

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 26 (1999)
Heft: 3

Vorwort: Editorial
Autor: Tschanz, Pierre-André

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 14.03.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

CONTENTS

Forum

How much English can Switzerland take? 4-7

Soliswiss-Info 8

Official News 9-11

Politics 12/13

Free movement of people 12/13

Votes 14-15

Federal referendums of 13 June 1999 14-15

Politics 16/17

Federal elections 1999 16/17

Mosaic 18/19

Politics 20

50 years of the Geneva Conventions 20

SSA News 22/23

Cover

English has long been present even in the sheltered world of the Swiss alps. But opinions differ widely on whether to regard the raising of English to the status of national language of communication as a sign of modern enlightenment or a blow to deep-rooted federalism. (Photomontage: SG Design / STRATES)

I M P R E S S U M

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 26th year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 355,000. Regional news appears four times a year.

Editors: Lukas M. Schneider (LS), Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad (Chairman); Alice Baumann (AB), Press Bureau Alice Baumann Conception, Berne; Pierre-André Tschanz (PAT), Swiss Radio International, Berne; Dario Ballanti (DB), parliamentary correspondent of Corriere del Ticino; Editor of Official News: Robert Nyffeler (NYF), Service for the Swiss Abroad, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, CH-3003 Berne. Translator: Nicolette Chisholm.

Publisher, Editorial Office, Advertising: Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16; Tel: +41 31 351 61 00, Fax: +41 31 351 61 50, Postal Cheque Account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Printed by: Buri Druck AG, CH-3084 Wabern. Change of address: Please advise your local Embassy or Consulate – do not write to Berne. Internet: <http://www.revue.ch>

No. 3/99 (9.7.1999)

« Sorry, but English is not the problem! Rather, it is the difficulty we have in embracing and cultivating diversity. Therein lies the rub; because diversity is the basis of our Swiss identity.

Admittedly the debate on English – whether it should be taught in school from the age of ten or even in kindergarten, and whether the first foreign language should be a national language or English – is important; but it must be viewed within a broader context that incorporates educational, instructional and linguistic aspects and addresses the issue of what we are and what we want to be.

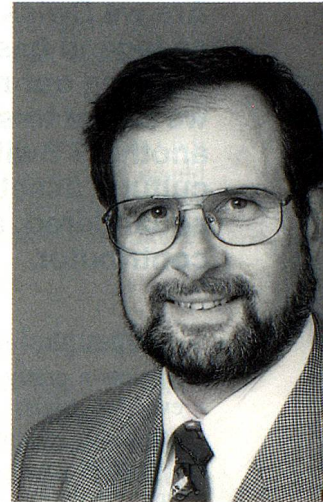
Some are of the opinion that English should be taught as early as possible because, as the dominant global language, it is essential in today's communications society. Others, however, fear that giving priority to English will have negative implications for our national languages. It is not a clear-cut matter, and I know lots of people who could argue for or against either faction. There is no escaping the fact that English is omnipresent. That being so, we have to live with it and integrate it; but not without trying our best to rectify the negative impact on our identity and our institutions.

Since the eighties much has been said about the Swiss malaise and the identity crisis of the Swiss nation. This inspired one contemporary to make the following pointed statement: "The Swiss get on so well with each other because they don't understand one another!" Communication or lack of communication is the key to the problem. Tired of promoting diversity, we have withdrawn into our own shells. The result is that, like an old married

couple who are so used to each other that they have nothing left to say, we are even beginning to wonder what is keeping us together. Have we forgotten that it is this very diversity that underpins our prosperity and that fostering such diversity is our trump card?

In terms of language we have other problems besides English – particularly with the Swiss-German dialects that are now more carefully cultivated than ever by our compatriots on the other side of the Saane. Once more it is not the dialects per se that pose the problem, but the fact that they act as an insulating barrier against High German. The culture of particularism is rife. Finally, everything that applies to English – an established language of communication that expands our horizons and allows us to understand each other – also applies to High German. When Swiss communicate, they do so in German (classical High German) or another national language. If the English language takes over, we would have nothing left to say to each other. And the aphorism would then become true: "The Swiss get on so well with each other because they don't understand each other!"

The debate on the English language is necessary. It acts as a stimulus, confronting us with our own problems and motivating us to overcome them. So let us uphold diversity rather than particularity!



PA Tschanz

Pierre-André Tschanz