Negotiating the boundaries and value of bilingual skills in a recruitment process at the language border

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Dans l'industrie du tourisme des destinations périphériques, on s'approprie souvent les langues/variétés locales comme une marque d'authenticité. Les langues (inter)nationales, quant à elles, servent d'instrument de communication avec les touristes. Cette appropriation économique des langues demande des compétences langagières spécifiques et une haute flexibilité linguistique de la part des employé.e.s du secteur du tourisme. La présente contribution traite de cette problématique dans la ville bilingue de Morat, située à la frontière linguistique franco-allemande en Suisse. Dans ce contexte, le rôle du "bilinguisme" en tant que critère de sélection pour l'accès au marché du travail dans le secteur touristique sera examiné dans une perspective sociolinguistique critique. L'enquête ethnographique d'un processus de recrutement montre que la définition du bilinguisme est régie par un ensemble d'idéologies langagières propres à l'économie politique locale des langues, c'est-à-dire la valorisation de certaines combinaisons de langues/variétés et de certaines conceptions de ce qu'est la compétence linguistique. Dans cet article, il s'agira de retracer comment la définition du bilinguisme est négociée tout au long d'un processus de recrutement et comment, de ce fait, les connaissances linguistiques des candidat.e.s peuvent être une variable pertinente, mais aussi d'une pertinence variable pour l'in- et l'exclusion de ce marché de travail spécifique.

Mots-clés:
bilinguisme, compétences bilingues, recrutement, employabilité, sélection, catégorisation des locuteurs/locutrices, tourisme.

Keywords:
bilingualism, bilingual skills, recruitment, employability, selection, categorization of speakers, tourism.

1. Introduction

Local languages and varieties have been shown to play a key role in the way the tourist experience is produced and consumed. Thereby, language has different but often intertwined functions: as a communication tool to reach wider or niche markets; as a feature of distinction; as an authenticity marker of (exotic) localness; and/or as a touristic experience (e.g. Salazar 2005, 2006; Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2011; Kelly-Holmes & Pietikäinen 2014; Muth 2017; Meyer Pitton 2018; Schedel 2018a, 2018b). This is also the case of the tourism destination Murten (in German; Morat in French), which presents itself as bilingual and situated at the intra-national French-(Swiss) German language border in the Canton of Fribourg in Switzerland. The 8,200 resident town is mostly Swiss German-speaking (around 83%) with a small French-speaking

minority (around 15%)[1], but the population usually has a more or less good command of the respective other language. Tourism plays a key economic role for Murten. The tourists coming to the small town also mainly speak (Swiss) German and French, and generally come from the surrounding Swiss regions on both sides of the linguistic divide, otherwise from Germany and France. However, also some international guests using English as a lingua franca can be found. In a global market, this tiny town has had to find ways to distinguish itself from other competing destinations. Therefore, it relies – amongst other things – on its linguistic particularities: The town's location at the language border and its supposedly resulting bilingualism are used for place and product branding and to attract tourists (Schedel 2018b). Whether in marketing material or in face-to-face contact, it is the responsibility of tourism workers to (re)present the bilingual destination in an attractive, linguistically authentic, yet comprehensible way and, if possible, in different languages for the linguistically heterogeneous national and international audience. But which languages are required for this task and at what level of competence? What ideas of bilingual skills circulate and define employability in the tourism context at the French-(Swiss) German language border in Switzerland?

The next section (2) will firstly deal with previous research on language-based work and the role of language skills for the entrance in multilingual job markets. I will then give further information (3) about the ethnographic research that I conducted in the tourism industry of the bilingual town of Murten and (4) about the research site in question, namely the local tourist office. Drawing on data from a recruitment process, the analytical section (5) will explore under what political-economic conditions and referring to which language ideologies "bilingualism" is defined. Therefore, I will analyse from a critical sociolinguistic perspective how the boundaries of this social category are drawn, blurred, or redefined during the process, thus attributing changing value to the linguistic repertoires of the candidates. In conclusion (6), I will discuss the consequences of these shifting boundaries in the category of "bilingualism" for the involved speakers.[2]

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[1]   http://www.murten-morat.ch/de/portrait/zahlenundfakten/zahlenfakten/ (accessed: 15.08.2018). For more detailed information about the sociolinguistic situation in Murten, see Schedel (2018a, 2018b).

[2]   Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the conference "Language Skills and Economic/ Social Inclusion" at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin (2017), at the VALS ASLA-Conference "The Process of differentiation: language practices in social interpretation" at the University of Geneva (2016), and at the international workshop "Linguistic Boundaries and Political Economy" at the University of Fribourg (2016). I thank colleagues and participants who have contributed to the discussion of these papers as well as the two anonymous reviewers and Liliane Meyer Pitton for their valuable feedback. I would also like to thank Jennifer Raab for proofreading this article. Any mistakes are my own responsibility. A more in-depth analysis with extended data of further boundary-(un)making in recruitment processes in the context of the tourism industry in Murten can be found in Chap. 5 in Schedel (2018b).

2. Literature review: Language skills and access to multilingual jobs

Globalization and enhanced mobility of workers and clients have blurred traditional boundaries and have contributed to increasingly multilingual and international working environments, resulting in new language needs and practices as well as the emergence of multilingualism as a market value (Coupland 2010; Blommaert & Rampton 2012; Angouri 2014). Scholars argue that "language work" (Boutet 2006)[3] or at least a linguistic part of work ("*la part langagière du travail*") (ibid. 2001: 23) is typical for the information- and communication-based service industry (see also Dlaske et al. 2016). This certainly applies to the tourism sector where language is central as both a mode of production and of consumption (Heller 2005; Heller et al. 2014b). Confronted with different-speaking audiences, touristic service providers undergo an increasing demand of linguistic flexibility. The tourism workers are supposed to reach clients in their "own" language (whatever type of linguistic variability that might refer to) or in a lingua franca (Hall-Lew 2014; Heller et al. 2014a).

In the (service) work context, different language(s) or communicative practices can become an economic resource and be commodified in a number of ways (Heller & Duchêne 2016; Canagarajah 2017). Sometimes monolingualism, the adoption of a lingua franca or a uniformed (standardized/scripted/trained) way of speaking are seen as essential for economic success (Cameron 2000; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013; Lorente 2017). Sometimes, it is the multilingual practices that appear to be a cost-efficient working tool for profit-making, because they allow the flexible adaption of services to fluid markets or to reach niche markets, and thus have a distinctive value (Duchêne 2009; Duchêne & Heller 2012a; Muth 2017). However, there are tensions between conceptualizing language(s), linguistic competencies, and their value in the workplace in terms of a technical and measurable communicative skill (Urciuoli 2008; Heller 2010) and/or as an "authentic possession of groups considered legitimate 'owners'" (Heller 2005: 1), or between what Duchêne & Heller (2012b) describe with the tropes "profit" and "pride".

Depending on the political-economic situation of the workplace context, different concepts of language skills and ensuing speaker categorizations can achieve different economic values and constitute gatekeeping-criteria for accessing the job market, a certain position, or a better remuneration, and for being acknowledged and getting valorized or de-valorized as speaker (DuBord 2010; Roberts 2013; Tranekjær 2015). While some multilingual workplaces require specific language skills, which are even rewarded by a higher salary (Piller & Takahashi 2013), others might require specific language skills as a condition for the access to a job, but do not valorize them (neither symbolically nor financially)

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[3]   The term "language work" figures in the English title of her Portuguese article on work in call centers.

(ibid.; Duchêne 2009). Besides this, some workplaces might not even ask for such skills, but exploit them anyway, thereby banalizing the multilingual competencies of their employees (Duchêne 2011).

With this background, the tourism industry in the bilingual town at the French-German language border provides an apt site for the investigation of what ideas of bilingual skills circulate while at the same time defining not only the employability of the involved speakers, but also how their linguistic diversity is appropriated, managed, regulated, hierarchized, and (de)valorized.

3. Methodology

3.1 Ethnographic approach and data

The data presented in this paper is part of a wider multi-sited and multi-perspective ethnographic (Marcus 1995, 1998) research project[4] that examined the appropriation of the language border and/or the local bilingual situation in the tourism industries at two sites in Switzerland, one of them the region of Murten in the canton of Fribourg. During two years (spring 2013 – spring 2015), I followed the tourism workers in their daily work life and documented their interactions among colleagues and with business partners as well as with tourists - mostly with audio-/video-records or field notes. I further conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews with employees of different touristic institutions, in different positions, and with different task areas. Moreover, I collected promotional material and accompanied the tourism workers to exhibition presentations at tourism trade fairs in Switzerland, Germany, and France or during visits of travel journalists. I also collected media reports (newspaper, radio, etc.) on touristic activities and events in the region.[5]

For the following analysis, I will focus on the data of my ethnographic fieldwork in Murten's tourist office, where I could follow the recruitment process for a new marketing assistant. My data consists of the job advertisements in French and German, of six recorded interviews with either one or both of the two recruiters (before and during the selection process), of audio recordings of the interactions between the recruiters and the candidates during the four job interviews as well as among the recruiters during the ensuing discussions. Furthermore, I am relying on different audio records and field notes of the daily work (e.g. reception of tourists) and of team meetings in the tourist office during the whole fieldwork period, which served as a background for my understanding of the linguistic

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5   For detailed information about the project, the research terrain, and the data production, see Chap. 3 in Schedel (2018b).

needs, the challenges, and the actual practices of the tourism workers in this specific office.

3.2 Analytical basis

This contribution views language(s), linguistic competencies, and bilingualism as social categories (Becker 2018: 30-40). Since these categories, i.e. the boundaries and differences between languages (and thus their speakers), are ideological in nature (Gal & Irvine 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000), I am drawing on the concept of language ideologies. Silverstein defines language ideologies as "any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979: 193). Accordingly, language ideologies are collectively shared assumptions about (the value of) languages or language practices linking them to assumptions about the social identity (and e.g. employability) of their speakers (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). This concept will serve as an analytical tool for the examination of the understandings of bilingualism and bilingual skills in this specific work context of the tourist office in the bilingual town of Murten at the language border. In the analysis, I will thus focus on moments within the recruitment process in which bilingual skills are defined or negotiated, and in which speakers are categorized and constructed as (in)eligible and (un)employable accordingly to those definitions.

4. Research field: The tourist office

Murten's tourist office is responsible for welcoming the visitors to the town and for promoting the site (inter)nationally. In direct client contact, by answering the phone or by email, the tourist office team tries to answer the questions of the tourists and provide them with information about the region and about possible touristic activities. This mainly requires a command of Swiss German, German, and French (cf. main public) and occasionally of English. The tourist office does not operate as an isolated entity, but functions within a network of service-providing partners (e.g. hotels) and superordinate regional and national tourism organizations. Because of its situation at the language border, the mainly (Swiss) German-speaking town has to reach out to French-speaking partners; e.g. it organizes its touristic promotion in collaboration with two mostly French-speaking tourism regions.

Furthermore, all information, be it on the tourist office's webpage, in a brochure or a press release, has to be provided in at least (standard) German and French, but often also in English. This results in a huge amount of translation work that the multilingual team is trying to deal with in-house: The employees usually speak French, (Swiss) German, English and to some extent also other languages. However, for the reason that "native"-like competencies are apparently required for translation tasks, every employee is categorized as being either German or French native speaker. This speaker categorization

follows an essentialist monolingual ideology according to which even a multilingual speaker can only be competent in one language, namely in his/her "native language" respectively "mother tongue".[6] Therefore, much attention is paid to have a balance of French- and German-speaking employees among the tourist office's staff. For the same reason, the office usually "outsources" its English translations, for example to their "native" English-speaking tour guides (working on mandate for the office).

During my fieldwork, the tourist office planned to enhance Murten's visibility through new marketing measures. This campaign presented an extra workload and required specific technical skills. Therefore, an additional post of a marketing staff member had been created.

5. Analysis of the recruitment process

In the following sections, I will retrace the recruitment process for this new marketing staff member and examine how the meaning and value of the linguistic (i.e. bilingual) skills of the candidates are defined, negotiated, and instrumentalized at the different stages of the process. I will particularly focus on how the boundaries of the category "bilingual" are shifted in ways more or less favorable for the candidates involved.

5.1 Imagining the ideal profile: First tensions

The tourist office published the job offer, as usual, in German and French. The development of a new touristic information concept and its realization were listed as the duties of the future employee as well as supporting the guest relation management and the touristic event management. To accomplish these tasks, relevant technical skills in the multimedia, graphic or communication domain were requested. A flexible person, eager to work, and if possible with some knowledge about the region and its touristic offer, was wanted. With regard to language skills, perfect oral and written German and French ("*Perfekte Beherrschung von Deutsch und Französisch in Wort und Schrift*" / "*Parfaite maitrise du français et de l'allemand (oral et écrit)*") was requested, and client (at least in the German version) as well as team related communicative skills ("*Kommunikative Fähigkeiten, kunden- und teamorientiert*" / "*Facilité à communiquer et à travailler en équipe*"). When I asked the director[7] of the tourist office about these required linguistic and communicative skills, he explained (switching between Standard German and French) that language was a principal selection criterion for the recruitment:[8]

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[6]   For a critique of the "native speaker"-concept and -ideology see e.g. Piller (2001).

[7]   As one of my anonymization strategies, I use the generic masculine to cite my research participants.

[8]   Please see transcription conventions in the appendix.

(1)   sprache ist ein basiskriterium. man muss mindestens ein dialog
           führen können ohne dass die andere person automatisch switcht. das
           ist für mich die minimale kenntnisse die man haben muss/ ich
           möchte nicht dass die gäste oder die partner sich zu uns an uns
           qu'ils doivent s'adapter à nous an uns anpassen sollen. aber das
           umgekehrte. wir sind ein tourismusbüro von mir aus sollen wir uns
           anpassen können an den gästen und partner. das ist die basis. on a
           huitante pourcent de visiteurs qui parlent allemand. vingt
           pourcent qui parlent français. mais au niveau des partenaires on a
           plus de partenaires qui parlent français que allemand. parce que
           tout ce qui est administratif fribourg région=on a quand même
           beaucoup de contact en français. donc on doit avoir un bilinguisme
           quasiment parfait.

Translation:
+language is a basic criterion. one must at least be able to have a conversation without making automatically the other person switch. for me this presents the minimal skills one should have/ i don't want that the guests or the partners have to us ((German)+ +have to adapt to us ((French))+, +to adapt to us. but the opposite. we are a tourist office. in my opinion it is our duty to adapt linguistically to guests and partners ((German))+. +eighty percent of the guests are german speaking. twenty percent speak french. but with regard to our partners we have more partners speaking french than german. that's why the whole administration in fribourg region is french=however we are a lot in contact with french. that's why one has to be nearly perfectly bilingual ((French))+.

The director emphasizes the importance of specific linguistic skills as a selection criterion and explains it through the necessity of linguistic accommodation to both clients and partners as one of the tourist office's guiding principle (the "basis"). He then defines his understanding of the necessary linguistic skills first in terms of functional oral skills, i.e. "being able to have a conversation" in either language. However, some seconds later, he reformulates the requirements as "nearly perfect" bilingualism. Both formulations differ however with regard to what has been officially requested in the job offer, where "perfect" oral and also written skills were stated. These three definitions based on different concepts of linguistic competence (e.g. oral and/or written) demonstrate that the boundaries of the category of bilingualism are not clearly demarcated. However, the (idealized) perfect skills in French and German, which are requested in the job offer, might discourage potential candidates in applying for the job and exclude them in a preliminary stage.

As an illustration, the director told me about the case of a former French-speaking employee who, in his eyes, was not bilingual enough. I had met the employee during my fieldwork and had had the opportunity to observe him while interacting with his team and with clients. He spoke standard German quite well, but struggled a lot to understand the Swiss German clients and partners. Even if he had no difficulties communicating with the team, his lack of receptive skills in the dialect was (apparently) considered as an obstacle for maximum efficiency since in some cases he had to ask his team for linguistic assistance while serving Swiss German-speaking clients. With this anecdote, the director again emphasized the relevance of bilingual skills in order to attain a maximum flexibility (and therefore efficiency) of the workforce. Notably, he also extends

the definition of "bilingual" by encompassing not only the standard varieties of French and German, but also Swiss German.

With this case in mind, it is interesting to note that skills in the local Swiss German dialect were not specifically requested in the job announcement. Only German was mentioned there. In Switzerland, however, speaking "German" often assumes skills in both varieties: standard German, mostly used in written and formal situations, as well as a Swiss German variety, mostly used in oral and informal situations. Furthermore, English was also not mentioned in the job advertisement. This is also puzzling as the tourist office's team usually uses English as lingua franca with international tourists, and client-related communicative skills were requested in the job offer. When I asked the director about the relevance of English skills for the recruitment, he replied (in French):

(2)   l'anglais ça a jamais été un problème. j'ai jamais eu la peine de
       trouver quelqu'un qui savait=parlait suffisamment bien l'anglais.
       mais c'est vrai c'est un critère aussi. mais j'ai jamais (.) sur
       un dossier euh eu l'impression tient c'est une bonne personne mais
       j'ai pas envie de la prendre parce qu'euh parce qu'il y a il
       manque l'anglais. par contre sur la sur le français et l'allemand
       ça m'est arrivé assez souvent de mettre les dossiers à côté, je
       regarde même pas, je trouve c'est à peu près la première chose que
       je regarde sur un dossier .h s'il est=bon il Y devait avoir des
       connaissances minimales, mais connaissances scolaires c'est
       souvent pas suffisant. donc il faut vraiment qu'il y a super
       dossier pour qu'on prenne quelqu'un.

   Translation:
   english has never been a problem. i've never had difficulties to find someone who
   knew=spoke english well enough. but it's true that's also a selection criterion. however
   i've never (.) had a candidature uhm and got the impression that's a good person but i
   don't want to engage him/her because of uhm because of a lack of english. nevertheless
   it occurred to me quite often with regard to french and german to sort out a candidature, i
   don't even have a look at it, i think that's more or less the first thing i check on a
   candidature .h if there's=well there should be minimal skills, but a school level is
   oftentimes not sufficient. so the candidature has really to be convincing that someone is
   taken anyway.

These statements reveal a lot about the existing hierarchy among (Swiss) German, French, and English as well as their weight as criteria in recruitment processes at the tourist office. While balanced or nearly native-like skills (not only on a school level) in (standard) German and French (somehow a parallel monolingualism) are described as an indispensable selection criterion and hence its lack as disqualifying, other language skills are not explicitly requested but implicitly assumed. This is the case for English and Swiss German. While functional skills in English are assumed as common knowledge, but also described as expendable, the case of the French-speaking employee struggling with Swiss German clearly demonstrates its importance for efficient customer service.

These tensions between the (albeit already differing) official discourses and the implicit assumptions regarding (un)desired, (dis)qualifying linguistic skills become even more complex in the next step of the recruitment process. When

it comes to the application phase, the imagined ideal profile of the "perfectly bilingual" worker meets certain realities of the labor market in terms of a limited availability of workers with the required skills, and in particular the required linguistic skills.

5.2   When the ideal profile meets the realities of the job market

In response to the job announcement, the tourist office received 55 applications. The management board, represented by the director of the tourist office and the president of the supporting association, invited five candidates to a job interview. One of them cancelled before the interviews started. In the end, I followed the job interviews with four young candidates in the estimated age between 20 and 35. All of them came from the region and/or knew it quite well. Some of the candidates already had some experience with marketing in the tourism sector; others were stronger regarding the required technical skills. However, none of them brought the whole package of the desired profile.

The job interviews were conducted in the first language of the respective candidate, but their knowledge in the other languages, e.g. French or (standard) German and English were verified with a couple of spontaneous questions they had to answer in these languages. For example, the interview with candidate (1) was conducted in Swiss German, and he had answered a few questions in French and English relatively fluently, asking one time for a missing word, but generally without any difficulty in expressing what he wanted to say. His standard German was not tested, but assumed on the basis of his categorization as Swiss German speaker. Written competencies were not tested either (although requested in the job offer), according to the common assumption that one also knows how to write a language that he/she is able to speak. In the following excerpt of the subsequent discussion of his job interview, the recruiters (the president (PR) of the sponsoring association of the tourist office and the director of the tourist office (DR)) are discussing (in Swiss German) the candidate's suitability for the advertised position, whereby they comment extensively on his "test performance" in French.

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(3)    PR: o d sprach ds französisch dänki isch zwenig versiert.
       DR: DAS nei isch guet
       PR: isch ehm (.) wie/
       DR: vo mir us isch ds guet. kum.
       PR: für ne kommunikations person/
       DR: ja
       PR: du hesch zersch e wäutsche wöle ((lacht))
       DR: JA ABER wennd ke mueter-=wener er nid muetersprach französisch
       isch spiuts jetz ke roue ober jetz super äh französisch redt oder
       ehm oder eifach haubpatzig super. aso für mi isch s minimale isch
       okay.
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Translation
PR: and the language, his french, i think it is not good enough.
DR: HIS FRENCH no, it's okay
PR: it's (.) pardon/
DR: from my point of view it's okay. come on.

> PR: for a communication specialist/
> DR: yeah
> PR: in the beginning you were looking for a frenchy[9] ((laughs))
> DR: YEAH BUT if he's not a native=if he's not a native french speaker it's not important, if he masters perfectly french or just a little. well, for me the minimal skills are okay.

While the president argues that the candidate's level of French would not correspond to the requested high level of "perfection" and that for this reason he would not match the demanded profile, the director explains that the level of the candidate's French skills was not that important, because he was no French "native speaker" anyway. In the monolingual ideology, only a French "native speaker" can really be competent in French. Candidate (1), who had grown up in the Swiss German-speaking part of Switzerland, had therefore been categorized as a Swiss German native speaker. Following this native speaker-logic, the director adapts the definition of the desired linguistic profile and reduces the demanded "perfect skills" to "minimal skills" in the respective other language, thereby contradicting the initially requested level in both languages. At the same time, the categorization as being either a German or a French native speaker becomes more important. Furthermore, a hidden agenda is unveiled; the desire for a French "native" speaker. The number of employees categorized as French and German speakers according to the essentialist logic mentioned in the previous section (4) was indeed unbalanced at the moment of the recruitment. Only one of the five employees was dominantly French-speaking, while the others were dominantly (Swiss) German-speaking. With regard to the translation work, another francophone was therefore most welcome. This need is also reflected in the shortlisting of a majority of dominantly French-speaking (3 out of 4) candidates. Despite the apparent multilingualism of the candidates, it appears that it is always their (seemingly) dominant language that will be used to categorize them. This categorization in either (Swiss) German or French native speaker demonstrates the prevailing ideology of languages (and therefore speakers) as clearly separable, bounded entities that can be mapped in space. With regard to these beliefs, it is however curious that the perfect command of both languages was requested in the job offer – a competence, which according to the monolingual ideology should actually not exist. The fact that not only dominant French speakers were invited to the job interview, but also a dominant (Swiss) German speaker, demonstrates that linguistic categorizations/skills may become of variable importance compared to other criteria such as professional experience.

5.3 Legitimizing the final choice by readjusting the profile

Candidate (1) withdrew his application after the job interview and candidate (2) could not convince the management board, so that the decision had to be taken between the remaining candidates (3 and 4), whose interviews had been

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[9]   In the original, the president is using the ethnicizing Swiss German term "wäutsche" meaning people from the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

conducted in French. Answering the questions in the respective other languages, candidate (4) had demonstrated his fluency in Swiss and standard German and that he was able to communicate in English. On the contrary, candidate (3) had had difficulties finding the right words and to express himself in German and English, but he had emphasized that he was aware of the important role of German and absolutely willing to improve it. In the following excerpt, the management board is discussing (in Swiss and standard German) the choice between candidate (3) and (4), thereby referring also to the relevance of their language skills.

(4)   PR: er kann weniger gut deutsch. ja. aber mir persönlich hat er
        besser gefallen. ich denke der junge der realisiert hier ein zwei
        sachen und in zwei jahren drei jahren sucht er sich eine
        multimedia oder eine kommunikations oder eine marketingfirma. aber
        er kann sich hier nach dem studium sporen abverdienen. und ich
        denke er würde das wahrscheinlich gut machen.
        [...]
        DR: für mi isch=aso zwüsche beidne .h si hei e chli ähnlechi
        profile/ .h är isch zwar perfekt bilingue/ das wäri e rise
        vorteil/ är isch: .h vor region/ (..) ds isch o% vorteil=bi ihm
        gsehni viu risike/ o ds är uf eim=uf einisch passts ihm nümm: und
        öh: i sächs mönet ischer wäg/ .h öhm:: and=dr ander da(x) ja%:
        zwüsche beidne wetti würklech dr ander v-=dä vo mäntig (x) vo mir
        us .h GANZ motiviert. är wott isch si erschte job und voilà/ und
        vo mir us bruche jetz nid stabilität i dere stell. nid öper wo
        PR: nein. wenn vielleicht wenn die arbeit getan ist, kannst dus
        mit dem normalen team weiterführen. und von dem her. ja/ ich sage
        nicht wir haben jetzt für immer ein spezialisten hier. vielleicht/
        aber dann ist es sicher nicht ja für jemand der wirklich auf
        marketing und so gehen will ist dieser posten auch nicht
        ausreichend. weil wir nur beschränkt marketing machen.

Translation:
PR: +his german is less good. yes. but personally i liked him better. i think that the boy might realize one or two things here before moving on to a multimedia or communication or marketing company in two years three years. but here he can earn some money after his studies. and i think that he might probably do a good job ((German))+
[...]
DR: +for me it's=well between those two .h they have quite a similar profile/ .h he is perfectly bilingual/ that would be a huge advantage/ he i:s .h from the region/ (..) that's a%lso an advantage=concerning him i see many risks/ or that is suddenly=suddenly he doesn't like it anymo:re and u:hm in six months he leaves/ .h u:hm and=the other one(x) yes between those two i would really take the other=the one from monday (x) for my part .h HIGHLY motivated. he wants it's his fist job and ((Swiss German))+ +for that reason/ ((French))+ +and for my part i don't need stability for this post. no one who ((Swiss German))+
PR: +no. when the work is done, you can continue with the normal team. and thus. yes/ i don't say that we will now have a specialist here for all times. maybe/ but then it's certainly not for someone who wants to do marketing and so on for someone like that the post would not be satisfactory. because we are doing marketing only to a limited percentage. ((German))+

In the excerpt, the president describes the German skills of candidate (3) favorably only as "less good" comparing him to the "perfectly bilingual" candidate (4). While the latter's "perfect" bilingualism is mentioned as an advantage by the director, he also portrays him as a risky candidate. However, despite the apparent linguistic and professional advantages of candidate (4), the

management board develops a series of arguments linked to the supposed professional ambitions of the candidates and the lack of the institution's financial resources in order to legitimize their favoring of candidate (3). What is not mentioned in the discussion, but may be important to add, is that the director had already worked together with candidate (3) in another context. He not only knew, but also appreciated, his work and was therefore sure that he was able to meet the technical expectations.

The recruitment decision was taken in favor of the youngest candidate (3). In the end, financial constraints and the precarious conditions of the offered job made the management board dismiss the initially requested "perfect" skills in French and German, and choose somebody who seemed to be highly motivated, more malleable, and ready to accept a low salary and a temporary limited contract. Since the profile of candidate (3) did not correspond to the initially searched for profile, this choice had to be legitimized and the desired profile adjusted. As his language skills presented one of the criteria which did not fit the desired profile, the relevance of those needed to be downplayed. Thereby, the linguistic barriers established in the job offer were opened up again and in the end language did not appear to be a gatekeeping criterion. At least not in the form of "perfect" bilingual skills (which would even have been available) and therefore counter to the demanded bilingualism that was stated in the job offer as well as to what was said in the interview when language was described as an important selection criterion. Contrary to the native speaker-ideology, which appeared to be defining language skills in the beginning – seeing them as a stable and "owned" characteristic, they were conceptualized as dynamic, and the fact that candidate (3) promised to improve his German seemed to be enough for the recruiters.

6.   Recruiting as a series of (moments of) linguistic boundary-(un)making

The analysis has shown different moments of definition, negotiation, and redefinition of the meaning of linguistic skills and bilingualism. This analysis unveiled multiple understandings where linguistic skills were necessary for the particular job in the particular setting – ranging from different combinations of languages to different levels of knowledge in these languages. However, these shifting boundaries of the definition of bilingual skills were either not at all or only partly visible to the candidates, who therefore had only very limited possibilities of steering the process – or understanding their acceptance or rejection.

The analysis has further shown that even if the idea of the relevance of "bilingual skills" was very prominent throughout the course of the recruitment process (e.g. requested in the job offer, tested during the interviews, and discussed in the debriefing) and said to be limiting or enabling the access to this specific job, in the end language skills did not play the role of a gatekeeping criterion. This

becomes clear in various moments of the process: For example, at the very beginning of the recruitment process, the director declared that he would reject applications right away because of the lack of or low skills in either the one or the other language (French and German), but candidate (3) – whose low skills in German were known to him because of the pre-existing relationship – had been invited to the job interview anyway. Furthermore, the need for a French native speaker had apparently been known by the selection team, however, candidate (1), who was categorized as a Swiss German native speaker, had been invited. In the end the required bilingual skills even turned out to be completely irrelevant in favor of other criteria. Nevertheless, precisely those language skills, which were downplayed during the recruitment process, might then cause problems in the daily working life, as speakers might not be perceived as efficient and competent enough – as the case of the French-speaking employee who struggled with Swiss German revealed (see also Schedel 2018b).

However, a closer look at the recruitment process also reveals how the negotiation of the boundaries of bilingual skills is instrumentalized to weaken the profile of an undesired candidate by depicting him as an incompetent speaker (e.g. when the president argues that candidate (1) would not be suitable because of his imperfect French skills) or to strengthen the profile of a desired candidate (e.g. by evaluating weak skills favorably and foregrounding the willingness of the chosen candidate to improve his German skills).

While the variability of the role of multilingual skills for access to a job has been reported from recruitment processes in different workplaces (see Section 2), this contribution highlights the variability of the definition and relevance within one and the same recruitment process. The inconsistent interpretation and negotiation of the category of bilingualism in this example of a recruitment process is embedded in a dynamic local political economy of language(s). The example of Murten unveils that the definition and value of language skills are in fact quite complex, ambiguous, and variable – and so are also the differences that are thereby (de)constructed between the speakers. As a consequence, one and the same person might arbitrarily experience an advantage due to his/her language skills, while he or she might experience disadvantages at the same place and the same time.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

(.)   Pause

=   No discernible pause within a single speaker's turn

,   Continuing intonation

.   Sentence final falling intonation

/   Sentence final rising intonation

+ Concerned passage ((commentary))+   Mostly used to indicate code-switching

Capitalized word   Mostly used to indicate loud voice