

English as the lingua franca of the international economy

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The role of English in Zug is that of a lingua franca, a common language used by people with different first languages. A trading desk in Baar may bring together traders from Britain, South Africa, Russia, the Netherlands, India and Switzerland. Since they have no common first language, English is the obvious choice. The same applies to the board of a holding company whose directors come from several countries, to a crypto foundation whose developers work across three continents and to a family office that serves clients from Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The use of English as a lingua franca has consequences that differ from those of a community of native speakers. The English spoken in the offices of Zug is a working language, often simplified, with its own conventions and vocabulary. It is shaped by the international business language of finance, trade and technology. It contains many terms that have no established German equivalent. Swiss employees who work in this environment often use English at work and Swiss German at home, switching between the two in the course of a day. The result is a layered linguistic landscape in which each language has its domain.

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