy”. From this perspective it can be concluded that both the celebratory and ideological construction of SBB CFF FFS’ multilingualism, and its supposed Swiss authenticity, are commodified for branding purposes because they are discursively constructed as being able to enhance the customer experience and therefore to generate economic return.

This discussion of the branding of the SBB CFF FFS through multilingualism is placed on a top-down discursive level, as it is based primarily on the language policy of the company. This latter in fact outlines how the company’s employees *are supposed* and *expected* to use language when they speak and write on behalf of the company in order to reinforce its brand as a Swiss institution, which is indexed to by -Swiss- multilingualism, efficiency, high quality services and cultural diversity. The analysis of the language policies (SBB CFF FFS 2014, 2017), combined and supported with the analysis of the language requirements for the jobs of customer consultant and passenger attendant, of multilingual signs and of the company’s logo, has shown how idealised multilingual practices and marketing discourses are commodified for the branding of SBB CFF FFS by being rooted in the ideology of multilingualism as a “welcoming strategy” and by indexing Swiss authenticity. As mentioned above, even if these two discourses have been analysed separately, they appear to be closely intertwined when looked at through the lenses of the intersection between pride and profit. In fact, both the “welcoming strategy” and the discourse on “Swissness” depict a celebratory image of Swiss multilingualism based on idealised authenticity and feelings of national pride and membership, and both of them aim to generate economic benefits for the company. In other words, authenticity discourses and symbols of national pride related to (Swiss) multilingualism generate economic profit because they are commodified on a competitive market.

Nevertheless, this celebratory discourse of multilingualism does not always correspond to what actually happens on the ground. In fact, more often than not, multilingualism reproduces social inequalities, exclusion and hierarchisation of languages and people. The following section focuses on how the practical use of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS contributes to the reproduction of these dynamics.

5.2 Hierarchies and Inequalities of Languages and Speakers at SBB CFF FFS: National Languages and English

If on a theoretical level Swiss multilingualism is ideologically and discursively constructed by the SBB CFF FFS as an equalising instrument to welcome its imagined -linguistically limited- clientele, in practical terms it is often the root cause of hierarchisation of languages and speakers. The celebratory view of multilingualism illustrated above in fact disregards and erases the influence of the demographic weight of the different national languages and the “competition between languages [that] is normal and typical for a multilingual state” (see Berthele 2016: 44). These are social realities that cannot remain ignored and unacknowledged in this sociolinguistic study of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS.

Turning thus to the hierarchisation of languages within the Swiss railway company, it is useful to distinguish between the three Swiss national languages and English. German, French and Italian in fact, are organised according to the territoriality principle within the company, both on trains and in the different stations and both in oral and written communications. On the contrary, as a non-Swiss language, English does not follow the logic imposed by the territoriality principle and it is conceived and treated as the international language. Despite this difference, the national languages and English are discussed together in the following analysis, which is composed of two subsections.

The first one (5.2.1) analyses the top-down signs issued by the SBB CFF FFS located in the linguistic landscapes of the stations of Genève, Lausanne, Fribourg/Freiburg, Zürich HB, Luzern, Bellinzona, Lugano, Chur and discusses the hierarchies of the institutional languages on a national and a regional scale, showing their coexistence and their close relationship. Top-down signs, produced by the company, are likely to reveal the institutional management of multilingualism across the linguistic regions and the varying importance given to the different institutional languages by the SBB CFF FFS in the different linguistic territories. The main result of this subsection is that the hierarchy of languages on the national scale, placing German in the most important position, followed by French and Italian and treating English as the international language, influences also the smaller, regional scale, where German is predominant by always being the second language on multilingual signs. The second subsection (5.2.2), based on the results of the first one, focuses mainly on the prominence of German within the SBB CFF FFS and analyses the data gathered through participant observations and in publicly available documents. It shows how German's elitist status generates patterns of inclusion and exclusion, both in terms of access to jobs, high-grade information and good-quality material.

5.2.1 Linguistic Landscapes of Main Stations: (Re)producing Hierarchies within Swiss Multilingualism

While analysing and discussing the hierarchies of the institutional languages at SBB CFF FFS, which are also considered the languages of the elite in Switzerland according to Berthele (2016: 43), it is useful to distinguish between a national and a regional scale, though they are intrinsically linked and they influence each other. On the national scale, the hierarchy of the Swiss national languages at SBB CFF FFS reflects the ranking of Swiss languages according to their demographic representation and communicative value reported by Berthele (2016) (see

section 2.2). From this perspective, at SBB CFF FFS as in Switzerland more in general, German occupies the first place in the language hierarchy, French the second one and Italian the third, as it is symbolised also through the order of languages in the company's logo (see section 5.1.1). Both on a national and on a regional scale, English at SBB CFF FFS -as already discussed in the previous section (5.1)- is ideologically considered the global language to use in the communication with the homogeneous non-national others, namely the imagined foreign clientele that is constructed as being able to communicate in English.

Since the SBB CFF FFS network covers the whole of Switzerland with a major concentration and frequency of use of their services in the German- and French-speaking regions, which is also logical given that they are the biggest areas of the country, the language hierarchical order on the national scale appears to have not only a demographic foundation, but also a geographical one. In relation to this, the importance of German could also be related to the geographical centrality of the German-speaking area of the country, which obliges the railway traffic -both of goods and people- to pass through it and therefore to enter in contact with the German language. Moreover, it has also to be considered that the company's head offices are located in the city of Bern, which is the capital of Switzerland and is well connected by rail, and where the official language is -Bernese Swiss- German. This is probably the reason why German is unofficially considered as the "langue de reference" (literally "language of reference", meaning "main working language" or "main language") of the company, as one of the gatekeepers who granted access to the institution underlined.

On the regional scale, in the SBB CFF FFS stations of the different linguistic regions, the influence of the territorial principle on the hierarchisation of the national languages acquires more visibility. In each linguistic territory, the hierarchy of the SBB CFF FFS national languages varies according to the official language(s) in the canton, which in the main train stations is the predominant one and normally occupies a privileged position. In multilingual

top-down signs for example, the local language is placed at the top of the sign or on the left-hand side of it.



Figure 9: Lugano, sign between the railway lines, 18.10.2020.



Figure 10: Genève, timetable screens, 20.10.2020.

As it can be seen in figure 9, which represents the multilingual sign between the railway lines in Lugano, and in figure 10, which represents the screens signalling the departures and the arrivals at the station of Genève, the local language -respectively Italian and French- is the first one on the list, being therefore easily recognisable and straightforwardly accessible. In the case of the stations of bilingual cities, such as Fribourg/Freiburg for example, the two local languages are consistently displayed together, as it is exemplified by figure 11.



Figure 11: Bilingual sign in Fribourg/Freiburg, 7.12.2020.

On the SBB CFF FFS top-down signs at the station of Fribourg/Freiburg, French is always placed before German, probably because it is the demographically better represented language, both in the canton and in the city of Fribourg/Freiburg (see figure 11).

The predominant place of the local language in the linguistic landscapes of the stations is also recognisable as it is the language more often used to give directions. For example, figure 11 shows that the directions to the city centre and to the bus station are given in both the local languages in Fribourg/Freiburg, figure 12 shows that in Genève directions are indicated in French (“Centre ville” indicating the direction to the city centre, “Aéroport” to the airport, “Place du Reculet” and “Place de Cornavin” to the two squares), and figure 13 shows that in Lugano directions are indicated in Italian (“Città” signalling access to the city). When mobilised to indicate directions, the local language is sometimes accompanied by English, which is treated as the global language addressed to the SBB CFF FFS imagined foreign customers. English is not normally used to translate the indications written in the local language, but it usually appears alone on the SBB CFF FFS official signs in the form of international words, such as “information”, “tourist”, “city”, “shopping”, “location” or “parking” that are often associated with small and easily recognisable icons like a shopping bag, a little car, the “I” of information, or a roof. Figures 14 and 15 provide examples of this.



Figure 12: Genève, indications of direction in French, 20.10.2020.



Figure 13: Lugano, indication of directions in Italian, 18.10.2020.



Figure 14: Lausanne, English and French presented on two separate signs without translation in either of the two languages, 7.12.2020.



Figure 15: Genève, use of international English words accompanied by icons, 20.10.2020.

This use of English addressed to foreign travellers and tourists imagined as speaking ELF is detectable in the linguistic landscapes of all the stations taken into consideration but to different degrees. In Zürich HB for example, this presence of English is much more remarkable than in Chur or Lugano, which is also probably due to the greater dimension and to the centrality of the station, as well as its proximity to the international airport of Zürich.

The second place in order of importance in the hierarchy of languages on the regional scale at SBB CFF FFS is occupied by the languages of the national linguistic majorities, namely German in the French- and Italian-speaking regions and French in the German-speaking region, which shows the coexistence and the reciprocal influence of the national and the regional scales in the different linguistic territories. As far as the linguistic landscapes of the SBB CFF FFS stations of Lugano, Bellinzona, Genève and Lausanne are concerned, they evidence the unarguable importance of German for the railway company in both Ticino and Romandie. In these linguistic areas, German appears as the language that follows the local language in terms of importance and frequency of use. In the SBB CFF FFS stations of Lugano and Bellinzona for instance, German is placed second in the quadrilingual signs between the railway lines (like the one shown in figure 9) and on the yellow screen displaying the departures (figure 16), rendering it immediately accessible after the local language.

Linea	Destinazione	Orario	Stazioni	Info
S60	Sorengo Bloggno Agno Ponte Tresa	17:39	11	
S10	Lamone-C. Taverne-T. Bellinzona	17:56	4	
RE	Mendrisio Chiasso Milano Centrale	18:00	2	
IC 2	Bellinzona Fidenz Zug Zürich HB	18:04	3	
S10	Paradiso Mendrisio Busto Arsizio	18:05	1	
S10	Paradiso Mendrisio Chiasso Como	18:05	1 B-D	
RE	Lamone-C. Bellinzona Biasca Erstfeld	18:08	4	
S60	Sorengo Bloggno Agno Ponte Tresa	18:09	11	
S10	Lamone-C. Taverne-T. Bellinzona	18:26	4	
IC	Bellinzona Arth-Goldau Zug Zürich HB	18:34	3	
S10	Paradiso Melide Mendrisio Chiasso	18:35	1	
S60	Sorengo Bloggno Agno Ponte Tresa	18:39	11	

Servizio sostitutivo: Lugano-Melide. Notte 18/19.10.2020 tra le ore 23.00 e le ore 05.00. Bus sostitutivi, luogo di partenza: piazzale stazione FFS.

Figure 16: Lugano, screen displaying departures, 18.10.2020.

On a side note, it has to be noticed that English does not appear in these yellow screens (as the one shown in figure 16 located in Lugano) as it does not appear either on the white screens signalling the arrivals that can be seen in figure 10. The assumption is that these screens are older versions of the blue ones, of which figure 17 offers an example. These possibly newer



Figure 17: Chur, timetable screen signalling departures, 7.11.2020.

blue screens are present in the most modern stations, such as Zürich HB, and in the stations that have relatively recently been renewed, such as Bellinzona, and always present the same order of languages regardless of the linguistic region. These supposedly newer screens, contrary to the yellow and the white screens (see figures 10 and 16), reflect the national hierarchisation of languages at SBB CFF FFS, underlining the coexistence of the national and the regional scales and the influence of the national scale on the regional one.

In connection with the importance of German in the stations of Lugano and Bellinzona initiated above, it is worth reporting also that the leaflets available in the area of the ticket counters in both stations in Ticino are all available in either Italian or German. Moreover, this discussion focuses only on the top-down signs and public material of the SBB CFF FFS, but if

the larger linguistic landscape of the station of Lugano in particular was to be considered, it would show that German basically always closely accompanies Italian in the texts displayed on the doors of the restaurant of the station (Buffet della Stazione) and of the small grocery shop “Piccobello”, which has a name that sounds Italian, but that is actually used as an expression to say “great” in Swiss German. For example, a Swiss German passenger attendant could answer “Piccobello!” after having checked a valid train ticket to signal that everything is fine.

The same ranking of German as second most important language of the SBB CFF FFS on the regional scale is detectable in the stations of Lausanne and Genève in Romandie (French-speaking Switzerland). There, too, the signs between the railway lines and the yellow screens displaying the departures place German as second language after the local language -French-. In both stations, moreover, as shown by figure 18, blue billboards to affix important information issued by the SBB CFF FFS post a bilingual target that displays only the local language and German.



Figure 18: Genève, bilingual sign displaying only French and German, 20.10.2020.

In Genève it was even possible to find a top-down sign displaying German before French (figure 19) in the middle of an underground corridor of the station. The centrality of this sign, which requests to leave the passage free, underlines the powerful position occupied by German in the francophone station of Genève.



Figure19: Genève, trilingual sign placing German first, 20.10.2020.

The distinctive status of German at SBB CFF FFS even in the Italian- and French-speaking regions of Switzerland is also highlighted by the informal declarations of the participants in this study and of their colleagues. In both Romandie and Ticino, the participants admitted that without German they could not work as passenger attendants. This is not only because the job would be more difficult in terms of communication with both passengers and colleagues, but also because they are actually expected to have German in their linguistic repertoire even if -technically- they could go without it. In fact, according to the linguistic requirements for the job stated in the official website, passenger attendants must have “very good verbal skills in *either* German *or* French” (my emphasis) and to “be prepared to learn two additional foreign languages (German, French, Italian or English)”. This discrepancy between the institutional policy and the actual language practices at SBB CFF FFS underlines the power

of the majority language German, which cannot be circumvented. For example, while shadowing Erika, before leaving the station of Genève she was laughing with her colleagues saying that in Genève German is more spoken than French. This predominance of German in the SBB CFF FFS' environments in Romandie and Ticino can logically be explained by the adjacency of these regions to the German-speaking area of Switzerland, which as mentioned above is geographically the biggest and it is located in the middle of the national territory. This predominance of German even on the regional scale is coherent with the hierarchisation of languages on a national scale, and points to the coexistence of the two scales and to the influence that the national scale has on the regional one. In Ticino and Romandie, as seen above, this means that German has a distinguished position and visibility as second language.

When the local language is German, French -as second major language in Switzerland- appears as the second language in terms of representation in the linguistic landscapes of the SBB CFF FFS stations. In fact, in Chur, Zürich HB and Luzern the second language -after German- displayed in multilingual signs is always French.



Figure 20: Chur, sign between the railway lines, 7.11.2020.

Figure 20 provides an example of this showing the type of sign standing between the railway lines in the station of Chur (cf. with figure 9 of the same sign in Lugano). Chur is in Graubünden, a canton with three official -cantonal- languages (German, Italian and Romansch), and despite this, French is still positioned in the second place in these quadrilingual top-down signs. This may indicate that these quadrilingual signs are conceived on a national level, which therefore underlines the coexistence of the national and the regional scales in these signs and the influence of the first on the latter.

It is interesting to notice though, that even if French is placed second in these quadrilingual signs located in the German-speaking region, its presence as second language in the linguistic landscapes of the stations in the German part of Switzerland is not as remarkable as the presence of German in Ticino and Romandie. For example, at the station of Lugano, as mentioned above, in the ticket counter area the leaflets promoting SBB CFF FFS offers for holiday and travels were half in Italian and half in German, whilst at the station of Zürich HB the same kind of leaflets could only be found in German. Strictly considering only the regional scale, this difference may signal that at SBB CFF FFS, the second position in the regional hierarchies of languages has not the same prestige and value across the linguistic regions. On the basis of the data and the discussion provided above in fact, it seems safe to argue that in Romandie and -especially- in Ticino, the second language -German- has a more conspicuous informative role than the second language -French- in the German-speaking territory.

The language that follows the local language and a majority language in degree of importance and representation in the regional hierarchy of languages at SBB CFF FFS is the third national language, namely the language of a national minority. This position is occupied by Italian both in Romandie and in the Germanophone region, and by French in Ticino. In the three linguistic regions, the third national language is represented basically only on the multilingual signs on the ticket machines, between the railway lines, on trains, and on the

screens displaying the departures and the arrivals. In Bellinzona, an exception could be found (on the 27.11.2020) on the automatic door giving access to the counter area, where a French sign signalling the obligation to wear a mask due to the Covid-19 pandemic was posted. Similarly, on the doors of the toilets in the SBB CFF FFS station of Luzern, on the 27.11.2020 there was a message from the company in both German, French and Italian (but interestingly not in English) announcing that the services were paying (figure 21).

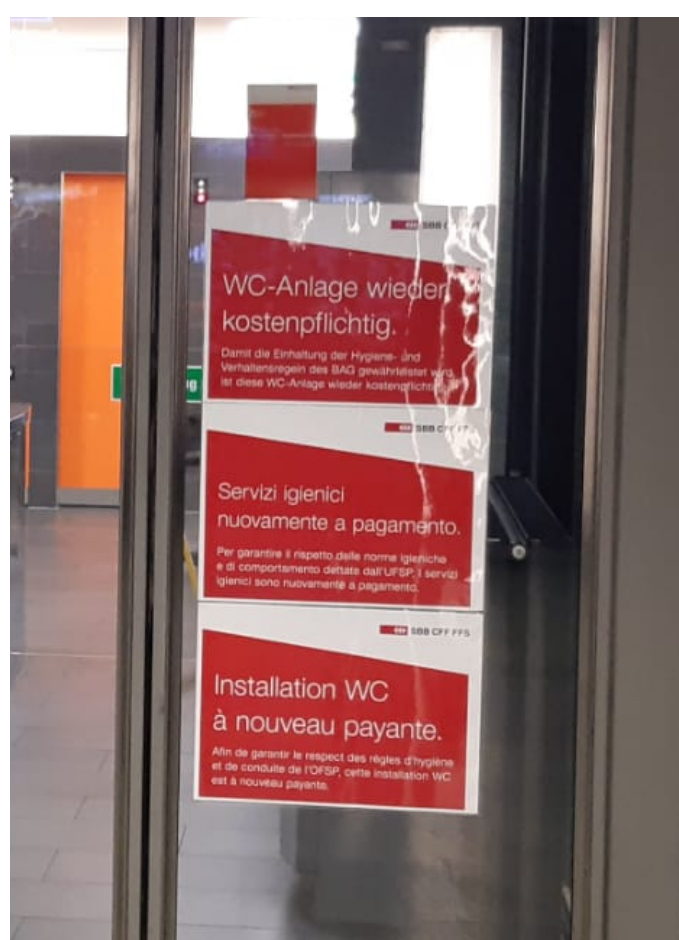


Figure 21: Luzern, information in German, Italian and French, 27.11.2020.

Despite these exceptional occurrences, it could be argued that the third national language appears only pro forma, as it is inserted in the linguistic landscapes of the SBB CFF FFS stations in the three linguistic territories only through the rather standardised quadrilingual

signs conceived on a national scale mentioned above and this does not even happen consistently.

In fact, as shown by figures 22 and 23, in Genève and Zürich HB it was even possible to find a sign of the type that forbids to cross the railway lines (that as seen above are normally quadrilingual, cf. figures 9 and 20) only in three languages, namely the local language -French in Genève and German in Zürich HB-, the majority language -German in Genève and French in Zürich HB-, and English.

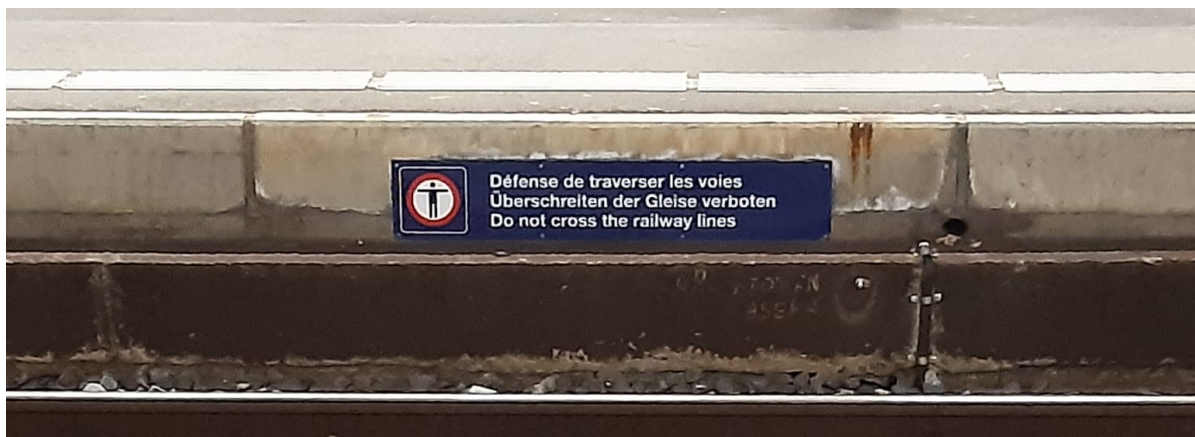


Figure 22: Genève, trilingual sign displaying only French, German and English, 20.10.2020.



Figure 23: Zürich HB, trilingual sign displaying only German, French and English, 14.2.2021.

Figure 23 is also interesting because it is composed by two signs, namely a first and more visible one in German, both in terms of position -as it is the one placed higher up- and of dimension -as the text is bigger-, and a second smaller and multilingual one, which places German first, followed by “only” French -the second majority language- and English. The third national language appears thus to be underrepresented through the linguistic landscapes and therefore to have a lesser importance compared to either of the other SBB CFF FFS institutional languages. On the contrary, English is always present on these signs warning about dangers located between the railway lines. This is based on its being constructed as the global language serving as lingua franca with all the idealised foreigners and is highly likely aimed at enhancing the successful reception of the signal of danger.

To sum up, this analysis of the hierarchies of languages at SBB CFF FFS has differentiated between a national scale and a regional scale, but it has also underlined that these two scales are closely intertwined as they coexist and influence one another. Actually, the fact that on the national scale the hierarchy of the SBB CFF FFS institutional languages places German in the most powerful position, French in the second and Italian in the third, and considers English as the international language addressed to the -imagined- foreign customers is reflected on the hierarchy of institutional languages of the regional scale. In fact, this latter is coherent with the hierarchy of languages on the national scale because, even if on a regional level the local language is always the most important and visible in signs, the national majority languages German and French still show their prominence by being the second languages in respectively Romandie and Ticino and the German-speaking region. The coexistence of these two scales is also made clear by the fact that it is possible to find the same quadrilingual signs -such as the supposedly newer blue screen seen in figure 17 and the quadrilingual sign on the ticket machine in figure 8- conceived on a national level, namely ordering the SBB CFF FFS

institutional languages according to the hierarchy of languages on the national scale, in all the linguistic regions.

These hierarchisation of languages can be explained from two points of view. The first and more plausible one is linked to security reasons and refers mainly to the quadrilingual signs signalling danger, such as the one forbidding to cross the railway lines for example. In this case, placing the local language and the language of a national majority in the privileged and most easily accessible positions at the top of the sign arguably aims to have a stronger impact, since these two languages are supposedly the demographically better represented in - respectively- a given locality and in the country. Moreover, always inserting English as *lingua franca* and as global language in these signs between the railway lines seems to ensure the successful reception of the message also by the imagined foreign customers. From this point of view, multilingualism -and the hierarchical organisation of the different languages- is mobilised in a speech act warning of potential danger, as it can be conceived of as an instrument to enhance customers' safety.

A second perspective that explains the hierarchisation of the SBB CFF FFS languages in the different regions of Switzerland relates to the ideology of language as a marker of membership and belonging to a certain community (Del Percio and Duchêne 2012: 49, 50). On the one hand, the fact of privileging the local language in multilingual signs and through the broader linguistic landscapes of the different stations respects the principle of territoriality (see Stotz 2006, Berthele 2016, Ronan 2016) marking these spaces as belonging to the local population (see Papen 2012: 57). On the other hand, through the use of multilingual signs the spaces of the SBB CFF FFS stations are constructed as belonging also to the Swiss population more in general and not only to the local population in particular. In fact, since multilingualism is considered -and constructed as- a Swiss characteristic (see section 5.1 on branding), the

multilingual signs in the stations can be seen as marking that the spaces where they are located are *Swiss* spaces, belonging to the Swiss nation and therefore also to the Swiss population.

Based on these considerations, as a final note it seems safe to claim that the management of multilingualism in the linguistic landscapes of the major stations of the SBB CFF FFS strengthens the bond between the constructed and idealised Swiss identity of the company and the imagined Swiss national identity, as the former (re)produces the latter. In particular, the consistent mobilisation of (Swiss) multilingualism in the SBB CFF FFS top-down written signs conceived on a national -but also at a regional- level seems to reinforce the ideological construction of this language regime as a marker of authenticity and of “Swissness” (see section 5.1.1). The appropriation and reutilisation of multilingualism as a national symbol by the SBB CFF FFS for their top-down signs signal the effort of the company to construct their Swiss identity in accordance with the -often stereotyped- Swiss national identity. Last but not least, as the linguistic landscapes and the hierarchies of languages that emerge from their study have shown, the SBB CFF FFS do not limit themselves to making “Swiss” multilingualism their own, but they also reconstruct -arguably for safety and identity reasons- the hierarchies of languages that are typical of Switzerland and that are related to geographical and demographical factors.

5.2.2 Predominance of German, Inclusion-Exclusion Patterns and Unequal Access to Information: A Glimpse from Ticino and Romandie

The cluster of national languages and English that are the SBB CFF FFS institutional languages are defined by Berthele (2016: 43) as the languages of the “elite” in Switzerland. In fact, these languages seem to provide a privileged access to positions of prestige within the nation-state’s labour market, constituting thus a Swiss type of elite multilingualism (see section 2.3 and Barakos and Selleck 2019). Nevertheless, the hierarchisation of the SBB CFF FFS institutional

languages -and therefore of the Swiss elite's languages- on the national and the regional scales illustrated above inevitably contributes to augment the elitist status of the Swiss majority languages, especially German.

As far as the latter is concerned, due to its overarching importance as predominant language of the company, this means that in the context of the SBB CFF FFS German is regarded as a key for access (see Barakos and Selleck 2019) to the labour market of the SBB CFF FFS and to high-quality information. On the one hand, the importance of German regulates access to the company in terms of employment, because -as shown above- having knowledge of German is an essential requirement to work at SBB CFF FFS (especially in customer service). In this sense, on the other hand, German also represents an element of exclusion, for those who do not have German in their linguistic profile are not granted access to the work at SBB CFF FFS.

Occasionally, the predominance of German at SBB CFF FFS can be considered as a terrain for exclusion and inequality also in terms of access to material on the job in the preferred national language and to information. For example, both Lizbeth, Gloria and Sébastien told me that sometimes the material they receive from the head offices of the company (located in Bern) is extremely poorly translated from German into French and Italian, to the point that some passages are incomprehensible. Gloria, who is based in Romandie and is originally from Italy (her L1 is Italian), referred in particular to the company's application that passenger attendants are provided with to prepare for the regular exams they have to pass on the different types of train and security procedures. She admitted that sometimes, not being able to understand the French version because of poor translation -given that she has high competence in French-, she switches the application to the Italian version or directly to the original German one in the attempt to understand the meaning of certain sentences. Similarly, Lizbeth and Sébastien said that they occasionally received informative documents -respectively in Italian and French- that

they struggled to decipher and that they sent back to the head offices in Bern requiring a better translation.

A similar manifestation of pattern of inclusion and exclusion deriving from the dominance of German at SBB CFF FFS is reported in the article entitled “SBB bringen Waadländer Regierung in Rage” (meaning “SBB infuriate the Vaudois Government”) published by the *Tages Anzeiger* on the 10th of September 2014. On that occasion, the SBB CFF FFS apparently issued a call for tenders in the Canton of Vaud -an officially Francophone region- announcing and explaining their project over twenty-six pages in German and providing a summary of only six pages in French. This was considered almost scandalous as it has been regarded as a linguistic discrimination of the non-German-speaking enterprises of the country. The following passage of the article illustrates the details of the event:

Die SBB sollen nicht nur verlangt haben, dass die Offerte auf Deutsch oder allenfalls Englisch eingereicht wird. Auch hätten alle Verantwortlichen des Projektes den Beweis erbringen müssen, dass sie über gute schriftliche und mündliche Deutschkenntnisse verfügen. Das Prinzip der «Nichtdiskriminierung» sei damit insofern verletzt worden, als Unternehmen aus dem nichtdeutschen Sprachraum klar benachteiligt seien, kritisiert die Waadtländer Regierung.

(*Tages Anzeiger*, 10th of September 2014)

The SBB is said to have not only demanded for the offer to be submitted in German or -if necessary- in English, but also for a proof of good written and oral knowledge of German by all those responsible for the project. As the government of the Canton of Vaud criticised, the principle of "non-discrimination" was thus violated as companies from non-German-speaking regions were clearly disadvantaged.

(My translation)

As the excerpt underlines, the predominance of German at SBB CFF FFS violated the principle of “non-discrimination” enunciated in the General Comment No. 20 (2009) of the United

Nation Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). Paragraph 21 of this document is dedicated to language and reads that “information about public services and goods [...] should also be available, as far as possible, in language spoken by minorities, and State parties should ensure that any language requirements relating to employment and education are based on reasonable and objective criteria” (CESCR 2009: 7). The SBB CFF FFS have thus discriminated all the non-Germanophone Swiss regions by neglecting their rights of both receiving a proper explication of the project and of submitting their offers in their local language -which does not seem to be a language requirement “based on reasonable and objective criteria” (CESCR 2009: 7)-. This episode highlights that the existence of elite forms of multilingualism, and hierarchies of languages therein, inevitably involves patterns of inclusion and exclusion of social groups (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 365) and that the SBB CFF FFS are no exception to the rule.

A last example of this pattern of exclusion that comes with the elitist status of the demographically better represented languages on the national scale is the evidence of the magazine “via”. “via” is a Swiss travel magazine published by the SBB CFF FFS and by the



Annonce dans via.

«via» est le plus important magazine suisse de transport et de voyage, destiné aux pendulaires, aux voyageurs d'affaires et de loisirs.

Avec un tirage global de 140 000 exemplaires (110 000 en allemand et 30 000 en français) en tant que magazine officiel de la clientèle des Chemins de fer fédéraux CFF et de l'Union des transports publics (UTP), via s'emploie à divertir et informer le public six fois par an sur les thèmes de la mobilité et les tendances dans les transports en commun au travers d'actualités, d'interviews, de reportages et d'une section de services particulièrement soignée.

Figure 24: Screenshot of SBB CFF FFS webpage presenting “via”, 8.1.2021.



“Union des transport publics” (UTP), which is available both online and in the SBB CFF FFS stations. “via” is presented as follows in the official website of the SBB CFF FFS (see original text in figure 24):

“via” is Switzerland's most important transport and travel magazine for commuters, business and leisure travellers.

With a total circulation of 140'000 copies (110'000 in German and 30'000 in French), “via”, as the official customer magazine of the SBB CFF FFS and the Swiss Public Transport Association (UTP), aims at entertaining and informing the public several times a year about mobility issues and trends in public transport through news, interviews, reports and a particularly well-curated service section.

(My translation)

Even though it is presented as “le plus important magazine suisse de transport et de voyage” (“Switzerland’s most important transport and travel magazine”) and as being the “magazine officiel de la clientèle des Chemin de fer fédéraux” (“the official customer magazine of the SBB CFF FFS”), “via” is only published in German and in French, the two majority languages of Switzerland. As shown in figure 25 below, even the webpage dedicated to the magazine in the SBB CFF FFS official website, is entirely available only in French and German, since the

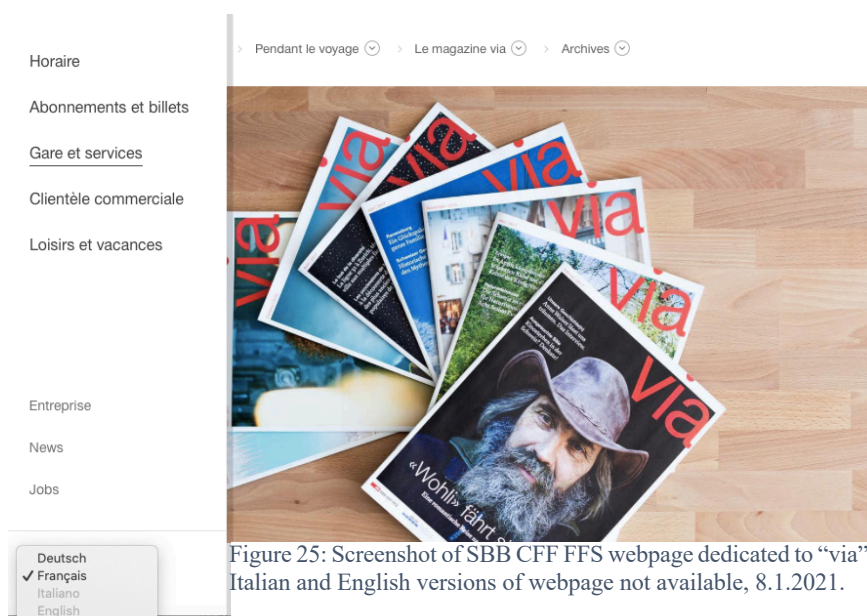


Figure 25: Screenshot of SBB CFF FFS webpage dedicated to “via”, Italian and English versions of webpage not available, 8.1.2021.

language menu appearing on the left corner of the bottom of the page does not allow to select Italian (nor English). The Italian-speaking Swiss are thus completely excluded from the public of the magazine, which reproduces thus the pattern of exclusion associated to the elitist status of certain languages. More than “the official customer magazine of the SBB CFF FFS”, “via” is the official customer magazine of the SBB CFF... but not of the FFS.

The hierarchies of languages that exist at SBB CFF FFS illustrated in this section (5.2) help thus to attribute an elitist status to certain Swiss languages -the majority languages and German in particular-, which generates patterns of inclusion and exclusion in terms of access to jobs and (good-quality) information at SBB CFF FFS. The examples illustrated above in fact show that occasionally, due to the predominance of German in the company, non-Germanophones are unofficially penalised by not having access to (good quality) information, either because this is not available in their national language or because it is very poorly translated, and might be denied access to customer service employment at SBB CFF FFS because they do not have German in their linguistic repertoires.

To conclude, this second section has discussed the hierarchies of languages at SBB CFF FFS through an analysis of the linguistic landscapes of the main SBB CFF FFS stations, pointing out also the -sometimes discriminatory- consequences of the predominance of certain languages on the linguistic minorities. The next and last section of the analysis and discussion of the results of this qualitative sociolinguistic study focuses on the participants and zooms in on their language practices and ideologies.

5.3 Zooming in on the Face and Voice of (SBB) CFF FFS: Passenger Attendants' Language Practices and Ideologies

This last section is based on the participant observations in which I shadowed six volunteer passenger attendants from Ticino and Romandie on long-distance trains and focuses on their implementation of the language policies illustrated above in the light of their language practices and ideologies. While the first two sections of the analysis (5.1 and 5.2) have dealt primarily with a top-down discursive construction and regulation of multilingualism on a company's level (with some glimpses into the bottom-up implementation of policies) this last section looks more in detail into multilingualism as practice from the perspective of the individual SBB CFF FFS employees, more precisely of passenger attendants.

This last section of the discussion of results is organised in six subsections. The first one (5.3.1), which expands on the discussion about the predominance of German (section 5.2.2) with a consideration of participants' metalinguistic commentaries on the diglossia between High (standard) German and Swiss German, reports the perspectives of the participants from Ticino and Romandie on German and on the coexistence of German and Swiss German at SBB CFF FFS. It shows that this diglossia can generate a real struggle and become a source of frustration -especially for those who are learning German- but it can also be a source of ambition and personal pride. The second subsection (5.3.2) discusses Italian and "Dialecto Ticinese" (dialect of Ticino) as means to affirm local identity and the visibility of the minority language. "Dialecto Ticinese" is also considered in its capacity of shifting interactions to a more informal and friendly tone. Without aiming at exhaustivity, the third subsection (5.3.3) reports the existence of a "Swiss Railway Language" and sketches its characteristics based on observations. The fourth subsection (5.3.4) deals with passenger attendants' linguistic flexibility in accommodating both the hierarchies of institutional languages (see section 5.2) and the passengers' language preferences. This subsection takes into consideration top-down

discourses on language hierarchies and bottom-up ones, as it shows how passenger attendants implement the “welcoming strategy” through the language choice with passengers and how they negotiate and even resist top-down prescriptions on the use and order of language according to the linguistic region. The fifth subsection (5.3.5) explains that passenger attendants’ absolute priority is to communicate successfully, and it shows how this priority is fulfilled through multilingual practices, especially receptive multilingualism, code-switching and the use of national languages as *linguae francae*. The sixth subsection (5.3.6) reports and discusses the participants’ pride in being multilingual workers, especially focusing on Sébastien, and explains that the participants in this study can be defined as ambassadors of Stotz’s (2006) “confederate discourse” since they state a preference to use the Swiss national languages instead of English with (Swiss) SBB CFF FFS passengers.

5.3.1 “L’allemand c’est à pleurer!” [“German makes you cry!”]: German and Schwyzerdütsch between Necessity and Difficulty, Pride and Profit

The participant observations and the interview with Sébastien revealed that German can represent a real struggle for passenger attendants working from Ticino and Romandie. This is not only due to the fact that it is commonly perceived as a very difficult language by French and Italian speakers, but also because more often than not SBB CFF FFS passengers and employees actually speak some varieties of Swiss German rather than Standard -High-German. In Switzerland in fact, there is not just one variety of (Swiss) German, but almost every canton -and one could even dare to say every remote region of each canton- has its own variety. As Steinberg (2015: 141) says, “[t]echnically what Swiss Germans speak is *Schwyzerdütsch*, a rather artificial term to describe an astonishing number of dialects in a small geographical area”.

This diglossia (see section 3.1) can generate frustration for those who -must- learn German, since normally the language that is studied in the language courses -High German- is not the one spoken in Switzerland. This applies to the non-Germanophone regions of Switzerland, where High German -and not Swiss German- is taught -with a certain degree of pain due to the difficulty of the language, as the opening vignette in the introduction hilariously illustrates- in schools as second language, and in the language courses taken by passenger attendants. The reason behind the recurrent choice of teaching High German and not Swiss German in Swiss schools is that the (High) German skills acquired can be used also outside Switzerland and with interlocutors from other German-speaking nations, such as Germany, Luxemburg or Austria for example (see Steinberg 2015: 164). Patrick underlined this point saying that during his yearlong stay in a family in Luzern to learn German he really made an effort to learn and speak High German rather than the local variety, because he wanted to be able to communicate also with Germanophones from outside Switzerland. Due to the perceived difficulty of the language -which constitutes an ideology of German- and to the diglossia in the Swiss German regions, during the interview I conducted with him, Sébastien laughingly claimed that sometimes “L’allemand c’est à pleurer!” (“German makes you cry!”), especially for the new employees who are still learning the language. Nevertheless, the acquisition of German and Swiss German skills is also regarded by some of the participants not only as a (work-related) necessity but also as an ambition and as a satisfying achievement, both on a professional and a personal level. These participants’ attitudes towards German and Swiss German were documented in linguistic practices and metalinguistic commentary during observations as well as in informal discussions with some participants and their colleagues on the long-distance trains.

In relation to the difficulty of both learning German and dealing with the coexistence of German and Swiss German at the SBB CFF FFS, Marie -Sébastien’s colleague-, and Gloria

openly reported their frustration and disorientation. Marie explained to me with a hint of exasperation that she had been employed by the SBB CFF FFS to know Standard German, that she was paying for standard German classes to achieve the required linguistic level and that she was putting a lot of effort in learning German even if at work she encountered more Swiss German than Standard German. The same frustration was mentioned by Gloria, who told me that when she first arrived in Switzerland and started working for the SBB CFF FFS ten years ago, she was often discomforted by the predominance of Swiss German. She confessed that still nowadays she finds Swiss German quite abstruse and problematic, which is why -as she told me- when passengers talk to her in Swiss German requiring a more elaborate interaction, in order to assure successful communication, she asks them to speak Standard German. From the observations conducted while shadowing her, it seems safe to conclude that this is normally well perceived, maybe also because it allows to clients to receive the information they need from Gloria, which would be more difficult communicating only in Swiss German.

I observed her requesting a switch from Swiss to Standard German to a passenger on the route between Genève and Luzern while we were approaching Zofingen with a few minutes delay. On that occasion, a middle-aged passenger who was apparently under pressure approached Gloria in Swiss German, frantically asking for information about the validity of her ticket on her next connection in Zofingen. Gloria immediately interrupted the passenger asking her to speak Standard German, so that she could understand better and properly answer. To this request, the agitated lady immediately abandoned Swiss German and explained, in High German, that due to the delay, she was not sure to be able to catch the train she planned to travel with from Zofingen, and she needed to know whether the ticket she bought would still be valid on the next train. After this switch to Standard German, Gloria was able to provide the required information and the exchange ended successfully, with the passenger being satisfied and calmer thanks to the answer she received. Despite her preference for (High) German over

Swiss German, Gloria confessed that German is still her “weak language” (she referred to her German skills as “la mia lingua più debole”, meaning “my weakest language”), saying that it is the language in which she feels less confident and proficient and in which she struggles the most. These feelings -of preferring German over Swiss German and of finding German quite difficult- were shared also by -other than Marie- Patrick and Gloria’s trainee (Giulio), who also suffered from the diglossia in the Swiss German regions and the difficulty presented by learning German mentioned above.

Simultaneously though, these same passenger attendants stated that they aspired to achieve good German skills as they regarded them as an important resource for both their job at SBB CFF FFS and for their personal interests and satisfaction. In fact, these participants stated to be willing to invest time, energies and financial resources in order to achieve and maintain the required level of German, which would reward them with its economic benefits and also with personal pride (see Duchêne 2016, as quoted in Flubacher et al. 2018: 2). In relation to the symbolic reward that the investment in language skills can provide, it is interesting to report at this point Sébastien’s satisfaction and pride in being able to speak Swiss German with both customers and colleagues, after forty-two years of service at SBB CFF FFS and having overcome his learning struggles. During the shadowing, he reported that Swiss German passengers are generally happier when they are spoken to in Swiss German rather than in Standard German and he revealed his gratification in being able to please them.

On a concluding note, despite the struggle and the frustration that German sometimes represents and entails, Gloria, Giulio, Patrick, Sébastien and Marie -therefore the majority of the participants- regarded the acquisition of -Swiss- German skills not only as a requirement to fulfil, but also as something to aspire to and be proud of, since it requires some degree of effort. From their perspective of SBB CFF FFS passenger attendants from Romandie and Ticino, German is thus positioned at the intersection between difficulty and necessity, pride and profit,

since making effort to learn it can be considered as a satisfactory achievement on a personal level that also generates profit, as it is a necessary requirement to work as passenger attendant at SBB CFF FFS.

5.3.2 “Siamo in pochi, ma ci siamo” [“We are not many, but we are here”]: Italian and “Dialecto Ticinese” as Affirmations of Pride, Membership and Visibility

Shadowing the participants from Ticino, namely Patrick, Lizbeth and Giuliana, both on the regional trains in Ticino and on the route between Lugano and Zürich HB, revealed the interesting coexistence of Italian and “Dialecto Ticinese” (dialect of Ticino) as well as the ideologies and the uses attached and reserved to them in the context of the SBB CFF FFS. Despite its presence in the linguistic reality of Ticino, “Dialecto Ticinese” is not as prominent as *Schwyzerdütsch* in the Swiss German regions. As Steinberg (2015: 251) states, the dialect of Ticino, “however much it revives in the coming years, does not confer identity in the way that Swiss German does”. Nevertheless, as it is explained below, this dimension is still present in the language practices of passenger attendants from Ticino.

It is interesting to note that in the interactions with local passengers on the regional trains and with passengers from Ticino on the long-distance trains travelling between Ticino and Zürich HB, the Ticino dialect was often used in combination with (standard) Italian. The passenger attendants who participated in this study would approach the passengers from Ticino in Italian, sometimes switching to dialect for either the entire exchange or just a few words only subsequently. The cues to this change of language were often taken from the “Ticinese” accents of the passengers or because they were speaking dialect either between them or with the passenger attendants. Also, the age and the gender of the passengers sometimes seemed to represent a contextualisation cue to speak dialect, as I noticed that more often than not,

passengers speaking and being spoken to in dialect were men who looked between forty and seventy years old.

Age, though, seems to play a more important role than gender, since the participants more often using dialect with passengers were Lizbeth and Giuliana, both aged between forty-five and fifty-five years old, and not Patrick, who is in his twenties. This is probably linked to the fact that moving from Italian to dialect gives to the exchange a more informal and friendly tone. As Steinberg (2015: 250) claims, “it is a little like moving from the polite to the more familiar tone, from the *lei* to the *tu* in Italian, and presupposes a degree of familiarity”. Lizbeth and Giuliana, being in their fifties, probably felt in the rightful position of adopting this “more familiar tone” (Steinberg 2015: 250) with the passengers, establishing also their equality with them. Patrick on the contrary, being much younger, when speaking with passengers probably felt compelled to stick to Italian, the more polite form according to Steinberg (2015: 250). When speaking with colleagues from Ticino, nevertheless, he switched easily to dialect too, signalling that with them he felt comfortable to adopt an informal and egalitarian and equalising tone. On the basis of the observations, it is possible to claim that the use of dialect is generally positively welcomed by most of the passengers and SBB CFF FFS employees from Ticino, as it appears to be a practice that reinforces and affirms a sense of local identity and a feeling of membership.

While shadowing Giuliana between Bellinzona and Zürich HB, Italian appeared to have a similar role in the affirmation of the “Ticinese” linguistic identity, in particular in the German-speaking part of the route. Moreover, other than being a marker of identity, through Giuliana’s use of Italian and her explanations, Italian seemed also to become a tool to resist the power of the German-speaking majority. Giuliana in fact, told me that she considers herself a bit of a rebel (she told me “sono un po’ ‘na ribelle”), because in the part of the journey between the Gotthard tunnel and Zürich HB she refuses to follow the rule that indicates to use the local

language -German- first (see section 5.3.4 below). In fact, when walking through the coaches Giuliana performed a sort of linguistic resistance, always announcing her presence and asking to see the tickets only in Italian, switching to -Swiss- German only when the passengers reacted in that language. This attitude contrasts what I observed between Biel/Bienne and Basel SBB with Sébastien, who used German as the local language first and subsequently French as the language of the region from where the train left.

She claimed that she behaves in this way travelling in both directions, but more consistently while heading towards Ticino. She explained to me that the message that she wants to convey through this little rebellion is that Italian is as important, alive and present as German on that particular route and that despite the smaller number of speakers, Italian is still a national language that has to be recognised. As she emphatically added, “siamo in pochi, ma ci siamo”, meaning “we are not many, but we are here”. To this she added that in so doing she hopes to “educate” Swiss Germans to the fact that they cannot travel around Switzerland (especially in Ticino) thinking to speak only Swiss German or German, which she considers arrogant, but that they should at least make an effort to recognise that there are other national languages that have the same official and legitimate status as their own.

These ideas were reflected also in her use of Italian during the short break at the station of Zürich HB. There, Giuliana had an interaction with a colleague in an office of the SBB CFF FFS, as she had to return a broken old work phone that she was still in possession of. She approached her colleague directly in Italian with what one could interpret as a slight challenging attitude, and firmly continued the conversation in Italian even if her interlocutor was evidently making a bigger effort than the one she would have made speaking in German, as she speaks fluently both German and Swiss German. Nevertheless, the communication was successful, and once out of the office Giuliana expressed her satisfaction saying something

along the lines of “Vedi che se vogliono lo sanno parlare ‘sto Italiano?” (“See? If they want to, they can speak this Italian”).

Del Percio and Duchêne (2012: 44) state that “language is a terrain that enables struggles over [...] [the] legitimacy to become visible”. Giuliana’s declarations and slightly rebellious and challenging language practices -that are such since they do not conform to the dominance of German in the company’s language policy and in Switzerland more in general- seem to reflect precisely this claim, as they aim to consolidate the presence and visibility of Italian on the routes she covers.

On a brief and final note, in order to compare the use of Italian to the use of French in relation to the predominance of German, it seems worth mentioning that I did not observe a “resistance” or “challenge” to German through the use of French, nor the use of French to affirm the “Romand” identity. This might be the case because French, contrary to Italian, is still one of the major national languages despite the fact that it is less spoken in Switzerland than (Swiss) German.

5.3.3 The “Swiss Railway Language(s)”: Swiss “Railway German”, “Railway French” and “Railway Italian”

Other than the institutional languages, the passenger attendants at SBB CFF FFS must know what could be called the “Swiss Railway Language”, which is a professional jargon typical of the Swiss railway system. The multilingual character of this latter is reflected in the “Swiss Railway Language” not really in the form of a multilingual vocabulary, but rather in the form of a collection of separate monolingualisms. In fact, participants talked about Swiss “railway German”, “railway French” and “railway Italian”. In particular, the “Swiss Railway Language(s)” -with the plural form within brackets signalling the collection of separate monolingual railway languages- refers to the specific and technical vocabulary in the different

national languages related to the SBB CFF FFS that the employees of the Swiss railway company must learn.

The “Swiss Railway Language(s)” is an object of examination during the language exams that passenger attendants have to pass every five years to attest their constant proficiency in the required languages which, according to Gloria, only test the national languages and not English. While discussing with Gloria and Giulio (her trainee) about these language exams, they told me that their goal is primarily to test the employees’ knowledge of the “railway language” -namely of the particular terms related to the Swiss railway system- in another national language, which assumes that passenger attendants have a main habitual language that is a national language. In fact, they are apparently only asked to talk about railway-related topics, using the specific terms of the SBB CFF FFS. Two examples of these terms, provided by Gloria in French and Italian, are “infortunio a persone” / “accident de personne” (injury to people) meaning suicide and “mancanza di personale” / “manque de personnel” (lack of personnel) indicating that there has been a last-minute change of the staff in service (see more examples below). Nonetheless, it seems that in the process of becoming a passenger attendant, the “railway language” in another national language is tested as a topic in its own right. Giulio for example, reported that before his eighth month at SBB CFF FFS, together with exams on Swiss geography and general knowledge of the railway system, he must also pass the exam of -as he called it- “allemand ferroviaire” (“railway German”), which differs from the exam on general German that he has to pass before the first year at SBB CFF FFS to certify his B1 level.

The “railway language(s)” that SBB CFF FFS employees have to learn is typical of Switzerland because it differs from the “railway languages” of the adjacent nation-states that also have German, French and Italian as official languages, namely Germany, France and Italy. Talking particularly about France and Italy, Gloria explained to me that also due to this difference between the “Swiss Railway Language(s)” and the French and the Italian ones, the

SBB CFF FFS' passenger attendants can only work in France -on the Lyria trains headed to Paris, for example- when accompanied by at least one French passenger attendant who knows the French “railway language”, and that they are not allowed to work in Italy. In fact, when I accompanied Gloria to Domodossola and Lizbeth on the regional trains in Ticino, we only arrived respectively to Domodossola and to Cantello-Gaggiolo, the first Italian train stations where the trains stop after the border. On both occasions, in these stations the Italian staff took over the trains and continued their journeys in Italy. Gloria explained to me that this is due also to security reasons, because since the terms are different between the “Italian Railway Language” and the Swiss one, SBB CFF FFS employees would not be able to communicate efficiently with the Italian railway departments in case of necessity, even if both of them can speak Italian.

Similarly, Lizbeth -who a few years ago occasionally used to translate official texts for the company- declared that in her mind only people who work or have worked for the SBB CFF FFS are able to properly translate their documents in the different national languages. She stressed the point that it is not enough to master the different institutional languages of the company, but it is also essential to know the specific terms of the SBB CFF FFS, which are listed in the SBB CFF FFS dictionary available on the intranet of the company in German, French and Italian. The simple examples that Lizbeth mentioned refer to specific SBB CFF FFS travel offers, such as “*metà-prezzo*” / “*demi-tarif*” / “*Halbtax*” (“half-price”) or “*biglietto risparmio*” / “*billet dégriffé*” / “*Sparbillette*” (“Saving tickets”), and to the acronym “KB”, which even in Ticino is sometimes used to refer to the passenger attendants' division (from the German “*Kundenbegleiter-in*”, meaning “passenger attendant”) (see also passage on helvetisms in section 5.1.1 above). In relation to this last example, Lizbeth said also that a lot of the terms of the Swiss “railway Italian” used in Ticino are translated from German, which is why they differ from the terms of the “Italian Railway Language”.

The “Swiss Railway Language(s)” -meaning Swiss “railway German”, “railway French” and “railway Italian”- thus mentioned by the participants to this study seems to constitute another of the linguistic requirements to be fulfilled in order to become passenger attendants. Moreover, as it is distinguished from the “railway languages” in neighbouring nation-states speaking the same languages, the “Swiss Railway Language(s)” could be considered also as another linguistic element at play in the consolidation of the Swiss identity of the SBB CFF FFS.

5.3.4 Linguistic Hierarchies “On the Go”: Passenger Attendants’ Flexible Language Practices on Moving Trains

Passenger attendants’ language practices during their shifts on long-distance trains (re)produce the hierarchies of the SBB CFF FFS institutional languages analysed in section 5.2.1, but they also take into account the passengers’ language preferences. In fact, though the order in which passenger attendants are required to use the various languages “on the go” changes according to the locality they are in, the locality they left and the locality they are headed to, passenger attendants normally try to accommodate the language preferences of the passengers. This applies to both the announcements over the loudspeaker and to the language they use to approach clients when checking tickets. This subsection examines the top-down rules regulating announcements and reports on the participants’ bottom-up language practices “on the go” to implement them.

As far as the announcements over the loudspeaker are concerned, as both Giuliana, Gloria and Sébastien explained to me -and as it can be seen in the document regulating passenger attendants’ language practices related to the announcements over the loudspeaker (see figure 26 below)-, normally the announcements have two parts. The first part indicates the next station and has to be made first in the language of the locality of the approached station

and then in the language of the region the train left. The second part of the announcement signals the available connections in that particular station and is to be made only in the local language of the approached station. For example, on a train that arrives at Arth-Goldau from Ticino, the passenger attendants should announce the station first in German and then in Italian and should then move on by detailing the available connections in German. If the approached station is still in the same linguistic region but the train heads towards another linguistic region, the passenger attendants should normally make the announcement first in the local language and then in the language of the region headed to, mentioning the connections in the local language. For example, on a train travelling from Chiasso to Zürich HB, the stops at the stations of Lugano and Bellinzona are announced first in Italian and then in German, and the connections are only mentioned in Italian.

English is compulsorily and officially used at the end of the announcements at the loudspeaker -both to announce the stations and the available connections- only before the stations of Genève and Zürich HB, as figure 26 -shared by Gloria- demonstrates. (Figure 26

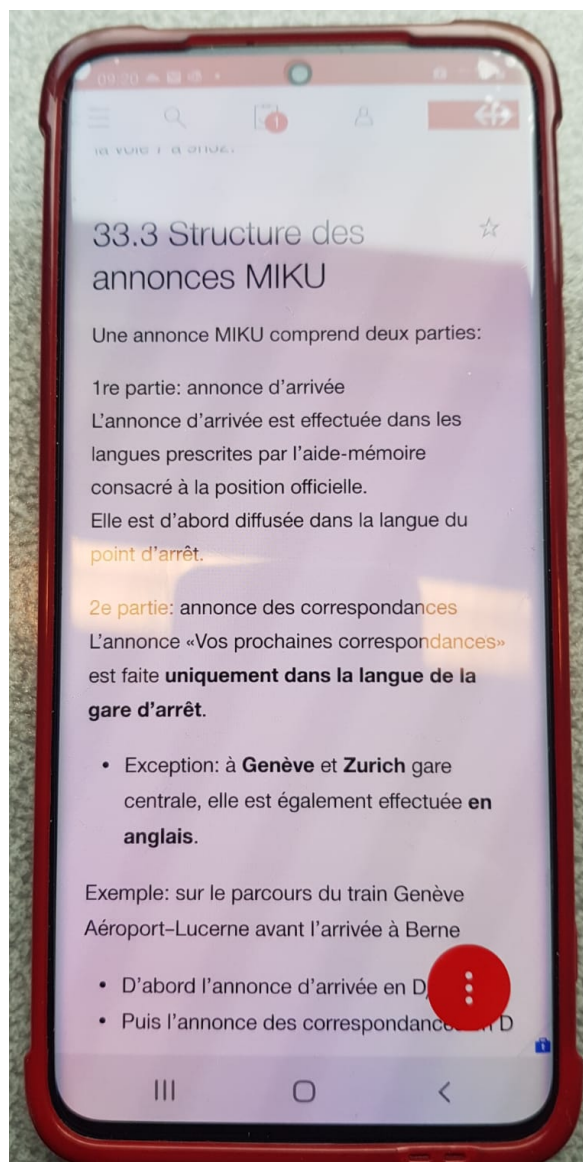


Figure 26: Rules regulating passenger attendants' announcements over the loudspeaker, 4.5.2020, reproduced with SBB CFF FFS' consent.

contains also the indications regulating the order of languages during the announcements and the two parts of it illustrated above). The fact that English must officially be used only in Genève and Zürich HB may be explained by the fact that these stations have international connections and are close to airports. If the passenger attendants consider it useful though, they can add an English announcement even before other stations. From my personal experience, I

can state that it happens quite often to hear English announcements before the central and important stations in Lugano, Lausanne, Genève Aéroport, Bern, Luzern and Basel SBB.

In fact, except from the rules that passenger attendants are required to follow mentioned above, they told me that they are quite free to personalise their announcements adding extra languages they can speak if they consider it useful for the passengers on board. Two examples collected from the informal talks with passenger attendants during the participant observations help to illustrate this last point. The first one is provided by Gloria, who told me that when she notices a conspicuous presence of Italian speakers on the trains circulating between Romandie and the German-speaking region, she makes the announcement over the loudspeaker also in Italian -after the German and French ones-, even if this is not demanded by the prescriptions they have to follow. She identified these Italian-speaking passengers mainly as students from Ticino and as Italian tourists. The second -quite similar- example is provided by an Arab passenger attendant I met while shadowing Erika. He told me that a few years ago, on a train between Montreux and Vevey, since he noticed that there were many Arab tourists, he decided to add an announcement over the loudspeaker in Arabic, which was apparently enthusiastically welcomed. These examples remind of the occurrence reported by Hohl (1995: 265) of a passenger attendant who made an announcement in Japanese on a train after having noticed the presence of Japanese passengers (see section 3.2.2).

The same procedures apply to passenger attendants' language practices when they go through the coaches checking tickets, though participants underlined that they are much freer to choose how to behave on these occasions. Shadowing them made it clear that the first language they normally use is the language of the linguistic region the train is crossing. This is sometimes followed by either the language of the region from where the train left or the language of the region the train is headed to. As the participants explained to me though, this practice is adopted at the passenger attendants' discretion, as they are free to use a second

language or not when checking the tickets. For example, while I was shadowing Sébastien, on the route from Biel/Bienne to Basel SBB, he used to enter the coaches announcing his presence and requesting the presentation of tickets through both a German formula (“Grüezi wohl, alle Billette vorweisen, bitte”) and a French one (“Bonjour, tous les billets, s’il vous plaît”), both meaning “Hello, all the tickets, please”. On the contrary, on the same route, his colleague - Marie- used only German to approach clients and switched to French only if she understood that the passengers were francophones, if they spoke French to her, or if she sensed that they felt more comfortable communicating in French.

This observation indicates that during the checking-tickets procedure, therefore when the most direct contact with passengers happens, the passenger attendants normally actively try to accommodate the clients using the language they understand or they think that the passenger is most comfortable speaking. This was explained to me also by Gloria on the route from Genève to Domodossola, because she had just approached a passenger directly in Italian after having noticed a book in Italian that the passenger was reading and having heard her speak on the phone in Italian with a strong Italian accent. Erika behaved in the same way - accommodating the language of the clients- on the route between Genève and Luzern, when checking tickets after Lausanne she met a Swiss German family with children. Since the parents spoke to her in French with a strong Swiss German accent and they talked to each other in Swiss German, Erika switched immediately to Swiss German too understanding that they felt more comfortable in that language. The fact that once having switched to Swiss German the parents started to laugh and exchange little jokes with Erika and the children seems to prove that they felt more at ease in speaking Swiss German rather than French. Gloria explained that she considers this language practice as a form of politeness and as a way to make the clients feel comfortable, which totally matches the ideology of multilingualism as “welcoming strategy” illustrated above.

From these considerations it can be concluded that the hierarchies of the SBB CFF FFS' institutional languages "on the go" depend on the territorial principle only partly, since during the direct contacts with clients passenger attendants privilege the customers' language preferences, accommodating it whenever possible. The moving space of the train results to be an interesting one, because travelling through and stopping in different linguistic regions it anchors the language practices of passenger attendants to the territorial principle, but at the same time it slips its very logic by being constructed as a space where the passengers' languages are prioritised whenever possible by the flexible language practices of the passenger attendants.

5.3.5 Multilingualism "On the Go": Priorities and Practices in Passenger Attendants' Oral Communication

Both on the train and at the station, the absolute priority of passenger attendants is to make themselves understood. This is true both when communicating with clients and with colleagues, because it is related to questions of security and high-quality information. This priority sometimes entails multilingual practices such as code-switching, receptive multilingualism (see Berthele and Wittlin 2013, Losa 2020) and the use of national languages as *linguae francae*. In order to illustrate these phenomena, I will analyse the following examples gathered during the participant observations.

As far as code-switching is concerned, Sébastien's train journey between Biel/Bienne and Basel SBB provides an example of it. On that occasion, Sébastien was about to take over as passenger attendant in Biel/Bienne on the train headed to Basel SBB. When the train arrived at the station, Sébastien met his colleague who had been passenger attendant on that very train until Biel/Bienne on the platform, in order to be informed of potential anomalies or particular facts about the train. At first they exchanged greetings in Swiss German ("Hoi! Wie goots?

Alles guet?” meaning “Hi, how are you? Everything fine?”) and then switched to French for the communication about the train. Sébastien’s colleague explained to him in French that there was a problem with the phone box, but missing the word to describe the details he switched back to German to mention a buzzer disturbance (the German word for which he could not find the French translation was “Summerstörung”, possibly a specialised word in “railway German”). Though in this case code-switching served to provide an explanation of a minor problem of the train, the example shows that this language practice can be used between SBB CFF FFS employees in order to successfully communicate information and to allow passenger attendants to efficiently accomplish their duties, which can be determining for the safety of both staff and passengers. This use of code-switching reflects the one reported by Losa (2020: 200) in relation to the recruits at the Swiss army, where a collaboration on a functional level is inseparable from cooperation on a linguistic level (see section 3.1).

Though the instances of the use of receptive multilingualism were fewer than those of code-switching, receptive multilingualism was still observed a few times during the shadowing of participants, sometimes in combination with code-switching (see Berthele and Wittlin 2013: 192). The following example of this practice derives from the observation of Gloria on the route between Genève and Luzern, when Giulio -Gloria’s trainee- was with us. Giulio could understand -but not speak- a little Italian. Between the three of us we normally spoke French. At a certain point we were joined by a colleague of theirs with Italian origins, who had been employed by the SBB CFF FFS one year before. On that occasion, Gloria explained to the two of them something about the application they have that signals potential delays or deviations on the route they cover. Always visually checking that Giulio was also following, she gave the explanation in Italian, since for her it was easier, since the majority of us spoke Italian and since she knew that everybody would understand her. Concerning this marked language choice, the Italian passenger attendant commented “Almeno così ti eserciti” (“At least in this way you

practice (your Italian)”), addressing himself to Giulio. This comment resonates with the argument made by Berthele and Wittlin (2013: 189) in favour of receptive multilingualism affirming that it gives the opportunity to learn languages through “real life” situations. After the explanation, Giulio asked Gloria two questions in French on the topic, which demonstrated that he understood her explanation and to which she answered in French (engaging in code-switching), since she was addressing him in particular.

In relation to this, it is interesting to note that the SBB CFF FFS language policy, in the section underlining the importance of promoting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Swiss linguistic regions, clearly encourages the practice of receptive multilingualism, as shown in the following passage:

Spesso è più facile comprendere che esprimersi. Pertanto nelle riunioni o anche nei colloqui personali proponiamo il principio “chacun et chacune parle sa langue”. Dunque ciascuno parla nella lingua aziendale nella quale si sente più a suo agio (italiano, francese o tedesco). Teniamo conto delle conoscenze che in nostri colleghi hanno delle lingue straniere. Parliamo alla giusta velocità e facciamo attenzione alla nostra pronuncia.

(Italian version, SBB CFF FFS 2017: 15)

Often it is easier to understand than to speak [a foreign language]. For this reason, we should follow the principle "chacun et chacune parle sa language" (“everybody speaks their own language”), both during meetings or personal conversations. In this way, everyone speaks in the institutional language in which they feel most comfortable (Italian, French or German). We should take into account our colleagues' skills in foreign languages. We should speak at an appropriate speed and be mindful of our pronunciation.

(My translation)

The example of the exchange between Gloria and Giulio perfectly reflects this passage of the language policy. Both of them in fact, spoke “their own language”, the language “they feel most comfortable” speaking, therefore following the principle “chacun et chacune parle sa langue” (“everybody speaks their own language”). As the reported example demonstrates, and

as Berthele and Wittlin (2013: 189) advocate, receptive multilingualism can help to ease the communication and the collaboration between speakers of different languages in multilingual contexts, such as passenger attendants at SBB CFF FFS.

As mentioned above, the use of national languages as *linguae francae* between speakers who had a different L1 or habitual language -which corresponds to the definition of *lingua franca* as a third language to which speakers of different habitual languages resort to in order to communicate successfully- was also observed to fulfil passenger attendants' priority of making themselves understood. During the participant observations this use of the national languages was noted only in interactions between passenger attendants and passengers. The example that better illustrates this phenomenon is taken once again from the observation of Gloria on the route between Genève and Luzern. On that occasion we were approaching Sursee with a delay of a few minutes and Gloria and Giulio were passing through the coaches checking tickets. She had just explained to me in French (because Giulio was with us too) a particularity of the application that passenger attendants use to check tickets, when an elderly Swiss German couple who was sitting close to where we were standing approached her in French to ask for information about the next connections in Sursee. They probably spoke French because they heard us speaking French, and Gloria carried on in the same language so that Giulio and myself could also understand the exchange. This case represents an instance of the use of French as *lingua franca* between passenger attendants and passengers as for neither Gloria nor the Swiss-German couple French was their L1 or habitual language. On this occasion, the language practice of choosing one of the national languages as *lingua franca* was adopted in order to allow to everyone to understand the conversation and to fulfil the passenger attendants' essential priority of being understood.

As observed earlier, sometimes the priority of making themselves understood also requires passenger attendants to put aside their social image and performance of fluent and

successful speakers of some of the institutional languages in order to try to convey a message in a language that they may just have a minimal knowledge of, and all this has to be done without being deprived of their authority as responsible and efficient passenger attendants. This became clear shadowing Giuliana on the route between Zürich HB and Lugano. As already mentioned in section 5.1.2, the train where she had to work that day was attached to another train (“double composition”) and presented a problem with a blocked door between two coaches. For security reasons, it would have been impossible to go through the Gotthard basis tunnel without being able to open that door. Due to this situation, Giuliana had to walk through “her” train to inform all the passengers about the problem and to make sure that they all understood that they needed to move to the other train, at the front of the composition. She spoke -Swiss- German, Italian and French with the majority of the passengers, but on a few occasions she had to try a few words of Spanish and English to convey the message, two languages of which she has just an extremely basic knowledge. She succeeded to move everyone to the front train combining the knowledge she has of these languages and resorting to code-switching and receptive multilingualism. At the end of the -rather stressful- operation, she exclaimed “ok, ora ho finito di fare figuracce” (“Ok, now I am done making a fool of myself”). This comment suggests that she felt rather self-conscious and uncomfortable in producing the important explanation in languages that she is not proficient in. Nevertheless, after this comment she smiled and underlined that it is all part of the job and that she feels satisfied and proud every time that she succeeds in accomplishing her duties by means of her truncated multilingual repertoire. As she said, the important thing is to successfully convey the information despite the difficulties presented by her uneven knowledge of the different languages.

5.3.6 “On est en Suisse, quoi!” [“We are in Switzerland, right?!”]: Passenger Attendants as Proud Multilingual Workers and as Ambassadors of the Confederate Discourse

The general sense of pride connected to the ability of carrying out the passenger attendant’s job resorting to multilingual skills was shared by all the participants in this study. They all demonstrated enjoyment and satisfaction in being able to adapt to the different clients’ languages in order to be at their service in the most efficient way possible. From this perspective, the intersection between discourses of pride and profit suggested by Duchêne and Heller (2012) applies to these passenger attendants, for whom multilingualism seems to be a source of personal pride and is for sure a source of economic profit. The fact that the participation in this sociolinguistic study on multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS was based on self-selection -since it was on a voluntary basis- is already an evidence of the participants’ conviction of having something interesting and valuable to share in relation to the topic. Moreover, during the participant observations, the passenger attendants that I was shadowing -and their colleagues whom we encountered during our journeys- demonstrated a great interest in the topic of my study and were all very keen on telling me about their experiences with multilingual communication at work and about all the sometimes “non-European” languages they could speak.

Sébastien represents a perfect example of this pride in defining himself as a valuable worker having a multilingual profile. First and foremost, in the form through which participants could signal their willingness to participate to the study Sébastien mentioned that he had some knowledge of a South Asian language⁴. Moreover, during the shadowing I noticed that on the nameplate pinned on the jacket of his uniform he had added his name written in that language with a pen. One of his close relatives is in fact South Asian and he has been learning this relative’s language for a while now. He demonstrated to be extremely proud of his little

⁴ The language is not specified in order to guarantee the anonymity of the participant.

knowledge of this language by saying quite a few sentences in it to me and by explaining that he added his name written in it on his nameplate so that if he happens to encounter tourists from that country on an SBB CFF FFS train they know that he could -at least try to- help them in their language.

During the participant observation, Sébastien also expressed a general pride in the passenger attendants' Swiss multilingualism -composed by the three official languages of the country- by mentioning the Oertli prize they had recently won. The image below (figure 27), taken from the page dedicated to the transport services in the online version of the Canton of Vaud's newspaper "24heures", shows the title announcing the awarding of the prize to the SBB CFF FFS passenger attendants referred to by Sébastien.

Le personnel des CFF récompensé pour son plurilinguisme

La capacité des assistants clientèles des CFF à s'exprimer en plusieurs langues a été saluée par un prix d'une valeur de 30'000 francs, décerné vendredi par la Fondation Oertli.

Figure 27: Title of the 24heures newspaper of the 6th of November 2020 announcing that the Oertli prize has been awarded to the SBB CFF FFS passenger attendants for their multilingualism

The SBB CFF FFS personnel rewarded for their multilingualism

The ability of SBB CFF FFS passenger assistants to express themselves in several languages was recognised with a prize of 30,000 Swiss francs, awarded on Friday by the Oertli Foundation.

(My translation)

As a contextualising note, the Oertli prize is awarded by the Oertli Foundation as a sign of recognition to the promoters -both individuals and institutions- of the cohesion between the different linguistic regions of Switzerland. By telling me about the reception of this prize, Sébastien underlined his pride in being a multilingual passenger attendant able to speak more than one national language, and as such as being recognised and valued for his contribution to reinforce the unity between the Swiss linguistic regions and therefore to affirm the Swiss national identity. This pride in participating to the country's cohesion through the use of the national languages expressed by Sébastien and discussed in this subsection on the consideration of passenger attendants as proud multilingual workers is linked to the consideration of passenger attendants as ambassadors of the "confederate discourse" (Stotz 2006).

When confronted with the question about their use of English with passengers, all the participants in this study answered that they use it only with foreign passengers who cannot speak any of the Swiss national languages. Some of them elaborated on this quite emphatically, underlining that with passengers who can speak the Swiss national languages they always try to use these latter. Gloria for example, explained to me that she believes that using English with Swiss passengers would be a pity ("sarebbe un peccato!"), as in her mind this represents an impoverishment of the linguistic richness that characterises Switzerland. Similarly, Sébastien's colleague, Marie, warmly argued that precisely because the SBB CFF FFS operate in Switzerland -a multilingual country- the national languages should be used instead of English to communicate with the different passengers. Exclaiming "On est en Suisse, quoi!" ("We are in Switzerland, right?!") and underlining "On a la chance de vivre dans un pays qui a trois langues nationales, il faut les utiliser!" ("We have the chance of living in a country with three national languages, they should be used!"), she seemed to advocate for the confederate discourse and for the use of the national languages as *linguae francae* instead of immediately recurring to global English. In her eyes too, resorting to English "too easily" at SBB CFF FFS

comes at the expense of the Swiss identity of the company and -more in general- to the richness of the Swiss multilingual national identity.

This idea of linguistic impoverishment related to the use of English Lingua Franca in Switzerland is analysed by Stotz (2006: 252), who recognises it as one of the main elements of the confederate discourse. For this reason, the passenger attendants who participated in this study and all those who share the same convictions -who according to the participants in this study are the majority- can be defined as ambassadors of the confederate discourse, as they actively and simultaneously promote both the use of the Swiss national languages and the linguistic richness that characterises Switzerland and the SBB CFF FFS.

But passenger attendants who adhere to this view do not seem to be the only ambassadors of this ideology related to the use of the Swiss national languages. Certain SBB CFF FFS customers reportedly appear to share the same beliefs. In fact, both Gloria and Marie mentioned that they happened to notice that many Swiss passengers do not like at all when they are addressed in English, and that they seem to consider it as arrogant and almost as an offence. Gloria reported this observation while commenting on the fact that she has the impression that some passenger attendants -normally the new recruits- do not attain the required level of linguistic proficiency in the national languages and that therefore sometimes they speak English with Swiss passengers. The rather negative reactions of passengers to this attitude are most likely connected to questions of national and regional identity and pride. As Del Percio and Duchêne (2012: 46) underline, language is a marker of community and national identity, and being spoken in a foreign language in a given country by the employees of the *national* railway company can be perceived as a failure to embody and legitimise a national and local identity and therefore can easily be understood as an action triggering indignation by the locals. It is even arguable that some SBB CFF FFS Swiss customers perceive this use of English as a threat to the national languages and their traditional and identity values, as well as to their

Swiss' self-esteem and cultural identity (Mair 2002, as quoted in Ronan 2016: 17). Having noticed these customers' reactions, Gloria and Marie claimed to be even more convinced of the importance of privileging the Swiss national languages, which reinforces their position as ambassadors of Stotz's (2006) confederate discourse.

6 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the management of the institutional multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS and more specifically, to unveil the ideologies and hierarchies of language behind it and to understand the role of multilingualism in the construction of the Swiss company's brand. Moreover, the thesis has revealed which ideologies, role and status are associated with English within the iconic Swiss railway company. This mémoire project is firmly anchored in the present late capitalist context in Switzerland and provides a unique contribution to sociolinguistics by focusing on a largely unexplored setting, i.e. that of public transportation.

As far as the hierarchies of the SBB CFF FFS institutional languages on a national and a regional scale are concerned, the exploration of linguistic landscapes and institutional documents has revealed that they are coherent with the demographic importance of the national languages -where German is the majority language, followed by French and then by Italian- and with the territoriality principle, which privileges the local language in an officially monolingual territory. German clearly emerged as the predominant language within the company, and even on a regional scale, as its importance as second language, after the local language, is highly remarkable. This predominance of German can generate patterns of exclusion among passengers and employees, since those who do not master this language sometimes do not have access to good-quality information related to the SBB CFF FFS. In relation to the linguistic landscapes in particular, it seems that the reasons behind the

privileging of the official language and German (when it is not the local language) on multilingual signs is related to matters of security, as it heightens the successful reception of particular signs, and of identity, as it marks each territory as belonging to a certain linguistic group. The study has also reported the existence of a “Swiss Railway Language”, a professional railway jargon typical of the Swiss railway system that exists in the three Swiss official languages. Hence, it is possible to talk about Swiss “railway German”, “railway French” and “railway Italian” that distinguish this company as authentically Swiss in contrast to Deutsche Bahn (DB), Österreichische Bundesbahnen (ÖBB), Société nationale des chemins de fer français (SNCF) and Trenitalia.

The language ideologies behind the management of the SBB CFF FFS institutional multilingualism that have emerged from this study mainly contribute to the branding of the company. On the one hand, multilingualism is ideologically and discursively constructed by the SBB CFF FFS language policies as an instrument to efficiently and politely welcome their imagined clientele, namely Swiss monolinguals in one of the national languages and foreigners proficient in English as a *lingua franca*. The idealised institutional multilingualism is thus associated to what has been called a “welcoming strategy”, because it ideally provides a pleasurable customer experience, making clients feel at ease, recognised and accepted in their -limited and ideologically constructed- linguistic identity. On the other hand, (Swiss) multilingualism is mobilised by the SBB CFF FFS to construct their institutional identity on the basis of its indexing “Swissness”. Swiss multilingualism is in fact ideologically regarded as a marker of Swiss national identity and authenticity. By appropriating this national symbol, as for example in its multilingual logo, the SBB CFF FFS apparently seek to be endowed with the symbolic values associated with Switzerland, namely efficiency, punctuality, modernity, innovation, exclusivity and cultural diversity.

As far as English is concerned, it has an important role within the company as the SBB CFF FFS adopt it as one of their institutional languages on the basis of the ideology that regards it as global language used with non-Swiss. From this perspective, English is used as a marketing language to give fashionable and catchy names to the company's travel offers and products and to render the SBB CFF FFS a competitive institution on the global market. In addition, it is also seen as the language to communicate with their foreign clientele, which is consequently constructed as speaking ELF, which is not necessarily the case. The SBB CFF FFS employees who use English the most are those in direct contact with foreign travellers, namely the customer consultants at the station counters and the passenger attendants.

According to these top-down language ideologies, the passenger attendants who participated in this study affirmed that they only use English with foreigners, whilst with Swiss passengers they always try to communicate in one of the national languages, as they believe that Swiss multilingualism -composed by the Swiss official languages- is a national symbolic richness that has to be preserved and promoted. By acting as proud ambassadors of the "confederate discourse" that advocates for privileging the national languages over global English, the passenger attendants are the institutional representatives of the SBB CFF FFS that embody the Swiss national identity. As "the face and voice of SBB CFF FFS", they help to construct a Swiss "face" for the company by using a Swiss "voice", which speaks the national languages. In this light, finally, these Swiss faces and Swiss voices of SBB CFF FFS really make the difference, by making the SBB CFF FFS not only a national railway company, but the *Swiss* national railway company.

The main limitations that I encountered in this study are linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and to my basic knowledge of German. The reduced presence of foreign passengers due to Covid-19 has limited the observations of the participants' use of English. It would have been

interesting to witness more instances of interactions in English between passenger attendants and passengers in order to better understand the bottom-up language practices and ideologies related to this language. Moreover, due to my limited German skills, and the lack of access to German-speaking “dépôts” during my fieldwork, participant observations were only conducted with passenger attendants from Romandie and Ticino, and not with those based in the Swiss German regions.

Based on these limitations, future directions for possible research could be to investigate the role of ELF with foreign tourists on trains after the Covid-19 pandemic and to conduct a similar study of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS in the German-speaking territory of Switzerland, considering the diglossia that characterises that language area. A further research direction could be to study the management of multilingualism in the trilingual canton of the Graubünden, taking the Rhätische Bahn (RhB) as institutional window as it operates the majority of the railway lines in this canton. Finally, future research could further investigate this interesting railway environment from a diachronic perspective to explore the evolution of language policies and of the role of ELF in particular. These possible directions for future studies metaphorically represent the next stations of this research journey. Who knows? Maybe the voices announcing “Nächster Halt”, “Prochain arrêt”, “Prossima fermata” and “Next stop” will be those of passenger-attendant potato Froidevaux’s successors.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation Grid for Participant Observations

RO:

- Which are the language ideologies and hierarchies behind the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS?
- How is language used by SBB CFF FFS in the construction of a brand as a Swiss company?
- What is the role and the status of English in the SBB CFF FFS? (When is it used, by/with whom and for which purposes?)

Observations Grid

- Immersion in the observation, become involved
- It's a network! SBB CFF FFS: company connecting the linguistic regions and its people.

General elements to observe

- Trajectory covered
- Place (nearest stations? Canton? Linguistic region?)
- How many participants

- Most frequently spoken languages → changes during the route, where (crossing boundaries between linguistic regions)
- Languages spoken during the shift → cues for language choice (greetings, language negotiation)
- English: ELF? With tourists? With Swiss?
- Code switching, receptive multilingualism, ELF
- Impressions on the feelings of the participants while using different languages

- Internal (between staff) vs external communication (with passengers) communication
- Public (announcements) vs private (with customers) communication

- Use of digital devices during the exchange
- Object based exchanges (tickets, information on the app, ...): how do they influence the interaction?
- Written material for announces?
- Power relations (internal and external)
- How many people involved in the exchange?
- Recurrent topics
- Solving problems on the train: language? Who intervenes?
- Persona created by participants

Appendix 2: Information Sheets (Italian, French, English)⁵

Information Sheet: Italian



Foglio informativo

Progetto di ricerca:

“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution”

(“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: Uno studio sociolinguistico sul multilinguismo per il “branding” di un’istituzione svizzera”)

Responsabili

Ricercatrice : Chiara Ceppi, Department of English, Université de Lausanne
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Supervisor: Dr. Maria Rosa Garrido Sardà, Maître Assistante, Department of English, Université de Lausanne
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Questa ricerca servirà a completare una tesi di Master necessaria per ottenere la laurea *Maitrise universitaire ès Lettres, anglais* all’Università di Losanna.

Descrizione e obiettivi della ricerca

In Svizzera il plurilinguismo ufficiale è una delle caratteristiche nazionali utilizzate per la promozione economica del Paese, anche se le lingue nazionali sono inegualmente percepite e rappresentate sul territorio svizzero. In qualità di istituzione nazionale, le Ferrovie Federali Svizzere (SBB CFF FFS) utilizzano il tedesco, il francese, l’italiano e l’inglese come lingue della compagnia. Questo progetto vuole esplorare le pratiche e le idee riguardanti la gestione del plurilinguismo da parte delle SBB CFF FFS. La gestione del plurilinguismo è uno degli aspetti importanti della creazione dell’identità delle SBB CFF FFS in quanto istituzione nazionale. L’obiettivo è quello di cogliere le prassi legate alle lingue ufficiali svizzere e dell’inglese in quanto lingua franca da parte dell’iconica compagnia nell’attuale contesto economico. Questo studio ha una durata stimata di 5 mesi (dicembre-aprile 2020).

Le domande di ricerca a cui questo studio cerca di rispondere sono le seguenti:

- Come viene recepito e gestito il plurilinguismo dalle SBB CFF FFS? Quali lingue sono più importanti e perché?
- Come viene utilizzata la lingua dalle SBB CFF FFS nella costruzione di un marchio rappresentativo di un’istituzione svizzera?

⁵ All information sheets were approved by the Commission d’éthique de la recherche of the University of Lausanne on the 9th of December 2020.



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- Quali sono le percezioni, l'uso e lo stato dell'inglese nelle SBB CFF FFS? Quando viene utilizzato, da chi, con chi e per quali scopi?

Svolgimento

Per la realizzazione di questo studio, la ricercatrice utilizzerà una metodologia qualitativa che richiede la raccolta di diversi tipi di dati che potrebbero includere:

- Osservazioni dei partecipanti (capitreno) durante i loro turni di lavoro sui treni a lunga percorrenza.
- Interviste semi-strutturate e/o gruppi di discussione audio-registrati con una selezione di partecipanti.
- Documenti istituzionali prodotti dalle SBB CFF FFS quali ad esempio pagine web, opuscoli, offerte di lavoro, annunci, ecc..
- Fotografie di segnaletica situate nelle principali stazioni SBB CFF FFS delle quattro regioni linguistiche della Svizzera: Ginevra, Losanna, Zurigo, Lucerna, Bellinzona, Lugano, Coira.

Impegno etico

La partecipazione a questo progetto di ricerca è interamente volontaria. Siete liberi di rifiutare di partecipare alla ricerca in qualsiasi momento o di non rispondere a tutte le domande. La vostra partecipazione non avrà alcuna conseguenza negativa su di voi. In quanto ricercatrice, mi impegno a mantenere l'anonimato dei partecipanti durante tutte le fasi di questa ricerca, compresa la pubblicazione finale, la conservazione della mia tesi di Master e delle pubblicazioni di ricerca derivate. I dati raccolti saranno conservati e trattati in modo riservato e saranno utilizzati esclusivamente per scopi accademici. La ricercatrice chiederà il consenso informato dei partecipanti prima della registrazione audio delle interviste e dei gruppi di discussione.

Chiunque desideri ulteriori informazioni sullo studio può contattarmi in qualunque momento (vedi dettagli sopra elencati).

Desidero esprimere la mia gratitudine a tutti coloro che parteciperanno al progetto, contribuendo così al suo successo. Grazie di cuore!

Information Sheet: French



Feuille d'information

Projet de recherche :

“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution”

(“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: Une étude sociolinguistique du multilinguisme pour l’image de marque d’une institution Suisse”)

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Cette recherche sera utilisée pour réaliser un mémoire de Master nécessaire à l'obtention de la *Maîtrise universitaire ès Lettres, Anglais* à l'Université de Lausanne.

Description

En Suisse, le multilinguisme officiel est l'une des caractéristiques nationales utilisées pour la promotion économique du pays, même si les langues nationales sont inégalement conçues par la population suisse et inégalement représentées démographiquement sur le territoire du pays. En tant qu'institution nationale, les Chemins de Fer Fédéraux suisses (SBB CFF FFS) utilisent l'allemand, le français, l'italien et l'anglais comme langues de l'entreprise. Ce projet de recherche explore les pratiques linguistiques et les idées sur les différentes langues qui sous-tendent la gestion du multilinguisme pour l'image de marque des SBB CFF FFS en tant qu'institution suisse. L'objectif est de saisir les idées et les usages économiques, culturels et symboliques des langues officielles suisses et de la lingua franca anglaise tels qu'ils sont construits par l'entreprise emblématique suisse dans le contexte capitaliste tardif actuel. Cette étude a une durée estimée à 5 mois (décembre-avril 2020).

Les questions de recherche auxquelles cette étude cherche à répondre sont les suivantes :

- Comment le multilinguisme est-il conçu et géré au sein des SBB CFF FFS? Quelles sont les langues les plus importantes et pourquoi?
- Comment la langue est-elle utilisée par les SBB CFF FFS dans la construction d'une marque en tant qu'entreprise suisse?
- Quelles sont les perceptions, l'usage et le statut de l'anglais dans les SBB CFF FFS? Quand est-il utilisé, par/avec qui et à quelles fins?

Mise en œuvre

Pour répondre à ces questions, la recherche s'appuie sur une méthodologie qualitative qui vise à recueillir les données suivantes:



- Des observations des chef-fe-s de train pendant leur travail dans les trains qui parcourent des trajets à travers les différentes régions linguistiques.
- Des entretiens semi-structurés et/ou des groupes de discussion enregistrés sur support audio avec une sélection de chef-fe-s de train.
- Des documents institutionnels produits par les SBB CFF FFS tels que les pages web, les dépliants, les offres d'emploi, les annonces, etc..
- Images des panneaux situés dans les principales gares des SBB CFF FFS des quatre régions linguistiques de Suisse, à savoir Genève, Lausanne, Zurich, Lucerne, Bellinzona, Lugano, Coire.

Engagement éthique

La participation à ce projet de recherche est entièrement volontaire. Vous êtes libre de refuser de participer à ce projet à tout moment, ou de répondre à toute question. Votre participation n'aura aucune conséquence négative sur vous. Je m'engage à préserver l'anonymat des participant-e-s pendant toutes les phases de cette recherche, y compris la publication finale et la préservation de mon mémoire de Master ainsi que des publications de recherche dérivées. Les données collectées seront stockées et traitées de manière confidentielle et seront utilisées exclusivement à des fins universitaires. La chercheuse demandera le consentement informé de la part des participant-e-s avant d'enregistrer les entretiens et les groupes de discussion. Les participants qui souhaitent obtenir de plus amples informations sur l'étude peuvent contacter Chiara Ceppi (voir détails ci-dessus).

Je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude à tous ceux qui participeront au projet et contribueront ainsi à son succès. Merci à tous!

Information Sheet: English



Information Sheet

Research project:

“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution”

Affiliation

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This research will be used to complete a Master thesis required to obtain the *Maîtrise universitaire ès Lettres, Anglais* degree at the University of Lausanne.

Description

In Switzerland, official multilingualism is one of the national features used for the economic promotion of the country, even if the national languages are unequally conceived by the Swiss population and unequally demographically represented across the Swiss territory. As a nationwide hallmark institution, the Swiss national railway services (SBB CFF FFS) employ German, French, Italian and English as languages of the company. This research project explores the language practices and the ideas about different language varieties behind the management of multilingualism for the branding of the SBB CFF FFS as a Swiss institution. The aim is to grasp the economic, cultural and symbolic uses of the Swiss official languages and of English lingua franca as they are constructed by the Swiss iconic company in the current late capitalist context. This study has an estimated duration of 5 months (December-April 2020).

The research questions that this study seeks to answer are the following:

- How is multilingualism conceived and managed at SBB CFF FFS? Which languages are more important and why?
- How is language used by SBB CFF FFS in the construction of a brand as a Swiss company?
- What are the perceptions, the usage and the status of English in the SBB CFF FFS? When is it used, by/with whom and for which purposes?

Implementation

For the implementation of this study, the researcher will use a qualitative methodology that requires collecting different types of data which might include:

- Participant observations by shadowing passenger attendants during their work shifts on long distance trains.
- Audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups with a selection of passenger attendants.



- Institutional documents produced by the SBB CFF FFS (e.g. webpages, leaflets, job descriptions, advertisements, etc.).
- Pictures of signs located in the main SBB CFF FFS stations of the four linguistic regions of Switzerland, i.e. Genève, Lausanne, Zürich, Luzern, Bellinzona, Lugano, Chur.

Ethical commitment

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in this project at any time, or to answer any question. Your participation will not have any negative consequences on you. I commit to preserving the anonymity of the participants during all the phases of this research, including the final publication and preservation of my Master thesis as well as derived research publications. Collected data will be stored and treated in a confidential way and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. The researcher will ask for informed consent from participants before audio recording interviews and focus groups. Participants who require further information about the study can contact Chiara Ceppi (see details above).

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who will participate in the project, as such contributing to its success. Thank you!

Appendix 3: Consent Forms for Participant Observations (Italian, French, English)⁶

Consent Form: Italian



Dichiarazione di consenso

Progetto di ricerca: “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: uno studio sociolinguistico sul plurilinguismo per il “*branding*” di un’istituzione svizzera.”

Riguardante: osservazioni dei partecipanti in situ.

Cognome, nome:

Luogo, data:

Con la presente dichiaro di essere stata/o informato sull’obiettivo del progetto di ricerca “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: uno studio sociolinguistico sul plurilinguismo per il “*branding*” di un’istituzione svizzera” (“The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution”) per via scritta (ad es. foglio informativo).

Sono d’accordo che la situazione sopra descritta possa verificarsi e che gli appunti generati dall’evento osservato possano essere utilizzati nell’ambito del progetto. Sono inoltre d’accordo che le osservazioni e i relativi appunti possano essere utilizzati per la divulgazione della ricerca, ad esempio in pubblicazioni e presentazioni. Ho ricevuto l’assicurazione che le osservazioni e le relative note saranno utilizzate esclusivamente per scopi accademici, ovvero per la tesi di laurea magistrale della ricercatrice principale e le pubblicazioni derivate.

Inoltre, ho ricevuto l’assicurazione che tutte le informazioni che potrebbero identificare me stessa/o o altre persone menzionate o che partecipano alla situazione osservata saranno rese anonime grazie all’uso di pseudonimi, gruppi d’età (e.g. 20-30), origini generalizzate (e.g. “romanda/o” invece di “ginevrina/o”, nonché evitando di menzionare il “dépôt” al quale le/i partecipanti sono affiliate/i).

Prendo atto di poter richiedere la distruzione dei dati che mi riguardano durante le fasi di raccolta e analisi dei dati. Capisco che una volta che il progetto completato è stato consegnato alla Facoltà di Lettere dell’Università di Losanna posso ancora richiedere la distruzione dei dati che mi riguardano, ma alcuni estratti di essi potrebbero già far parte del progetto in questione.

Sono consapevole che la mia partecipazione è volontaria e che posso ritirarmi dallo studio in qualsiasi momento, senza dover dare una motivazione.

Firma del ricercatore:

.....

Firma del partecipante:

.....

⁶ All consent forms were approved by the Commission d’éthique de la recherche of the University of Lausanne on the 9th of December 2020.

Consent Form: French



Déclaration de consentement

Projet de recherche : « The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS : une étude sociolinguistique du plurilinguisme pour l'image de marque d'une institution suisse. »

Concernant : observations des participants in situ.

Nom, prénom :

Lieu, date :

Je déclare avoir été informé-e de l'objectif du projet de recherche "The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: une étude sociolinguistique du plurilinguisme pour l'image de marque d'une institution suisse" par des moyens écrits (p. ex. fiche d'information).

J'accepte que la situation décrite ci-dessus puisse avoir lieu et que les notes générées par l'événement observé puissent être utilisées dans le cadre du projet. J'accepte en outre que certains aspects des observations puissent être utilisés pour la diffusion de la recherche, par exemple dans des publications et des présentations. J'ai reçu l'assurance que les observations et les notes seront utilisées exclusivement à des fins universitaires, à savoir le mémoire de la chercheuse principale et les publications dérivées.

En outre, j'ai reçu l'assurance que toutes les informations permettant de m'identifier ou d'identifier d'autres personnes mentionnées ou participant à la situation observée seront rendues anonymes grâce à l'usage de pseudonymes, groupes d'âge (e.g. 20-30), origines généralisées (e.g. "romand" au lieu de "genevois") et en évitant de spécifier les dépôts auxquels les participant-e-s sont affilié-e-s.

Je comprends que je peux demander la destruction des données me concernant pendant les phases de collecte et d'analyse des données. Une fois que le projet a été soumis à la Faculté de Lettres de l'Université de Lausanne, la destruction des données me concernant demeura encore possible, mais certains extraits de ces données (anonymisées) peuvent déjà faire partie du projet susmentionné.

Je comprends que ma participation est volontaire et que je peux me retirer de l'étude à tout moment, sans donner de raison.

Signature du chercheur :
.....

Signature du participant :
.....

Consent Form: English



Declaration of consent

Research project: “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution.”

Regarding: observations of participants in situ.

Last name, first name:

Place, date:

I hereby declare that I have been informed on the goal of the research project “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution” by written means (e.g. information sheet).

I agree that the above-named situation may take place, and that the fieldnotes generated by the observed event can be used within the scope of the project. I further agree that aspects of the observations may be used for research dissemination, e.g. in publications and presentations. I received assurance that the observations and the relative notes will be used exclusively for academic purposes, namely, the main researcher’s MA thesis and derived publications.

Further, I received assurance that all information that could identify myself or other people mentioned or participating in the observed situation will be made anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, age groups (e.g. 20-30), general origins (e.g. “romand” instead of “genevois”) and by not identifying the “dépôts” to which participants are affiliated.

I understand that I can ask for data concerning myself to be destroyed during the phases of data collection and analysis. I understand that once the completed project is submitted to the Faculty of Art of the University of Lausanne I can still ask for the destruction of data concerning myself, but some excerpts of it may already be part of the above-mentioned project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

Researcher’s signature:

.....

Participant’s signature:

.....

Appendix 4: Consent Forms for Interview (French, English)⁷

Consent Form: French



Déclaration de consentement

Projet de recherche : « The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: Une étude sociolinguistique du plurilinguisme pour l'image de marque d'une institution Suisse. »

Concernant : entretiens en ligne enregistrés sur support audio.

Nom, prénom :

Lieu, date :

Je déclare avoir été informé-e de l'objectif du projet de recherche "The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS : une étude sociolinguistique du plurilinguisme pour l'image de marque d'une institution suisse" par des moyens écrits (p. ex. feuille d'information).

J'accepte que la situation susmentionnée soit enregistrée, transcrite et utilisée dans le cadre du projet. J'accepte en outre que des extraits de l'enregistrement et/ou de la transcription correspondante soient utilisés pour la diffusion de la recherche, par exemple dans des publications et des présentations. J'ai reçu l'assurance que les enregistrements audio et les transcriptions correspondantes seront utilisés exclusivement à des fins universitaires, à savoir le mémoire de la chercheuse principale et les publications dérivées.

En outre, j'ai reçu l'assurance que toutes les informations permettant de m'identifier ou d'identifier d'autres personnes mentionnées ou participant à la situation enregistrée seront rendues anonymes grâce à l'usage de pseudonymes, groupes d'âge (e.g. 20-30), origines généralisées (e.g. "romand" au lieu de "genevois") et en évitant de spécifier les dépôts auxquels les participant-e-s sont affilié-e-s.

Je comprends que je peux demander la destruction des données me concernant pendant les phases de collecte et d'analyse des données. Une fois que le projet a été soumis à la Faculté de Lettres de l'Université de Lausanne, la destruction des données me concernant demeura encore possible, mais certains extraits de ces données (anonymisées) peuvent déjà faire partie du projet susmentionné.

Je comprends que ma participation est volontaire et que je peux me retirer de l'étude à tout moment, sans donner de raison.

Signature de la chercheuse :

.....

Signature du participant :

.....

⁷ All consent forms were approved by the Commission d'éthique de la recherche of the University of Lausanne on the 9th of December 2020.

Consent Form: English



Declaration of consent

Research project: “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution.”

Regarding: online audio-recorded interviews.

Last name, first name:

Place, date:

I hereby declare that I have been informed on the goal of the research project “The Face and Voice of the SBB CFF FFS: A Sociolinguistic Study of Multilingualism for the Branding of a Swiss Institution” by written means (e.g. information sheet).

I agree that the above-named situation may be recorded, transcribed and used within the scope of the project. I further agree that excerpts of the recording and/or the corresponding transcription may be used for research dissemination, e.g. in publications and presentations. I received assurance that the audio-recordings and the corresponding transcriptions will be used exclusively for academic purposes, namely, the main researcher’s MA thesis and derived publications.

Further, I received assurance that all information that could identify myself or other people mentioned or participating in the recorded situation will be made anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, age groups (e.g. 20-30), general origins (e.g. “romand” instead of “genevois”) and by not identifying the “dépôts” to which participants are affiliated.

I understand that I can ask for data concerning myself to be destroyed during the phases of data collection and analysis. I understand that once the completed project is submitted to the Faculty of Art of the University of Lausanne I can still ask for the destruction of data concerning myself, but some excerpts of it may already be part of the above-mentioned project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

Researcher’s signature:

.....

Participant’s signature:

.....

Appendix 5: Interview Guidelines (French, English)

Interview Guidelines: French

RQ

- Comment le multilinguisme est-il conçu et géré au sein des SBB CFF FFS? Quelles sont les langues les plus importantes et pourquoi?
- Comment la langue est-elle utilisée par les SBB CFF FFS dans la construction d'une marque en tant qu'entreprise suisse?
- Quelles sont les perceptions, l'usage et le statut de l'anglais dans les SBB CFF FFS? Quand est-il utilisé, par/avec qui et à quelles fins?

Lignes directrices et thèmes – Interview

Introduction

- Bienvenu et remerciement
- Enregistrement audio: vérifier qu'il est d'accord, mentionner le formulaire de consentement et la possibilité d'arrêter l'enregistrement, d'effacer des parties de la discussion et des contributions par la suite, anonymisation
- Programme de la session : liste des sujets et temps alloué (30 min environ)
- Rappelez qu'il n'y a pas de bonnes ou mauvaises réponses, qu'il doit parler de sa propre expérience

Sujets et questions

Marque

1. Le logo de la société, SBB CFF FFS, signifie "Schweizerische Bundesbahnen, Chemin de Fer Fédéraux, Ferrovie Federali Svizzere".
 - Que signifie/représente ce logo pour vous et comment est-il lié à votre utilisation de la langue au travail ?
2. Au début de novembre 2020, les SBB CFF FFS ont reçu le prix Oertli pour leur plurilinguisme.
 - Dans quels aspects pensez-vous que le plurilinguisme au sein des SBB CFF FFS est si important ?
 - Que pensez-vous de l'utilisation du français, de l'italien et du romanche dans l'entreprise ?

Langues

3. Avec quelle fréquence et avec qui utilisez-vous l'allemand pendant votre travail et quel type d'allemand est-il? (Hoch Deutsch, Suisse allemand)
 - Que pensez-vous de l'utilisation de l'allemand dans l'entreprise ?
4. Utilisez-vous l'anglais au travail et si oui, avec quelle fréquence et dans quelle situation ?
 - Que pensez-vous de l'utilisation de l'anglais chez les SBB CFF FFS ?
 - Avez-vous une expérience/un anecdote particulière à partager ?
5. Que pensez-vous de la gestion du plurilinguisme globale des SBB CFF FFS ? Quels aspects conserveriez-vous et quels aspects changeriez-vous ou amélioreriez-vous ?

Numérisation et langues

6. Les SBB CFF FFS ont vécu un important processus de numérisation et sont désormais une entreprise hautement numérisée.
 - Pensez-vous que la numérisation de l'entreprise a changé/affecté d'une manière ou d'une autre votre utilisation des différentes langues au travail ?
 - Quelles sont vos propres expériences en matière de numérisation ?

Interview Guidelines: English

RO:

- Which are the language ideologies and hierarchies behind the management of multilingualism at SBB CFF FFS?
- How is language used by SBB CFF FFS in the construction of a brand as a Swiss company?
- What is the role and the status of English in the SBB CFF FFS? (When is it used, by/with whom and for which purposes?)

Interview guidelines

Introduction

- Welcome and thank for his presence and willingness to participate
- AUDIO-record session: double check that it is ok, mention consent form and possibility to stop recorder, to erase parts of discussion and contributions afterwards, anonymisation
- Program of the session: list of topics and time commitment (30 min ca.)
- Remind that there are no right or wrong answers, that he should speak from his own experience

Topics and questions

Brand

1. The company's logo, SBB CFF FFS, means "Schweizerische Bundesbahnen, Chemin de Fer Fédéraux, Ferrovie Federali Svizzere".
 - What does this logo mean/represent for you and how is it related to your use of language at work?
2. At the beginning of November 2020, the SBB CFF FFS received the Oertli prize for their multilingualism.
 - In what aspects do you think multilingualism in the SBB CFF FFS is so important?
 - What do you think about the use of French, Italian and Romansch in the company?

Languages

3. How often and with whom do you use German during your work and which variety is it? (Hoch Deutsch, Swiss German)
 - What do you think about the use of German in the company?
 - How do you feel about it?
4. Do you use English at work and if so, how often and in which situation?
 - What do you think about the use of English at SBB CFF FFS?
 - Do you have any particular experience/anecdote to share?
5. What do you think about the overall linguistic policy at SBB CFF FFS? What aspects would you keep and what aspects would you change or improve?

Digitalisation and languages

6. The SBB CFF FFS have undergone an important process of digitalisation and now are a highly digitalised company.
 - Do you feel that the digitalisation of the company has changed/affects in any way your use of the different languages at work?
 - What are your own experiences related to digitalisation?

Appendix 6: Methods of Data Collection, Details

Methods	Languages	(Main) Places	Total Duration	Total Number of Occurrences	Participants
Participant observations	French Italian English German	Ticino Romandie Swiss German region	54 hours	8	6
Fieldnotes during participant observations	French Italian English	Notebook Mobile Phone			
Interviews	French	Online	1 hour	1	1
Linguistic Landscapes	French Italian German English	Genève Lausanne Fribourg/Freiburg Zürich HB Luzern Bellinzona Lugano Chur	10 hours approximately (without counting the journeys to reach each setting)	Total number of pictures taken: 412	
Research of publicly available material on SBB CFF FFS	French Italian German English	Online	July 2020 - May 2021	Types of material collected: Job profiles Language policies Newspaper articles Advertising leaflets Online advertisements	

