

Renate Mauk

Linguistic Statistics About Shop Signs

Languages, parts of speech, word formation patterns, and vocabulary sections on shop signs in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and England

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1. Introduction

The topic of shop signs as a part of the linguistic landscape immediately caught my interest, when my tutor Prof. Dr. Hans Sauer suggested it for my thesis. This paper compares the shop signs in 33 villages and cities in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and England in regard to languages, parts of speech, word formation and vocabulary sections. A second focus is on branches of economic activities. This paper is a short version of my thesis *Linguistische Analyse von Geschäftsschildern* 'Linguistic Analysis of Shop Signs'.¹

Looking at studies about linguistic landscape, hardly anything could be found about the southern part of Germany, and most studies focus on language. Existing papers are not really comparable because every scholar uses different methods of data-selection and of evaluating. Therefore, this paper analyses seventeen locations in southern Germany and one in northern Germany, three locations in Austria, Switzerland and France. Since the role of English is a point of interest, five locations in England were added. The data was collected as fast as possible to get a valuable overview of a moment in time. Different regions and numbers of inhabitants lead to the choice of the respective towns. In each, the most frequented area was selected, the photos taken, listed, and then evaluated.

Studies about linguistic landscape start in the 1970s. Tobiasz has an overview about publications in the 20th and 21st century.² Gorter/ Cenoz list the different approaches addressed by the researches like sociology, psychology, politics, and linguistics.³

One of the first studies is by the Japanese geographer Masai about the characters in which shop signs in Tokyo were written, Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana, or the Latin alphabet, and the languages on them.⁴ Near a university in Tokyo, MacGregor finds a dominance of Japanese, which is "ornamented" with foreign words.⁵ Wang examines the languages on the shop signs of one street in Peking.⁶

Fishman, Cooper and Conrad publish a book about "The Spread of English" in Jerusalem.⁷ Further studies in Israel are also interested in English, and they look at the use of Hebrew and Arab.⁸ Calvet focusses on towns in Africa in contrast to Paris and its quarters.⁹ Tulp is interested in advertisements in Brussels and the role of the two native languages and English on them.¹⁰ The complex situation in Quebec with its national language French is at the centre of several studies.¹¹ In their paper, the Canadians Landry/ Bourhis define a theoretical background for studies on the subject, including the term *linguistic landscape*: "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration."¹²

Smalley takes an insight into the role of English in Thailand,¹³ Huebner into the characters used in this country.¹⁴ Lee puts up "The Seven Magnets of Trends", which draw people to the use of specific languages: globalization, localization, nationalism, integration, regionalization, urbanization, and separatism.¹⁵ Scollon/ Scollon analyse different aspects, e.g. the use of characters, the placement on the shop signs, languages and branches of economic activities, and they compare the use in different countries.¹⁶

In Zurich and Uppsala, McArthur looks at all sorts of signs and finds a macaronic language mix, for which he creates the term *interanto*.¹⁷ Based on his paper, Schlick compares the use of languages on shop signs in Austria, Italy, Slovenia, and England.¹⁸

¹ Mauk 2023; I apologize for possible mistakes in this paper. I had no one for proofreading.

² Tobiasz 2012 and Tobiasz 2014

³ Cf. Gorter/ Cenoz 2017: 239f.

⁴ The study of Masai 1972 is written in Japanese. Backhaus 2007: 47f. analysed it.

⁵ Cf. MacGregor 2003: 22

⁶ Cf. Wang 2012: 43

⁷ Fishman 1977

⁸ E.g. Spolsky/ Cooper 1991, Trumper-Hecht 2009, Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, Yitzhaki/ du Plessis 2015

⁹ Cf. Calvet 1994

¹⁰ Tulp's paper is in Flemish and only accessible via Tobiasz 2013: 239, Gorter 2013: 192, and van Mensel 2017: 425

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Monnier 1989, Landry/ Bourhis 1997, Desautels 2019, Dumont 2017

¹² Landry/ Bourhis 1997: 25

¹³ Cf. Smalley 1994

¹⁴ Cf. Huebner 2006: 39

¹⁵ Cf. Lee 2019: 71

¹⁶ Cf. Scollon/ Scollon 2003

¹⁷ Cf. McArthur 2000

¹⁸ Cf. Schlick 2002 and Schlick 2003

Pappenhagen et al.'s study deals with the languages on shop signs in different urban districts in Hamburg, one 'richer' and one where many migrants live.¹⁹ The same aspect is examined by Stoltmann in two districts in Kiel and Rostock, respectively.²⁰

Several studies focus on the use of German language variations.²¹ Lüdi analyses the four Swiss national languages, the role of English, and the use of Swiss-German in Basel.²² Bogatto/ Hélot look at an urban district in Strasbourg with regard to the nationalities of the migrants living there and the languages on the shop signs.²³

The aspect of history in the linguistic landscape is addressed by Coulmas and Pavlenko.²⁴

My study tries to fill some gaps, like the southern part of Germany, parts of speech, word formation patterns, vocabulary sections, and branches of economic activities. How I worked shall be explained in the next chapter.

2. The methods of the counts

This paper sheds light on a sample of shop signs, while it compares those found in Germany, Austria, the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and England. Different regions were chosen in all the countries. Five categories of locations were made up according to the German reference book *Duden*, which defines small towns as having 5 000 to 20 000 inhabitants, medium-sized towns with between 20 000 and 100 000, big towns with up to 1 000 000 and megacities with 1 000 000 or more inhabitants.²⁵ Villages have below 5 000 inhabitants.

Shop signs are seen as the writings on the shops which reproduce their names, regardless of the material used for the writing. In some cases, the shops have no specific name but feature brands. And in a few cases, other signs appearing in the same manner and prominence as the shop signs in the respective town were collected.²⁶

For the analysis of languages, lexemes borrowed after 1800 were categorized with the source language.²⁷ Mono-, bi- and multilingual signs were counted according to each different language that contributes to the signs. That means that a bilingual sign has two language contributions etc. E.g. of the 317 shop signs in Eichstätt, 230 have one language, 76 two, nine three and two four languages, which leads to 417 language contributions (100%).²⁸

In the categories parts of speech, word formation, and vocabulary sections, I counted, how many signs have items of the respective categories. Consequently, the counts may be below or over 100%, because one sign can consist of e.g. a noun, an article, and an adjective, or simply an acronym. Although proper names are nouns as well, they were listed separately because it makes a huge difference, whether a noun or a proper name appears on the shop sign. Proper names are only those related to the shop owners, since names from mythology, religion, history, or literature like *Starbucks* belong to 'special vocabulary'.

On the one hand, each item of the respective list was counted once, e.g. *Theater-Gasthaus Alte Schule* in Solnhofen has two nouns. The list therefore simply states that there is at least one noun on the sign. On the other hand, signs with only a place name, an acronym, clipping or blend were not categorized according to parts of speech because place names merely function as references, and the reader usually cannot tell, what an acronym etc. means, e.g. SSG means 'Solnhofen Stone Group' or *NORMA* 'Noricum Markt' = 'Nuremberg Market'.²⁹ Acronyms, blends, and clippings were classified according to the respective words on which they are based, e.g. *NORMA* contains Latin and German. Where no information about their meanings could be obtained, the language is 'not classified'.

Additionally, all shop signs were listed according to branches of business. The branches are based on the internet site *handelsdaten.de*³⁰, and adapted to the papers of Desautels 2019, and Bogatto/ Hélot 2010.

¹⁹ Cf. Pappenhagen et al. 2013

²⁰ Cf. Stoltmann 2015. He also draws up a comparison between the former GDR and the BRD before the reunification.

²¹ E.g. both topics: Wolk 2005; Low-German: Zickelbein 1983, Reershemius 2011; dialect: Auer 2009; Swiss German: Petkova 2017

²² Cf. Lüdi 2007. This is the only paper dealing with one of the towns I visited. The approach is quite different, though.

²³ Cf. Bogatto/ Hélot 2010

²⁴ Cf. Coulmas 2009, Pavlenko 2010

²⁵ Cf. Duden online: Kleinstadt, Mittelstadt, Großstadt, Millionenstadt, 13 June 2025

²⁶ These may be town halls, churches, doctor's offices, and the like.

²⁷ This was suggested by Prof. Dr. Hans Sauer. For German, Kluge 2011 and Mackensen 1966 were used as reference books, for English the *Oxford English dictionary* (OED) online and print (1989), in some cases *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 2000, for French *Le Petit Robert* 2014 and Larousse 1964. The *DWDS* online was used in cases of insufficient information in the books on German etymology.

²⁸ $230 + 2 \times 76 + 3 \times 9 + 4 \times 2 = 417$

²⁹ Cf. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norma_\(Supermarkt\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norma_(Supermarkt)), accessed 19 December 2025

³⁰ <https://www.handelsdaten.de/branchen>, accessed 19 December 2025

3. Comparison of locations

3.1. The locations in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and England

In Germany, four villages, small towns, medium-sized towns, big towns, and one megacity (Munich) were chosen from different Landkreise, Regierungsbezirke, and Bundesländer.³¹ The main focus was on southern Germany and Bavaria, one big city in northern Germany, Paderborn, was added for comparison. The villages and towns are the following:

Village/ Town	Landkreis	Regierungsbezirk	Bundesland	Population (Census 2022) ³²	Number of shop signs	Word count average
Tagmersheim	Donau/ Ries	Swabia	Bavaria	1 082	25	1.92
Solnhofen	Weißenburg	Middle Franconia	Bavaria	1 783	30	1.87
Dollnstein	Eichstätt	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	2 888	50	2.06
Rennertshofen	Neuburg-Schrobenhausen	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	4 839	59	1.92
Pappenheim	Weißenburg-Gunzenhausen	Middle Franconia	Bavaria	3 942	63	2.22
Miltenberg	Miltenberg	Lower Franconia	Bavaria	9 351	147	2.28
Eichstätt	Eichstätt	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	13 891	317	2.25
Weißenburg	Weißenburg-Gunzenhausen	Middle Franconia	Bavaria	18 345	188	1.81
Neuburg	Neuburg-Schrobenhausen	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	30 135	216	1.81
Ansbach	Ansbach	Middle Franconia	Bavaria	40 742	194	1.81
Aschaffenburg	Aschaffenburg	Lower Franconia	Bavaria	73 091	528	1.69
Hanau	Hanau	Darmstadt	Hessen	97 956	390	1.76
Ingolstadt	Ingolstadt	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	141 185	436	1.83
Paderborn	Paderborn	Detmold	North Rhine-Westphalia	156 378	299	1.76
Nuremberg	Nuremberg	Middle Franconia	Bavaria	529 508	596	1.65
Stuttgart	Stuttgart	Stuttgart	Baden-Württemberg	612 663	664	1.74
Frankfurt am Main	Frankfurt a.M.	Darmstadt	Hessen	756 021	557	1.70
Munich	Munich	Upper Bavaria	Bavaria	1 505 005	639	1.80
Total					5398	1.88

The locations in Austria (A), Switzerland (CH), France (F), and England (GB) were also selected from different regions, counties, etc.

Town	Landkreis	Political Borough	Bundesland	Population (2021) ³³	Number of shop signs	Word count average
Imst	Imst	Imst	Tirol	10 882	157	1.86
Steyr	Steyr	Steyr-Land	Upper Austria	37 952	340	1.12
Salzburg	Salzburg	Statuarstadt Salzburg	Salzburg	155.416	483	1.83
A total					980	1.60

³¹ A *Landkreis* is the administrative district of a town (and its surrounding), a *Regierungsbezirk* – also an administrative district - comprises a part of a federal state, and *Bundesland* means 'Federal State'.

³² Data on villages: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Zensus2022/Publikationen/publikationen-akkordeon-regionaltabellen.html>. All data on towns: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Laender-Regionen/Regionales/Gemeindeverzeichnis/Administrativ/05-staedte.html>, both accessed 18 December 2025

³³ Austria: https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/publications/Gemeindeverzeichnis_Stand_1.1.2021.pdf, Switzerland: Bülach: <https://www.buelach.ch/portraet/70963>, St. Gallen: <https://www.stadt.sg.ch/home/verwaltung-politik/stadt-zahlen.html>, Basel: <https://statistik.bs.ch/unterthema/einwohner>, France: <https://citypopulation.de/en/france/>, England: <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/>, all accessed 18 December 2025

Town	Municipality (CH) Community (F) Borough (GB)	Canton (CH) Département (F) County (GB)	Greater region ³⁴ Region Region	Population ³⁵	Number of shop signs	Word count average
Bülach	Bülach	Zurich	Zurich	(Nov. 2025) 24 584	175	1.99
St. Gallen	St. Gallen	St. Gallen	Eastern Switzerland	(Nov. 2025) 84 316	290	1.83
Basel	Basel	Basel-Stadt	Northwestern Switzerland	(2024) 207 515	422	1.73
CH total					887	1.85
Lure	Lure	Haute-Saône	Bourgogne-Franche- Comté	(estimate 2022) 7 912	184	2.38
Belfort	Belfort	Territoire de Belfort	Bourgogne-Franche- Comté	45 646	321	2.05
Mulhouse	Mulhouse	Haut-Rhin	Grand Est	104 924	321	1.98
France total					826	2.14
Marlborough	Wiltshire	Wiltshire	South East England	(Census 2021) 8 833	191	2.20
Hereford	Herefordshire	Herefordshire	West Midlands	60 475	412	2.11
Exeter	Exeter	Devon	South West England	126 156	306	1.80
Cambridge	Cambridge	Cambridgeshire	East of England	152 725	453	1.96
Nottingham	Nottingham	Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	299 797	638	1.99
GB total					2 000	1.61

Altogether, 10 091 shop signs were analysed. In all the towns, the most frequented shopping area was examined. The respective streets were found through information on the internet³⁶, tourist information offices³⁷, and personal knowledge.³⁸

When the project was presented at the LMU Munich, the idea was proposed that the bigger the city the more shop signs were to be expected. This idea did not prove to be true, as the table shows. In some cases, this may be due to the system which only requires the most frequented area. Thus, industrial areas were only included in towns where the variety of branches in the city centre is too small, like Miltenberg, Eichstätt and Weißenburg. In contrast, in Neuburg for example, even manufacturing industry can be found in the inner city. Another factor that can lead to differences in numbers is a limitation by surrounding city walls like in Weißenburg, Paderborn and Nuremberg, a river like in Miltenberg or a basin. Stuttgart for example, was rebuilt almost completely after World War II. The pedestrian area in this town has more than 300 000 m², which is unusually large.³⁹ This is probably why the highest number of shops was found in Stuttgart.

3.2. Languages in towns

The 5 398 shop signs in German villages and towns show an average of 1.81 words per item. The main interest of this study, languages, were counted as follows (in %), the lowest percentages per language highlighted in yellow, the largest in green:

³⁴ For details about the Swiss *Großregion* see: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/1031445>, accessed 19 December 2025 The Swiss *cantons* are smaller than the German and Austrian *Bundesländer*. Therefore, the term *Greater Region* must be applied here.

³⁵ Austria: https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/publications/Gemeindeverzeichnis_Stand_1.1.2021.pdf, accessed 18 December 2025

Switzerland: Bülach: <https://www.buelach.ch/portraet/70963>, St. Gallen: <https://www.stadt.sg.ch/home/verwaltung-politik/stadt-zahlen.html>,

Basel: <https://statistik.bs.ch/unterthema/einwohner>, France: <https://citypopulation.de/en/france/>, England (Census 2021):

<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/>, all accessed 18 December 2025

³⁶ E.g. for Frankfurt/ Main: <https://frankfurt.de/frankfurt-entdecken-und-erleben/maerkte-und-einkaufsstrassen/einkaufsstrassen>, and for Munich:

<https://www.muenchen.de/sehenswuerdigkeiten/fussgaengerzone-neuhauser-strassekaufingerstrasse>, both accessed 18 December 2025

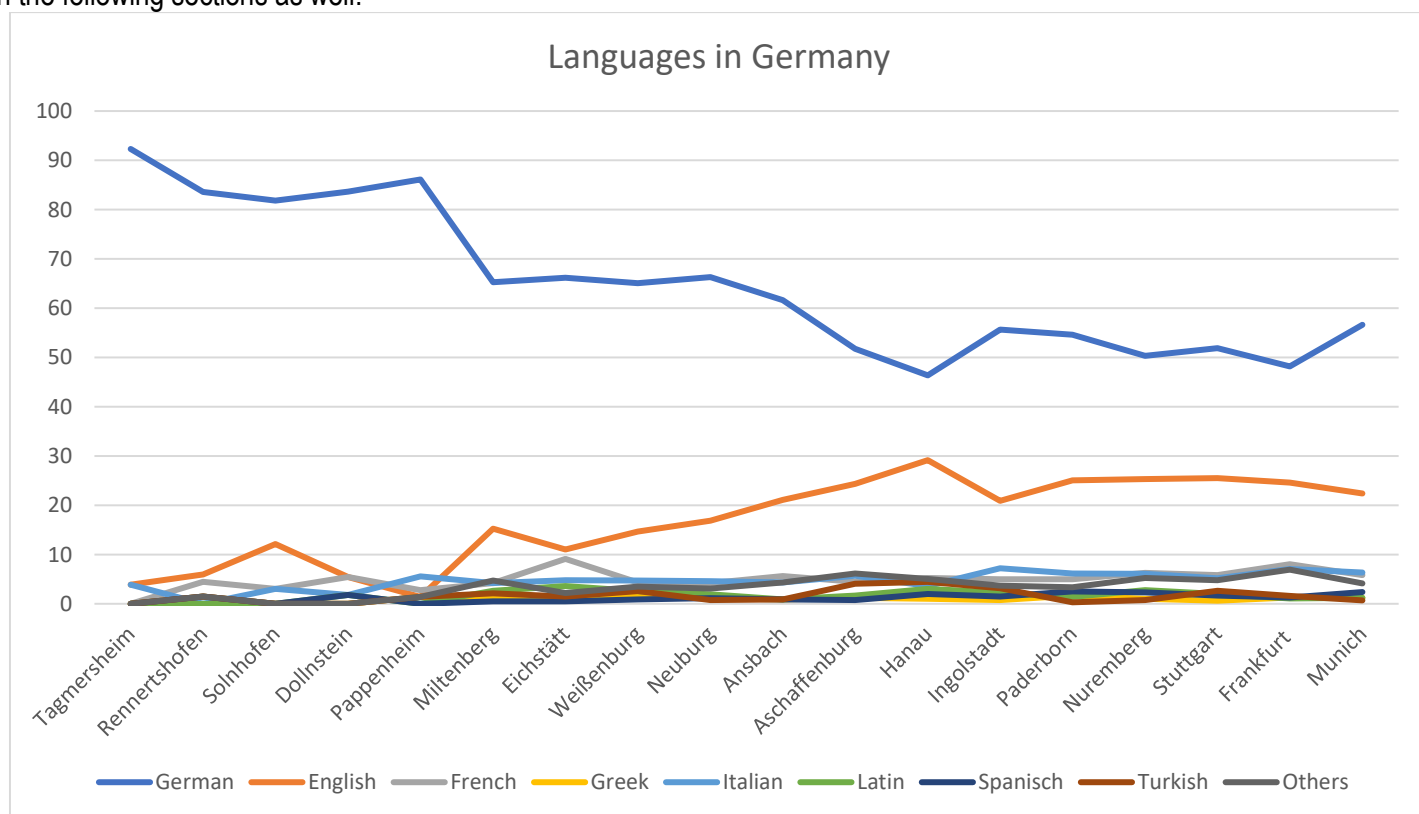
³⁷ E.g. Paderborn, Imst

³⁸ E.g. Nuremberg, Hanau, Belfort; in Miltenberg and Mulhouse, friends helped me with their knowledge of the places.

³⁹ Cf. Medek 2012

Language/ Town	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Tagmersheim	92.31	3.85	0	0	3.85	0	0	0	0
Rennerts- hofen	83.58	5.97	4.48	1.49	0	0	1.49	1.49	1.49
Solnhofen	81.82	12.12	3.03	0	3.03	0	0	0	0
Dollnstein	83.64	5.45	5.45	0	1.81	1.81	1.81	0	0
Pappenheim	86.11	1.39	2.78	1.39	5.56	0	0	1.39	1.39
Miltenberg	65.26	15.26	4.21	1.05	4.21	2.63	0.53	2.11	4.74
Eichstätt	66.19	11.03	9.11	1.20	4.80	3.60	0.48	1.44	2.16
Weißenburg	65.09	14.66	4.31	1.72	4.74	2.59	0.86	2.59	3.49
Neuburg	66.28	16.86	4.21	1.15	4.60	1.92	1.15	0.77	3.07
Ansbach	61.64	21.12	5.60	0.86	4.31	0.86	0.86	0.86	4.31
Aschaffenburg	51.72	24.36	4.48	1.20	5.68	1.64	0.75	4.04	6.13
Hanau	46.36	29.15	5.26	1.01	3.64	3.04	2.02	4.45	5.06
Ingolstadt	55.64	20.89	4.99	0.74	7.21	2.22	1.48	3.14	3.70
Paderborn	54.60	25.07	5.01	1.67	6.13	1.39	2.51	0.28	3.34
Nuremberg	50.29	25.29	6.25	1.02	6.10	2.76	2.33	0.73	5.23
Stuttgart	51.89	25.51	5.81	0.63	5.18	2.02	1.64	2.65	4.80
Frankfurt	48.19	24.57	8.03	1.26	7.09	1.10	1.26	1.57	6.93
Munich	56.60	22.41	5.81	1.24	6.36	1.24	2.35	0.69	4.12

In a diagram, the results are more evident. Since the table shows more details, both table and diagram shall be given in the following sections as well:



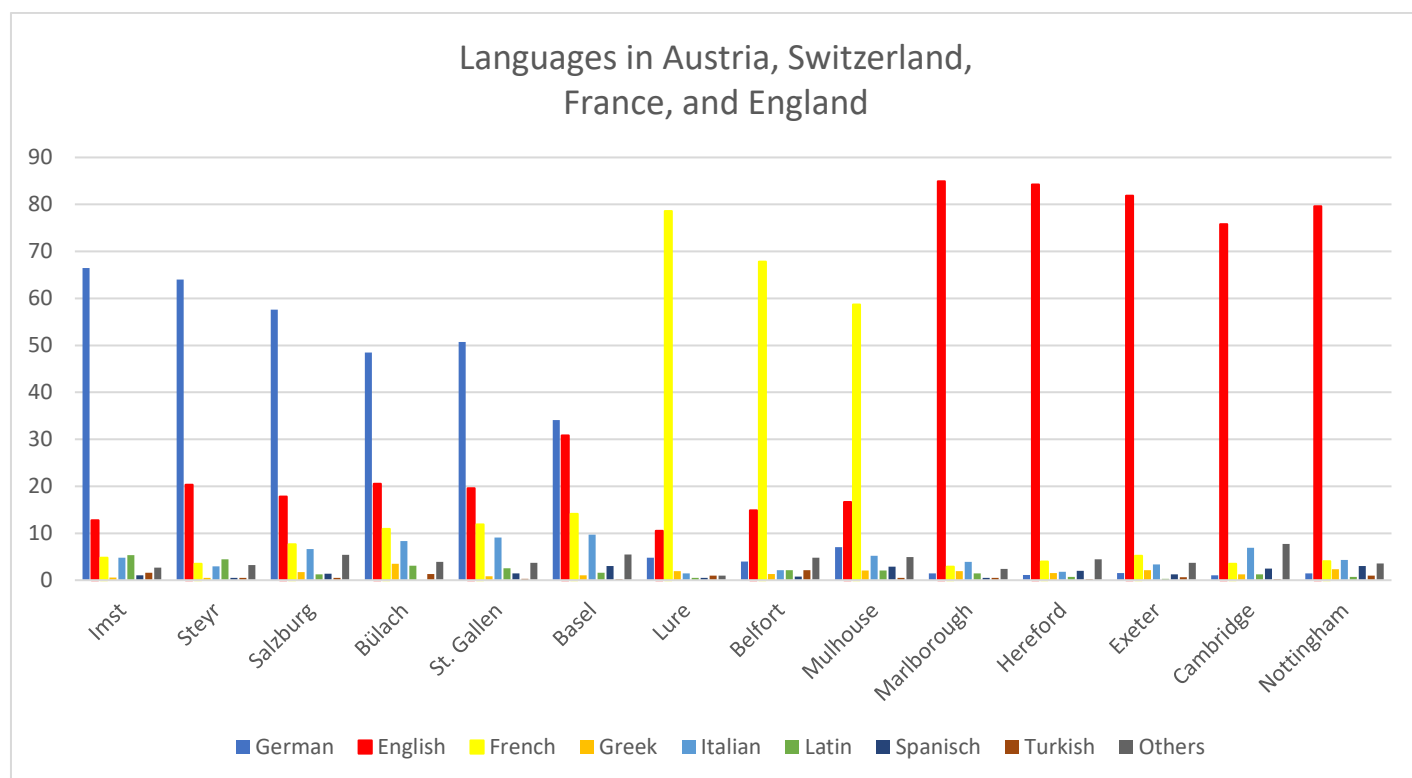
As a rule, German decreases with the size of the town and English and other foreign languages increase. Two factors must be taken into account, on the one hand the non-German inhabitants in the respective town, like a high number of persons with Turkish origin in Hanau and Vietnamese in Aschaffenburg, both also visible in some shop signs like *foncompany ay yildiz* = 'telephonecompany moon/ crescent star' and *Asia Supermarkt THINH-PHUC* with a proper name. This does not hold for villages; when I taught in Solnhofen, one third of the pupils in each class was of Turkish origin. This population group is clearly visible and audible in the village, e.g. the bakery *Lehner Bäck* was full of Turkish men on each of my several visits. Nonetheless, not a single Turkish shop sign was found on the day of the listing. A percentage of language proportional to the respective group of migrants can therefore clearly be denied. On the other hand, it is important which style a town chooses. Solnhofen probably addresses its shop signs to tourists; the relatively high percentage of English (12.12 %) supports this

idea, like the already mentioned SSG 'Solnhofen Stone Group' and *Touristinfo*. Dollnstein has 16.00 % (8) of its shop signs in Gothic script and apparently tries to hint at its history, e.g. the restaurant *Landgasthof Bayerischer Hof*, or the choir *LIEDERKRANZ KIRCHENCHOR*.

One important point must be noted. Where a low number of shop signs were collected, one single unusual item led to a relatively high percentage, e.g. the Italian pizzeria *DA NOI* = 'at our home' and one sign containing English in Tagmersheim, *Reifen-Kfz-Service*⁴⁰ *Richter*, which lead to 3.85 % for the two languages. In my opinion, these figures are misleading. When I worked for the Bavarian Statistical Office, the instructors pointed out that government statistics use high numbers of items to get good averages. Some former studies about shop signs work with less than one hundred shop signs per town,⁴¹ which I consider inadequate. That is why I excluded villages in all the other countries.

Language/ Town	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Rheto- Romance	Turkish	Others
Imst	66.49	12.77	4.79	0.53	4.79	5.32	1.06	0	1.60	2.66
Steyr	64.02	20.35	3.47	0.50	2.98	4.47	0.50	0	0.50	3.23
Salzburg	57.59	17.80	7.68	1.75	6.63	1.22	1.40	0	0.52	5.41
Bülach	48.47	20.52	10.92	3.49	8.30	3.06	0	0	1.31	3.93
St. Gallen	50.71	19.55	11.90	0.85	9.07	2.55	1.42	0.28	0.28	3.68
Basel	34.07	30.85	14.11	1.01	9.68	1.61	3.02	0	0.20	5.44
Lure	4.76	10.48	78.57	1.90	1.43	0.48	0.48	0	0.95	0.95
Belfort	3.99	14.89	67.82	1.33	2.13	2.13	0.80	0	2.13	4.79
Mulhouse	7.01	16.62	58.70	2.08	5.19	2.08	2.86	0	0.52	4.94
Marlborough	1.46	84.95	2.91	1.94	3.88	1.46	0.49	0	0.49	2.43
Hereford	1.11	84.26	3.99	1.55	1.77	0.67	2.00	0	0.22	4.43
Exeter ⁴²	1.54	81.85	5.23	2.15	3.38	0.31	1.23	0	0.62	3.69
Cambridge	1.02	75.81	3.46	1.22	6.91	1.22	2.44	0	0.20	7.72
Nottingham	1.43	79.63	4.02	2.30	4.30	0.72	3.01	0	1.00	3.59

Parallel to Hanau and Aschaffenburg, the population group of Polish origin is visible with shop signs like *ZABKA* and *KUBUS*, both subtitled *POLSKI SKLEP* = 'Polish shop' in Hereford.



⁴⁰ Service in the sense used here was borrowed from English in the 20th century, cf. Mackensen 1966: s.v.

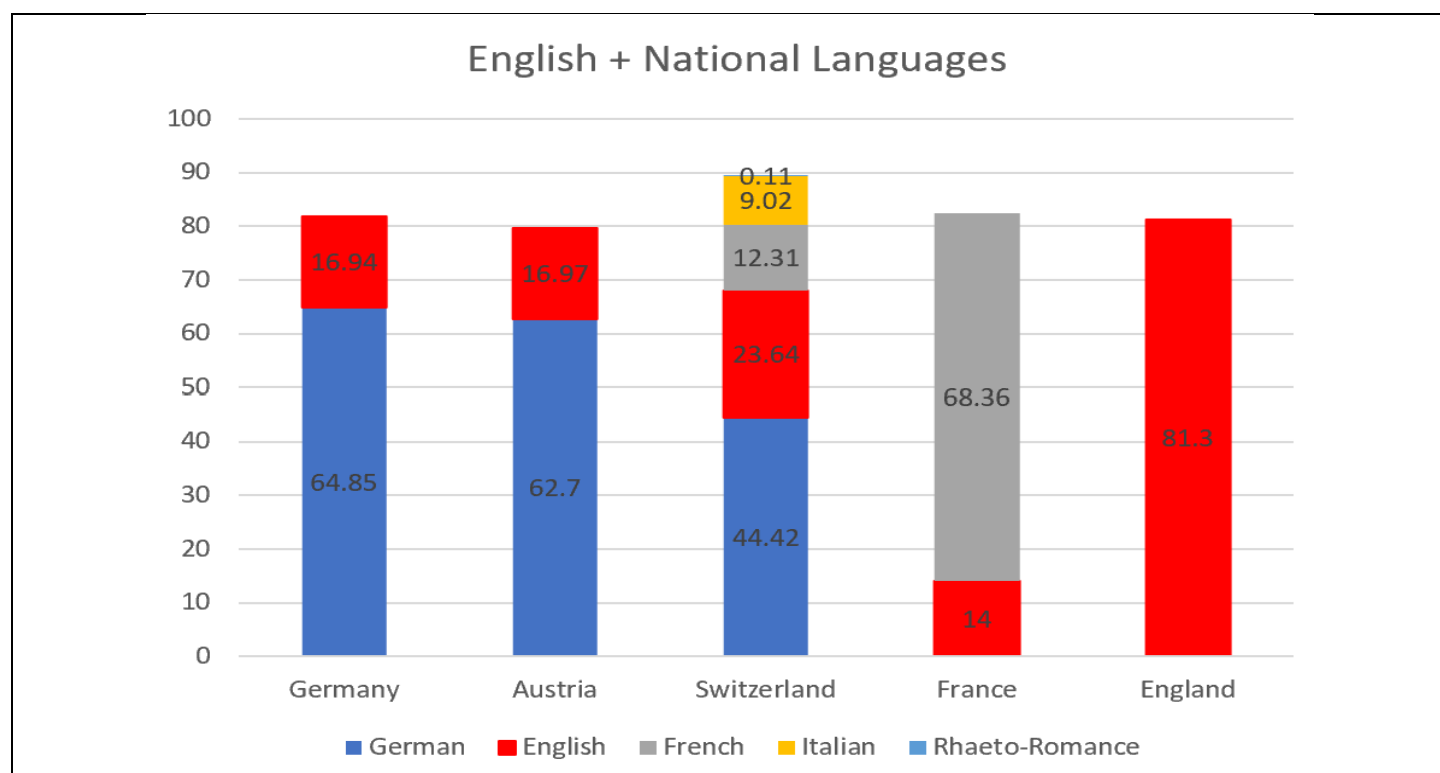
⁴¹ e.g. McArthur 2000, Schlick 2002 and 2003

⁴² The counts for Exeter are – so to speak – a bit out of the order. The town had many shops 'to let', which may have played a role. I kept the figures because otherwise, I would have falsified my statistics.

In Bülach, St. Gallen, and Basel, the percentages for German are significantly lower than in the German and Austrian towns. The Swiss towns in this study are all in the German-speaking part of the country, but French used to be the first 'foreign' language pupils learn at school, and it still is in most of the country. Only two cantons in East Switzerland have switched to English. That is why the Swiss are familiar with French.⁴³ Apart from that, French is one of the four national languages in Switzerland.⁴⁴ The role of English in Switzerland is interesting, though. Basel has the highest percentage of English outside of the towns in Great Britain. In England, the highest amount of English is found, because the national language here coincides with the *lingua franca* of globalisation.⁴⁵ The averages of the respective languages for each country are shown here:

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	France	England
German	64.85	62.70	44.42	5.25	1.31
English	16.94	16.97	23.64	14.00	81.30
French	4.93	5.31	12.31	68.36	3.92
Greek	0.98	0.93	1.78	1.77	1.83
Italian	4.68	4.80	9.02	2.92	4.05
Latin	1.60	3.67	2.41	1.56	0.88
Rheto-Romance	0	0	0.11	0	0
Spanish	1.20	0.99	1.48	1.38	1.83
Turkish	1.57	0.87	0.60	1.20	0.51
Others	3.33	3.77	4.35	3.56	4.73

In the following chart, national languages and English are summed up:



This chart shows that English + the national language usually amount to around 80 %, only in Switzerland⁴⁶, the percentage is higher because of the four national languages. Germany and Austria show roughly the same percentage of English, in France it is lower, but in Switzerland remarkably higher. Thus, the Swiss shop owners give their towns an international touch.

⁴³ Cf. <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/011195/2007-05-08/>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁴⁴ Cf. Schläpfer 1982: 69; Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, articles 4 and 70, see: <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/de>, accessed 19 December 2025

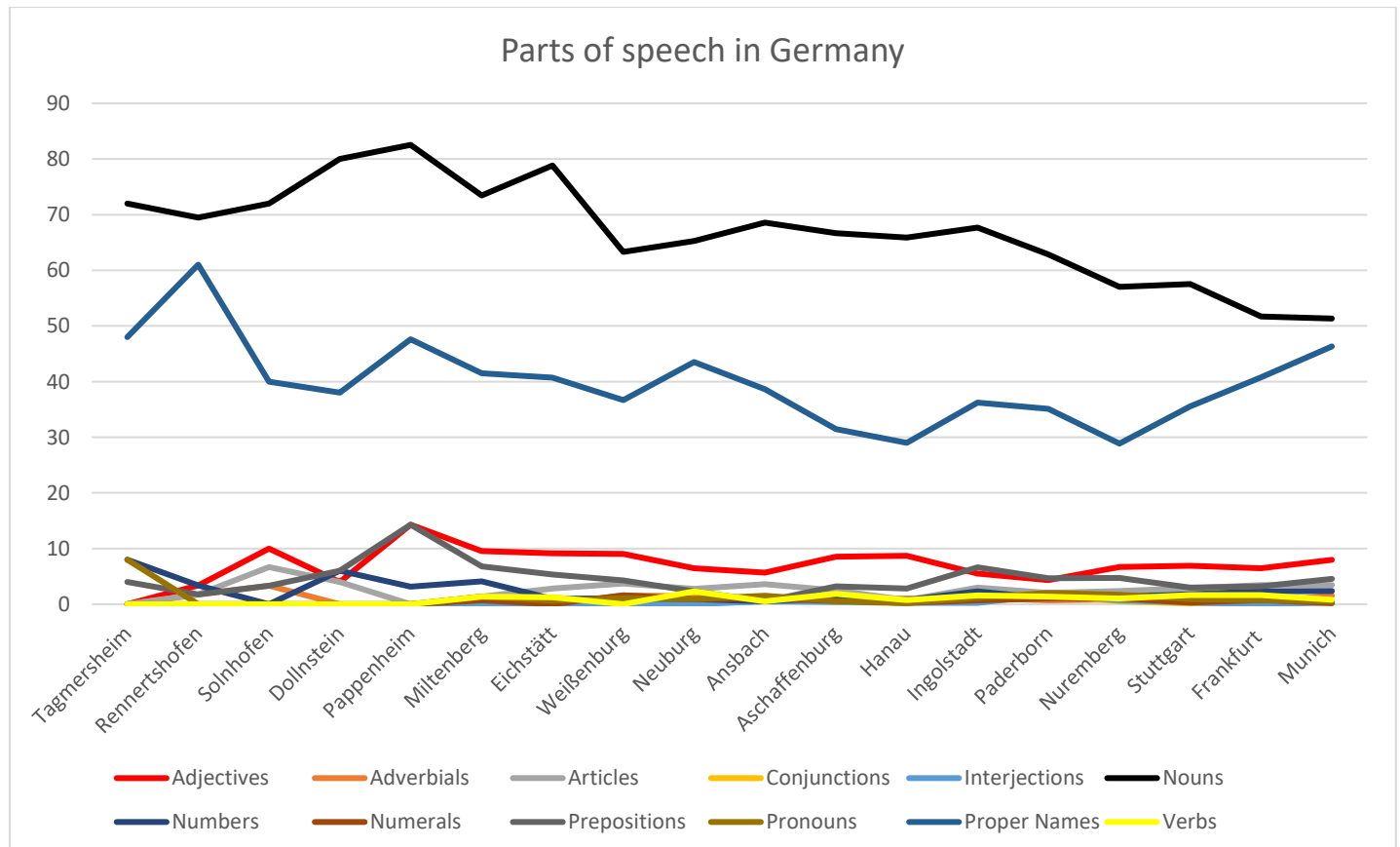
⁴⁵ Cf. e.g. Lee2019:72

⁴⁶ Schlick also found out that the percentage of English is higher in England because of "the absence of another powerful foreign language in the British towns". Schlick 2003: 5

3.3. Parts of speech in towns

The following table shows the percentages of parts of speech in Germany, highlighted as before:

Part of speech/ Town	Adjectives	Adverbials	Articles	Conjunctions	Interjections	Nouns	Numbers	Numerals	Prepositions	Pronouns	Proper names	Verbs
Tagmersheim	0	0	0	0	0	72.00	8.00	0	4.00	8.00	48.00	0
Rennertshofen	3.39	1.75	1.75	0	0	69.49	3.39	0	1.75	0	61.02	0
Solnhofen	10.00	3.33	6.67	0	0	72.00	0	0	3.33	0	40.00	0
Dollnstein	4.00	0	4.00	0	0	80.00	6.00	0	6.00	0	38.00	0
Pappenheim	14.29	0	0	0	0	82.54	3.17	0	14.29	0	47.62	0
Miltenberg	9.52	1.36	1.36	0.68	0	73.47	4.08	0.68	6.80	1.36	41.50	1.36
Eichstätt	9.15	0	2.84	1.26	0	78.86	0.95	0	5.36	0.63	40.69	1.26
Weißenburg	9.03	1.60	3.72	0	0	63.30	1.06	1.60	4.26	1.06	36.70	0
Neuburg	6.48	1.39	2.78	1.39	0	65.28	0.93	0.93	2.31	0.93	43.52	2.31
Ansbach	5.67	1.03	3.61	1.03	0.52	68.56	0.52	1.03	0.52	1.55	38.66	0.52
Aschaffenburg	8.52	0.95	2.46	0.38	0.38	66.67	1.14	0.57	3.22	0.57	31.44	1.89
Hanau	8.72	1.03	0.77	0.26	0.26	65.90	0.77	0.26	2.82	0.26	28.97	0.77
Ingolstadt	5.50	1.15	2.98	0.92	0.23	67.66	2.29	0.69	6.65	1.15	36.24	1.61
Paderborn	4.35	0.67	2.01	1.67	1.67	62.88	1.00	1.00	4.68	2.01	35.12	1.34
Nuremberg	6.71	0.84	2.35	0.50	0.67	57.05	1.34	1.01	4.70	1.68	28.86	1.01
Stuttgart	6.93	1.05	2.86	0.15	0.30	57.53	1.81	0.30	3.01	0.90	35.54	1.66
Frankfurt	6.46	0.36	3.41	0.54	0	51.71	2.33	0.72	3.23	0.72	40.75	1.62
Munich	7.98	1.56	3.44	0.63	0.31	51.33	2.35	0.16	4.54	0.47	46.32	0.78



Already in 1595, Michel de Montaigne writes about the importance of names in business. He states that a good name is essential, so that people can easily recall it. He adds that we prefer to commission those whose names are simple to

pronounce.⁴⁷ This is even more important for shop names. “As social items, shop names underlie a certain regulation by laws, but nonetheless they belong to the relatively rare self-chosen names. Therefore, they form an important means of self-portrayal and characterisation.”⁴⁸

In my study, nouns are by far the most frequently used parts of speech on the shop signs; Examples are *ZWEITHAAR*, literally ‘second hair’, the restaurants *SCHNITZELWIRT*, and *connection* in Munich. This is obvious, since the owners want to give their shops a name. A German word for *noun* is *Namenwort*, which means ‘name word’.⁴⁹ The understanding behind this is that every person, item or idea in this world has a name by which it can be identified. Shop owners therefore often choose nouns to define their businesses. Historically the content of the business was required in the name of the corporation in some cases, depending on the legal form,⁵⁰ which led to nouns as business names. In many other cases, proper names were required.⁵¹ Therefore, it is understandable that the second highest percentages of parts of speech are proper names like *BUCHERER 1888*, *BARTU*; *HIRMER*, and *BREITER* in Munich. Since the Handelsrechtsreformgesetz (HRefG), a reform of the German Commercial Law, was passed in 1998, the law only claims that the name of the business must enable everyone to identify the owner and to distinguish the business from others.⁵² The use of proper names has gone down ever since.⁵³ One example is *MUC BAR*⁵⁴, which uses the Munich airport code. But sometimes, even newly established firms use proper names, because this is a possibility to escape anonymity.⁵⁵

Adjectives show an average of 7.04 % in Germany. Colours are mentioned like *Pink & White* (hairdresser), *mavi* = Turkish for ‘blue’ (a jeans label), or describing adjectives like *BONITA* = Spanish for ‘pretty’ (fashion), *Desigual*® = Spanish for ‘irregular’ (fashion with irregular fabric patterns), *intimissimi* = Italian for ‘very intimate’ (underwear), *LUSH* (soap, cosmetics), *Casalingo* = Italian for ‘homemade’ (restaurant), *froh + bunter* = ‘happy and more colourful’.⁵⁶ The averages of all other parts of speech are below three per cent.

As a rule, the number of different parts of speech tends to increase with the size of the town. Anyway, the percentage of the respective signs does not increase constantly, some remain at low levels, those with e.g. interjections like *NANU NANA*, conjunctions, pronouns like *mymuesli* in Munich, and numerals like in *Best one Thaimassage* in Stuttgart. Nonetheless, prepositions appear everywhere, even though they stay below 7 % - apart from Pappenheim.⁵⁷ Examples for verbs are *Think!* shoes, and *Kauf Dich Glücklich* ‘Buy yourself happy’ in Stuttgart.

The following table shows the percentages in Austria, Switzerland, France, and England:

Part of speech/ Town	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
Imst	5.10	0	2.55	0.64	0	70.06	1.91	0	3.18	0	36.31	0.64
Steyr	5.59	1.47	2.94	0.29	0.88	61.18	1.47	0.59	0.88	0.88	35.88	1.18
Salzburg	7.45	0.62	3.11	0.62	0.21	62.53	1.45	0.21	5.80	0.41	38.92	1.45
Bülach	13.14	0	1.71	0.57	0	81.14	0.57	1.14	6.29	0.57	29.71	0.57
St. Gallen	8.28	0.69	2.07	1.03	0.34	64.83	1.38	0.34	7.59	0	28.97	0.34
Basel	8.29	2.13	3.55	0.24	0.24	58.77	2.37	1.42	6.40	0.71	25.36	2.13
Lure	13.04	0.54	21.20	1.63	0	79.89	1.63	0.54	22.28	2.17	21.20	0
Belfort	12.77	1.56	16.51	1.25	0	71.65	1.25	0.62	15.58	0.62	23.05	0.31
Mulhouse	15.58	1.25	12.77	0.93	0.31	67.60	3.12	0.62	12.77	1.25	20.56	1.87
Marlborough	15.71	0.52	13.09	1.05	0	65.97	1.57	2.09	3.14	0	37.17	0.52
Hereford	13.59	1.21	9.71	1.21	0	68.45	0.97	0.24	2.67	0.73	29.13	2.43
Exeter	9.80	1.31	5.56	0.33	0.33	59.48	1.31	0.98	1.63	0.33	30.07	2.29
Cambridge	13.91	1.10	10.60	0	0.88	62.47	0.66	0.66	3.31	0.66	24.94	1.99
Nottingham	15.67	2.04	8.46	0.31	0.47	65.36	1.41	2.35	1.88	0.63	24.92	1.88

⁴⁷ Cf. Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, Livre I, Chapitre 46

⁴⁸ Bergien/ Blachney 2009: 527, translation R.M.

⁴⁹ Cf. <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Namenwort>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁵⁰ e.g. § 4 GmbHG

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. Article 16 ADHGB ‘General German Commercial Code’ from 1861, § 17-19 HGB ‘Commercial Code’ from 1897

⁵² Cf. e.g. § 18 HGB

⁵³ Cf. Bergien/ Blachney 2009: 532

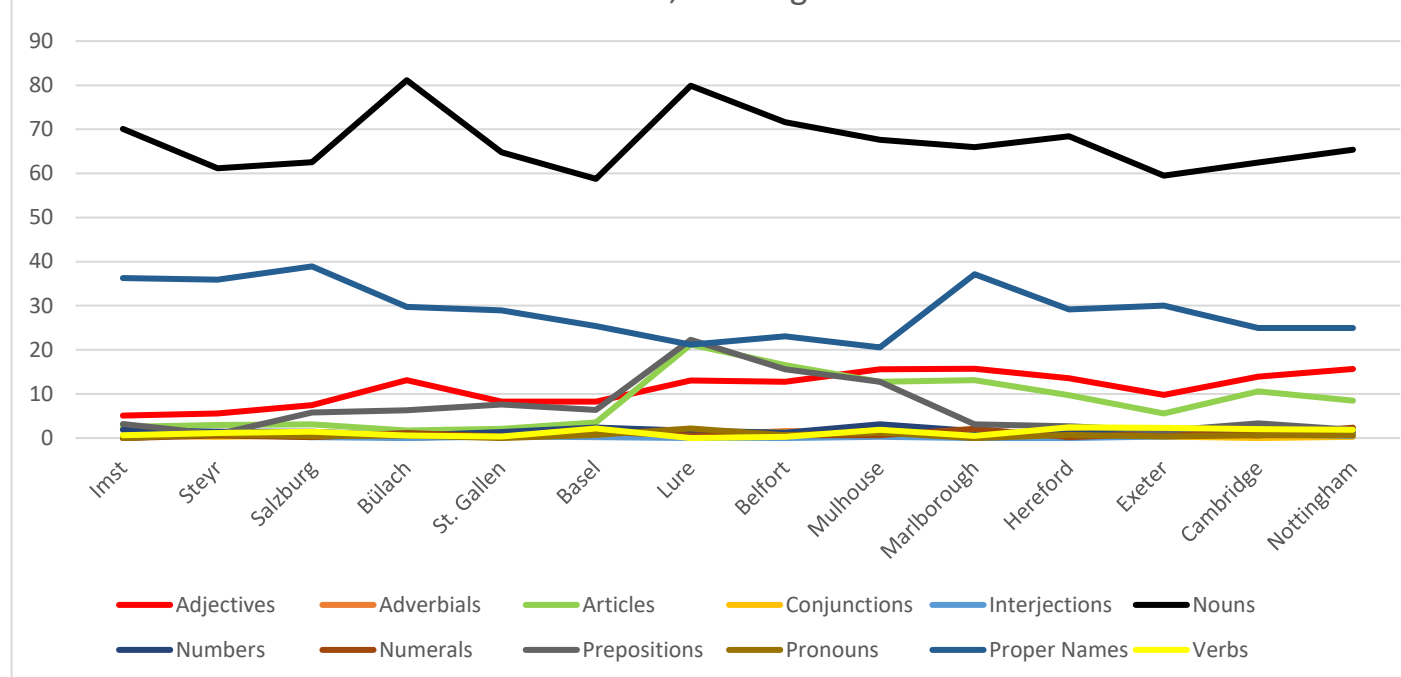
⁵⁴ The bar was established in 2016, see: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muc-bar-bar-mit-skyline-1.3099385>

⁵⁵ Cf. Koß 2009: 560

⁵⁶ This is a shop where one can paint one’s own ceramics; a pun with the German St. Nicholas’ Day song “Lasst uns froh und munter sein”

⁵⁷ In this touristic town, several restaurants cause a higher percentage (prepositions underlined): *DÖNER BEIM DEMIR*; *Gasthaus Zum Stern*, *Zum Lindenwirt*, *bei Raffi*, *Gasthof zum Goldenen Hirschen*, *Gasthof zur Sonne*, *Zum Goldenen Löwen*.

Parts of speech in Austria, Switzerland, France, and England



In all four countries, proper names are less frequent than in Germany, whilst the shops in France show the lowest percentage. The figures for adverbials, conjunctions, interjections, nouns, numerals, numbers, adverbials, pronouns, and verbs are roughly the same. Adjectives are slightly less frequent in Austria than in Germany, but more frequent in the other three countries with percentages in France and England around twice the ones in Germany and Austria. The greatest differences the chart above shows are with articles and prepositions. The averages for the countries are shown here:

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	France	England
Adjectives	7.04	6.05	9.90	13.80	13.74
Adverbials	1.08	0.70	0.94	1.12	1.33
Articles	2.61	2.87	2.44	16.83	9.48
Conjunctions	0.52	0.52	0.61	1.27	0.67
Interjections	0.24	0.36	0.19	0.10	0.34
Nouns	67.01	64.59	68.25	73.05	64.34
Numbers	2.29	1.61	1.44	2.00	1.18
Numerals	0.50	0.27	0.97	0.59	1.26
Prepositions	0.24	3.29	6.76	16.88	2.53
Pronouns	0.18	0.43	0.43	1.35	0.47
Proper Names	39.94	37.04	27.93	21.60	29.25
Verbs	0.90	1.09	1.01	0.73	1.82

The percentage of articles is higher in England than in the German-speaking countries, but the highest in France. This may be due to the differences in Grammar, e.g. in the following case: “In contrast to German, the indefinite article is used in English when referring to a person as a member, or representative, of a particular group or class [...] „Paul Gauguin was a bank clerk before he became a painter.”⁵⁸. In German, no article is required in that case. In French, a generalization needs an article, whereas there is none in German, e.g. “Le thé est bon contre la soif.”⁵⁹ ‘Tea is good against thirst.’ It is also required with family names in the plural like “les Duval”, and often with place names like “l’Europe”, or “la Provence”,⁶⁰ just to name a few examples. Les Matériaux ‘Materials’, Z.A. de la Saline ‘Commercial area Saline’ and restaurant names like LA CAPPADOCE ‘Cappadocia’ or LE SIROCCO ‘Sirocco’ occurred in France, all of them without an article in German or English.

⁵⁸ Ungerer et al. 2005: 72

⁵⁹ Klein/ Kleineidam 2006: 35

⁶⁰ Cf. Klein/ Kleineidam 2006: 36

That this phenomenon would be so apparent, was quite surprising. Articles are so highly frequent that even foreign words are sometimes used with an article, like *Le Beer* which combines a French article with an English word.

French also needs many more prepositions than German or English, since its usual form of compound contains prepositions, and the asyndetic compound-formation by juxtaposition⁶¹ is rarely applied.⁶² Therefore, complex shop signs, mostly with the prepositions *de* or *à*, like *maison de la presse* 'Press House', *Le Pont de l'Ognon* 'Ognon Bridge' and *Le BOUCHE à OREILLE* 'Whispering Campaign'⁶³ occur.

The two phenomena just mentioned also have an influence on the number of words per sign. This can be clearly seen in the following table:

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	France	England
Word count average per country	1.88	1.79	1.82	2.10	1.99

The shop signs in France lead to the highest word counts, followed by the ones in England.

3.4. Word formation patterns in towns

The following category contains some patterns of word formation:

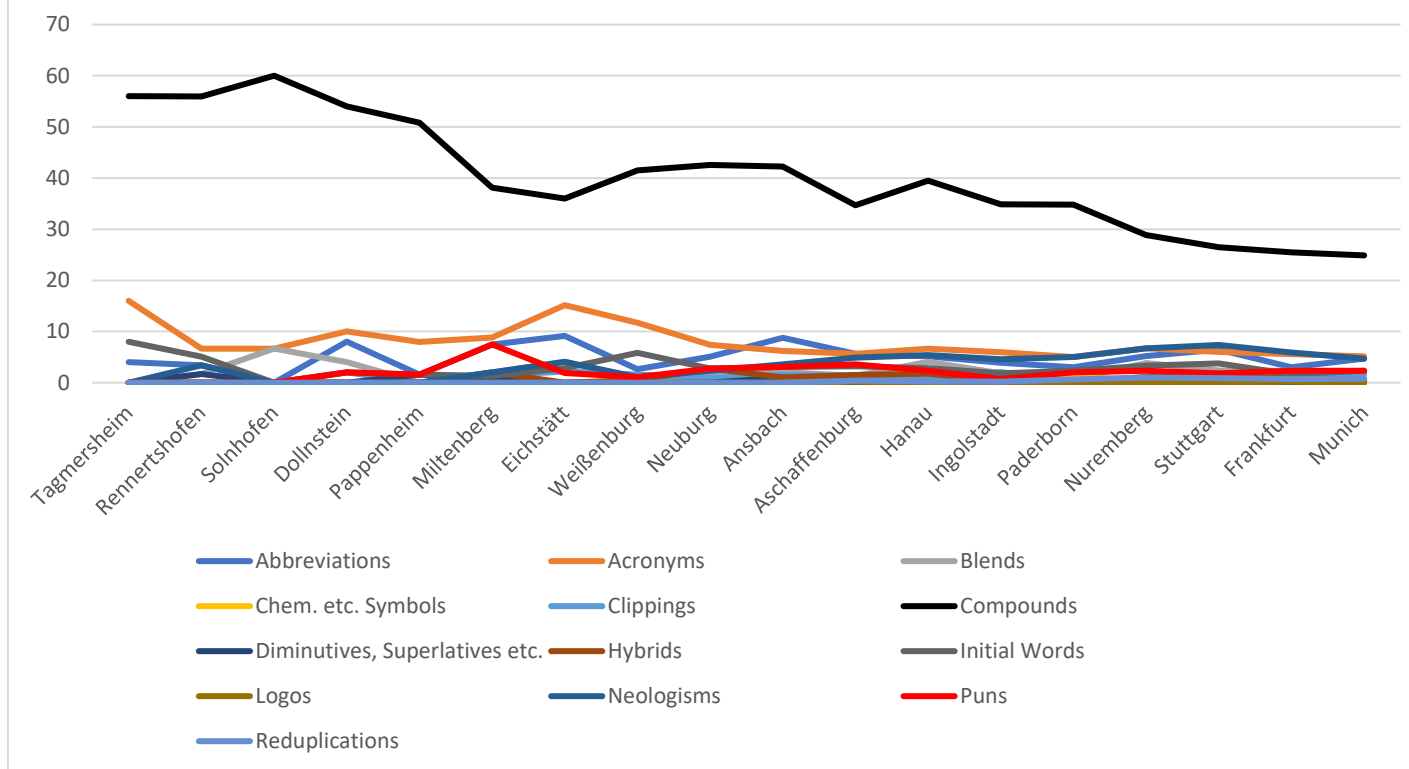
	Abbreviations	Acronyms	Blends	Chem. etc. Symbols	Clippings	Compounds	Diminutives etc.	Hybrids	Initials Words	Logos	Neologisms	Puns	Reduplications
Tagmersheim	4.00	16.00	0	0	0	56.00	0	0	8.00	0	0	0	0
Rennertshofen	3.39	6.68	1.69	0	0	55.93	1.69	0	5.08	0	3.39	0	0
Solnhofen	0	6.67	6.67	0	0	60.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dollnstein	8.00	10.00	4.00	0	2.00	54.00	0	0	2.00	0	0	2.00	0
Pappenheim	1.59	7.94	0	0	0	50.79	1.59	0	1.59	0	0	1.59	0
Miltenberg	7.48	8.84	2.04	0	1.36	38.10	0.68	2.04	1.36	0	2.04	7.48	0
Eichstätt	9.15	15.14	4.10	0	2.21	35.96	0	0	2.84	0	4.10	1.89	0
Weißenburg	2.66	11.70	0.53	0	1.60	41.49	0	0.53	5.85	0	1.06	1.06	0
Neuburg	5.09	7.41	1.39	0.46	0.93	42.59	0	2.78	2.78	0	2.31	2.78	0
Ansbach	8.76	6.19	2.06	0	1.55	42.24	1.03	1.03	3.09	0	3.61	3.09	0
Aschaffenburg	5.68	5.68	1.33	0.38	1.33	34.66	0	1.52	3.22	0.19	4.92	3.60	0.38
Hanau	5.13	6.67	4.10	0.51	1.03	39.49	0	1.79	2.82	0	5.38	2.31	0.26
Ingolstadt	3.90	5.96	1.83	1.38	2.06	34.86	0.23	0.23	1.83	0.23	4.59	0.69	0.23
Paderborn	3.01	5.02	0.67	1.00	0	34.78	0	0	2.34	0	5.02	2.01	0.67
Nuremberg	5.20	6.71	3.86	0.67	1.01	28.86	0.84	1.17	3.36	0	6.71	2.35	1.01
Stuttgart	6.47	6.02	2.41	0.60	1.51	26.51	0	1.20	3.77	0	7.38	1.81	0.90
Frankfurt	3.05	5.57	2.33	0.54	1.44	25.49	0	0.90	1.62	0.18	5.92	2.33	0.72
Munich	4.69	5.16	2.19	0.78	1.72	24.88	0.31	0	2.35	0	4.69	2.35	0.78

⁶¹ like *wagon-lit*, *chasse-neige*, *porte-objet*, cf. Le Petit Robert 2014: s.vv.

⁶² Cf. Weber 2016: 38

⁶³ Cf. Pons 2006: *bouche*

Word formation in Germany

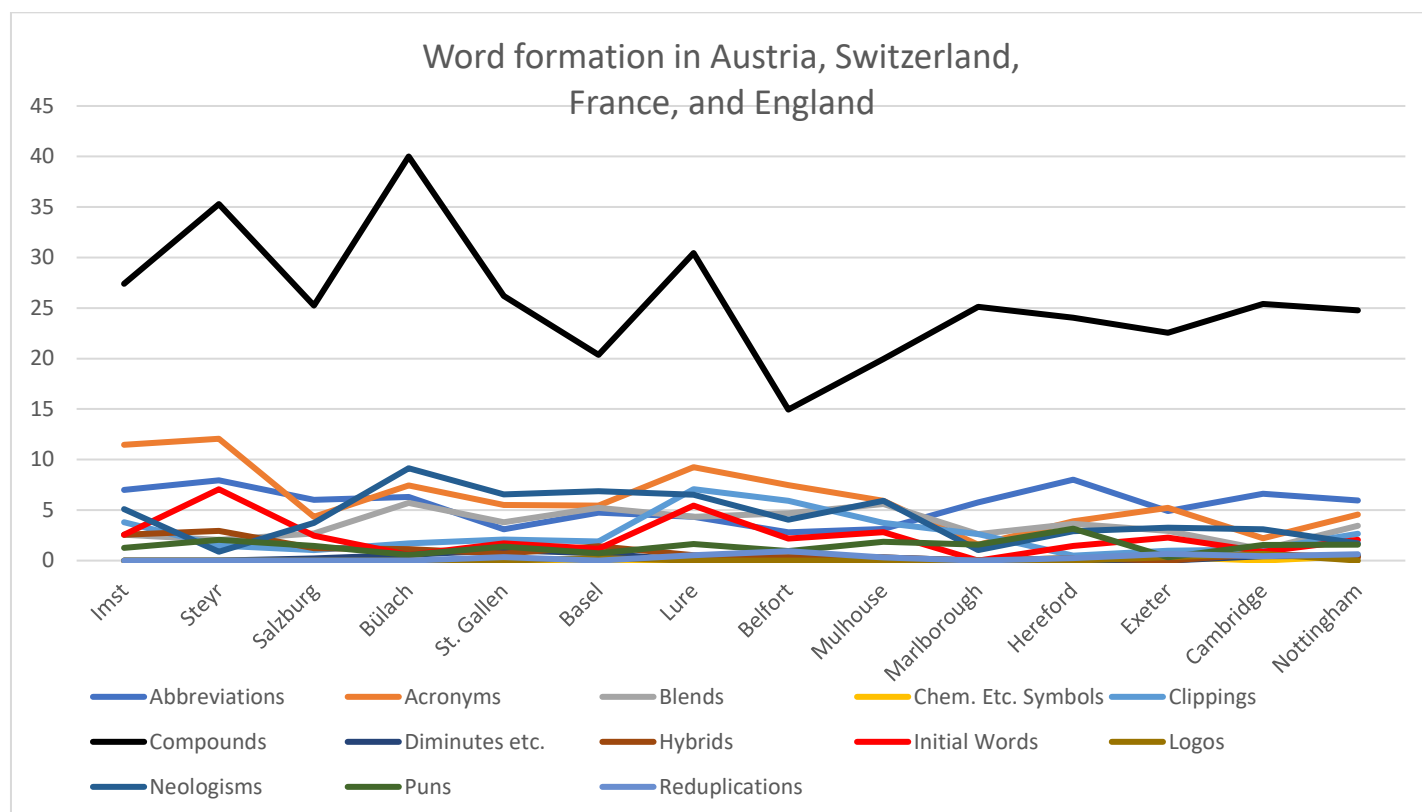


What has been said about the parts of speech also holds for the word formation patterns: Their variety tends to increase with the size of the town, even though some show only low levels throughout. These are e.g. chemical or other symbols, diminutives/ superlatives etc., hybrids, logos, puns, and reduplications.

Word Formation Pattern/ Town	Abbreviations	Acronyms	Blends	Chem. etc. symbols	Clippings	Compounds	Diminutives etc.	Hybrids	Initial Words	Logos	Neologisms	Puns	Reduplications
Imst	7.01	11.46	2.55	0	3.81	27.39	0	2.55	2.55	0	5.10	1.27	0
Steyr	7.94	12.06	2.06	0	1.47	35.29	0	2.94	7.06	0	0.88	2.06	0
Salzburg	6.00	4.35	2.69	0	1.04	25.26	0.21	1.24	2.48	0	3.73	1.45	0
Bülach	6.29	7.43	5.71	0	1.71	40.00	0.57	1.14	0.57	0	9.14	0.57	0
St. Gallen	3.10	5.52	3.79	0	2.07	26.21	1.03	0.69	1.72	0	6.55	1.38	0.34
Basel	4.74	5.45	5.21	0	1.90	20.38	0.71	1.42	1.18	0.24	6.87	0.71	0
Lure ⁶⁴	4.35	9.24	4.35	0	7.07	30.43	0	0.54	5.43	0	6.52	1.63	0.54
Belfort	2.80	7.48	4.67	0.31	5.92	14.95	0.31	0.31	2.18	0	4.05	0.93	0.93
Mulhouse	3.12	5.92	5.61	0	3.74	19.94	0.31	0.31	2.80	0	5.92	1.87	0.31
Marlborough	5.76	1.57	2.62	0	2.62	25.13	0	0	0	0	1.05	1.57	0
Hereford	8.01	3.88	3.64	0.24	0.49	24.03	0	0.24	1.46	0	2.91	3.16	0.24
Exeter	4.90	5.23	2.94	0.33	0.98	22.55	0	0	2.29	0.33	3.27	0.33	0.65
Cambridge	6.62	2.21	1.10	0	1.10	25.39	0.44	0.66	0.88	0.66	3.09	1.54	0.44
Nottingham	5.96	4.55	3.45	0.47	2.66	24.76	0.47	0.31	2.04	0	1.72	1.57	0.63

⁶⁴ Compounds in French are seen – comparable to de Saussure - consisting of two or more words that defines an item, idea or person: “Nous appelons composé un syntagme virtuelle caractérisé qui désigne, en la motivant, une idée unique: fr. *pot à eau*, all. *Wassertopf*”, English ‘water pot’. Bally/ Sechehaye 1944: 94. Consequently, they can consist of more than two words and include prepositions.

The table shows that the above said is a rule with exceptions. It also shows that the percentages for the respective patterns do not necessarily increase with the size of the town.



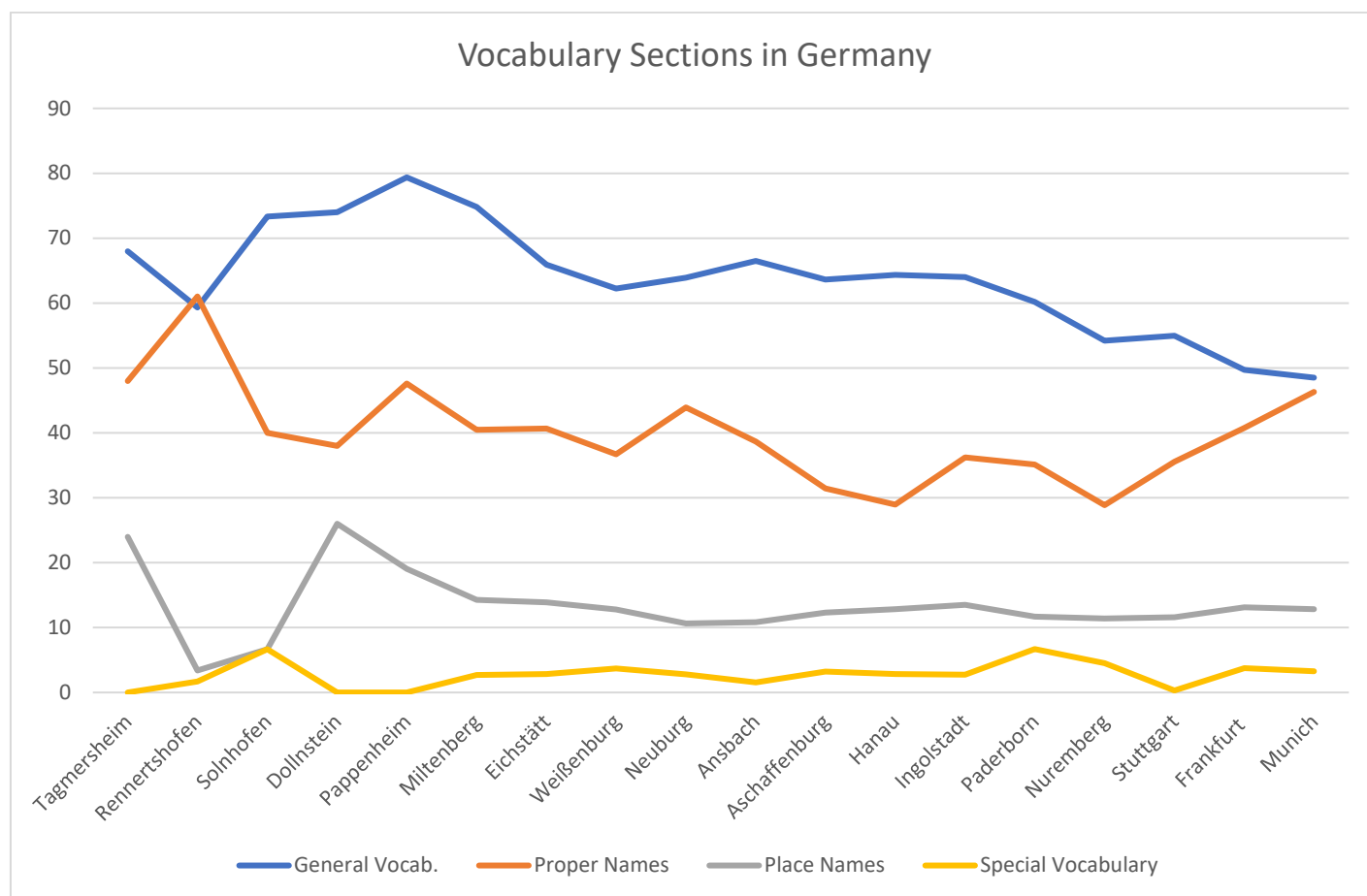
On this chart, the lines seem more inconsistent than the ones for Germany. While e.g. the numbers for compounds decrease with the size of the town in Germany and Switzerland, the curve is more a zigzag in Austria and France. In England, however, the percentages remain in the same range. Probably more locations need to be examined in order to see, whether tendencies can be detected.

3.5. Vocabulary sections in towns

The following vocabulary sections were established: general vocabulary, proper names, place names, special vocabulary, the latter consisting of special (non-standard) terminology and names or denominations from religion, mythology, literature, and history.

Village or town/ Vocabulary section	General vocabulary	Proper names	Place Names	Special vocabulary
Tagmersheim	68.00	48.00	24.00	0
Rennertshofen	59.32	61.02	3.39	1.69
Solnhofen	73.33	40.00	6.67	6.67
Dollnstein	74.00	38.00	26.00	0
Pappenheim	79.37	47.62	19.05	0
Miltenberg	74.83	40.50	14.29	2.72
Eichstätt	65.93	40.69	13.88	2.84
Weißenburg	62.23	36.70	12.77	3.72
Neuburg	63.89	43.92	10.65	2.78
Ansbach	66.49	38.66	10.82	1.55
Aschaffenburg	63.64	31.44	12.31	3.22
Hanau	64.36	28.97	12.82	2.82
Ingolstadt	63.99	36.24	13.53	2.75
Paderborn	60.20	35.12	11.71	6.69
Nuremberg	54.19	28.86	11.41	4.53
Stuttgart	54.97	35.54	11.60	0.32
Frankfurt M.	49.73	40.75	13.11	3.77
Munich	48.51	46.32	12.83	3.29

Taken into account that villages are statistically not reliably evaluable, one can see that the use of the general vocabulary in shop signs decreases with the size of the town. One reason may be that foreign words are no part of our general vocabulary and therefore, the increase of foreign languages has its counterpart in a decrease of general vocabulary. The percentages for proper names are inconsistent, which the chart shows more clearly:



At first, proper names decrease with the size of the town, but then, the curve has a range of around 20 %. My impression is that this feature is a part of the local colour the shop owners choose for each city, like the Gothic script in Dollnstein mentioned above. Thus, the shop owners in Munich use almost as many proper names as general vocabulary. Paderborn has the highest percentage of special vocabulary. The city worships its Saint Liborius, e.g. with the inner-city shopping mall *LIBORIGALERIE*. Also, several church-related facilities appear in the shopping area, like *Franziskanerkirche* = 'Grey Friars Church', *Diözesanmuseum* = 'Diocesan Museum', *PARAMENTE* = 'Paraments', and *Caritas*⁶⁵.

Place names were found as referring to the city like *City Sportsbar Ansbach*, *Ansbacher Medienwelt*, *Ansbacher Reisewelt*, and *Ansbacher Kräuter- und Teeladen*. The sign of the club *Jägerndorfer Heimatstuben* mentions a town in the Sudetenland, a once German, now Czech region, for which Ansbach took on a sponsorship,⁶⁶ because many Sudeten settled in Ansbach after World War II.⁶⁷ *Neustadt Apotheke* and *Die Werkstatt N2* are linked to the street name *Neustadt* in Ansbach, the latter mentioning the street number. The shop sign *C²* in Nottingham uses a similar pattern: C is an abbreviation for shop owner Connor, the 2 is the street number in St. James's Street.⁶⁸ The human resources service provider *onoldia*, found in Weißenburg and seated in Ansbach, goes back to the old name *Onoldsbach* for Ansbach.⁶⁹ The word city in German indicates a location downtown like *REWE CITY* in Stuttgart. It can have the same sense in England like in *CITY KEBAB HOUSE* in Nottingham, but also be a "shop where you can get the widest range"⁷⁰ like in *BUFFET CITY* in Exeter. Shop names with hidden place names are quite popular, too, like *MAINLIFTER* in Aschaffenburg mentioning the river *Main*, or *HAND IN HAND* which includes the licence number *IN* for 'Ingolstadt', where the shop is located. Both place names have a double meaning, *Main* is a homophone with *mein* = 'my' and *IN* with the preposition 'in'.

⁶⁵ A Catholic confederation for relief, see <https://www.caritas.org>, accessed 05 December 2025

⁶⁶ Cf. <https://www.jaegerndorf-sudetenland.de/>, accessed 19 November 2025

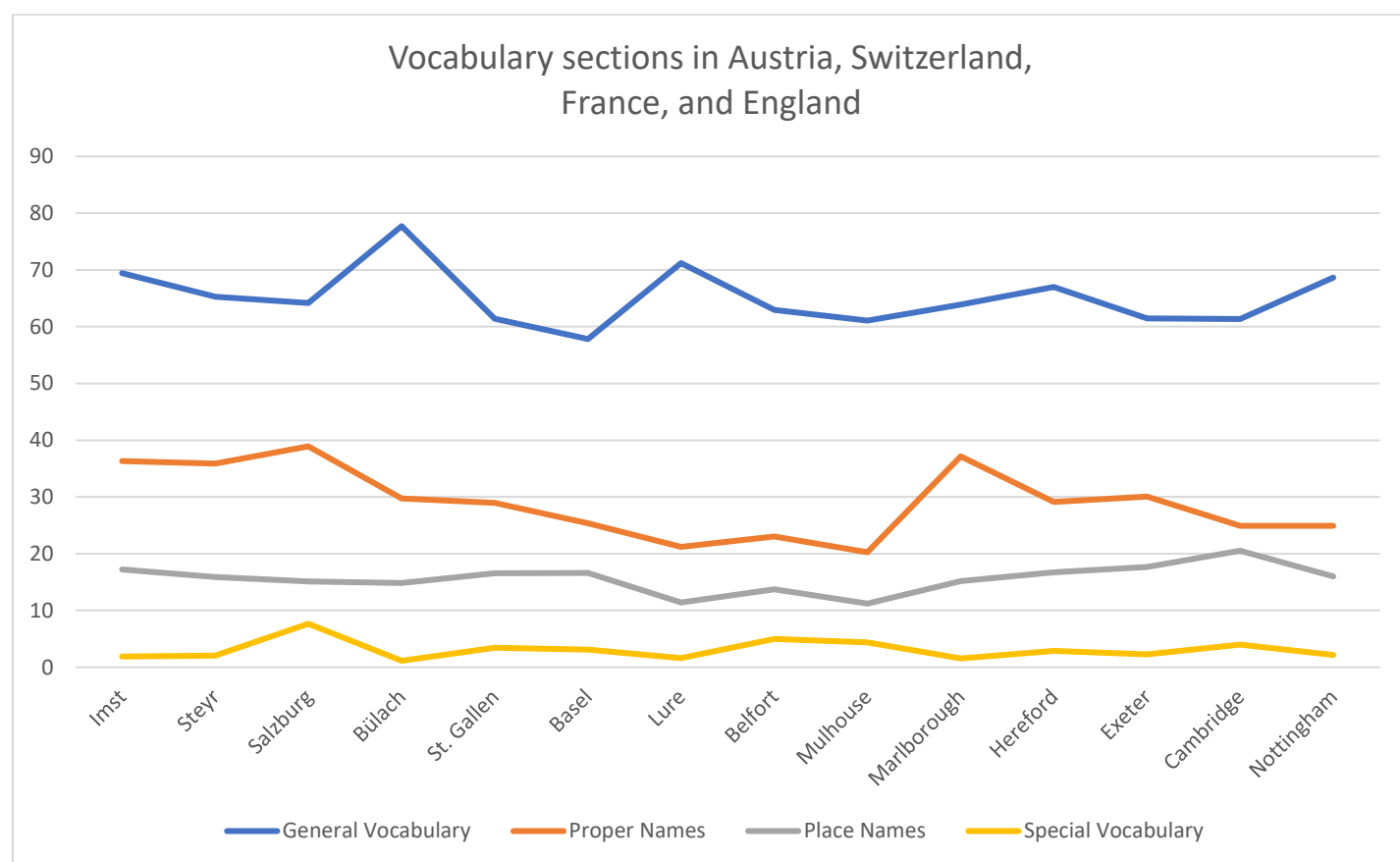
⁶⁷ Cf. Körner/ Schmid 2006: 11-13

⁶⁸ Cf. <https://www.yell.com/biz/c2-mens-hairdressing-nottingham-7894288/>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁶⁹ The motivation for that choice was the area covered by the service, which is the Regierungsbezirk Middle Franconia with its capital Ansbach, cf. <https://onoldia.com/>, accessed 10 December 2025

⁷⁰ McArthur 2000: 33

Town/ Vocabulary Section	General Vocabulary	Proper Names	Place Names	Special Vocabulary
Imst	69.43	36.31	17.20	1.91
Steyr	65.29	35.88	15.88	2.06
Salzburg	64.18	38.92	15.11	7.66
Bülach	77.71	29.71	14.86	1.14
St. Gallen	61.40	28.97	16.55	3.45
Basel	57.82	25.36	16.59	3.08
Lure	71.20	21.20	11.41	1.63
Belfort	62.93	23.05	13.71	4.98
Mulhouse	61.06	20.26	11.21	4.36
Marlborough	63.87	37.17	15.18	1.57
Hereford	66.99	29.13	16.75	2.91
Exeter	61.44	30.07	17.65	2.29
Cambridge	61.37	24.94	20.53	3.97
Nottingham	68.65	24.92	15.99	2.19



General vocabulary shows about the same percentages as in Germany, and they tend to decrease with the size of the town. In all the four countries, proper names are less frequent than in Germany. This may be due to German laws which required proper names in company names in many cases until the reform of 1998.⁷¹

⁷¹ HRefG, mentioned above with the parts of speech

4. Branches of economic activities

4.1. The branches

The following table lists all the branches of the study according to their frequency in Germany, while Germany = D, Austria = A, Switzerland = CH, France = F, and England = GB:

Number of shop signs	D	A	CH	F	GB	Word count average	D	A	CH	F	GB
DIY	10	1	1	2	9		2.00	2.00	2.00	1.50	1.77
Petrol stations, electricity, gas, and water supply etc..	14	4	2	1	3		1.86	1.75	1.50	5.00	1.67
Religion	14	5	1	1	12		1.62	2.40	1.00	3.00	4.00
Lawyers & tax counsellors	16	8	9	1	17		1.94	2.50	1.67	1.00	2.24
Stationery	26	4	6	5	30		1818	1.25	2.17	1.80	1.43
Works of art, stamps, coins etc.	34	18	6	3	18		2.15	2.28	2.67	2.00	2.33
Motor vehicles	39	5	0	8	4		2.03	1.80	0	2.00	2.00
Real estate agents, architects, engineers etc.	41	18	9	20	50		1.98	2.56	2.11	2.20	1.74
Insurances	49	10	4	24	6		1.92	1.60	1.50	1.50	2.00
Accommodation	55	27	5	8	28		2.24	2.07	2.40	2.75	2.04
Electronic equipment	55	12	18	8	38		1.69	1.83	1.94	2.50	1.76
Bookshops	57	10	15	9	22		1.96	1.60	2.00	2.22	1.86
Department stores	66	11	6	8	82		1.50	1.73	1.33	2.63	2.11
Education	107	31	19	11	31		1.88	2.19	1.89	2.09	2.10
Manufacturing industry	110	27	15	21	40		1.99	1.74	1.93	1.95	2.28
Tobacconists, betting shops, news agents etc.	120	24	16	22	45		1.93	1.96	1.69	2.68	1.78
Chemists	138	15	26	14	42		1.51	1.27	1.73	1.93	2.05
Banks	150	30	25	29	64		1.51	1.70	1.48	1.86	1.58
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians	150	20	28	22	27		1.74	1.45	1.61	1.86	1.96
Human health	206	26	47	23	53		2.09	2.15	2.28	2.43	2.34
Furniture & household articles	233	44	30	29	69		1.64	1.73	1.60	2.03	2.26
Jewellers	233	53	50	32	58		1.65	1.62	1.60	1.88	1.74
Shoes & leather goods	237	35	34	34	50		1.48	1.34	1.79	1.62	1.56
Barbers & beauty salons	246	35	47	50	134		2.10	1.86	2.13	2.04	2.18
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports	299	43	47	37	114		2.05	1.84	1.91	2.30	1.96
Other businesses	395	75	74	71	111		1.76	1.95	2.00	2.06	2.12
Food retailers	450	70	61	63	116		1.86	1.61	1.72	2.78	1.78
Fashion	874	153	140	131	233		1.58	1.53	1.56	1.76	1.67
Gastronomy	974	166	146	139	495		1.92	1.92	1.88	2.47	2.00
Sums (total 10 195)	5398	980	887	826	2000	Averages	1.82	1.84	1.71	2.20	2.01

In England, the high number of shops in gastronomy is striking. Compared to Germany, the total of the English shop signs makes up 37,05 %, while there are more than 50 % of the German gastronomy signs in England. This may be due to the English pub culture.

4.2. Languages in branches

The first focus is again on languages. In the following table, all percentages for Germany are given, and those of the other four countries above 100 shops in Germany as well:

Branch and country	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
DIY D	81.82	9.09	9.09	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol stations, electricity, gas and water supply etc. D	73.33	13.33	6.67	0	6.67	0	0	0	0
Religion D	66.67	13.33	0	0	0	6.67	0	13.33	0
Lawyers & tax counsellors D	72.22	5.56	0	0	0	11.11	0	0	11.11
Stationery D	70.37	7.41	22.22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Works of art/ stamps/ coins etc. D	86.49	5.41	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.11
Motor vehicles D	46.15	15.38	20.00 ⁷²	1.53	4.62	0	3.08	1.53	7.69
Real estate agents/ architects/ engineers D	80.43	10.87	0	0	0	2.17	0	4.35	2.17
Insurances D	82.46	3.51	0	0	0	12.28	0	0	1.75
Accommodation D	77.94	8.82	11.76	0	0	0	0	0	1.47
Electronic equipment D	52.17	27.54	2.90	1.45	1.45	5.80	0	0	8.70
Bookshops D	83.08	7.69	0	6.15	1.54	1.54	0	0	0
Department stores D	57.45	19.14	0	0	2.13	0	13.82	1.06	5.32
Education D	87.72	6.14	0.88	0.88	0	2.63	0	0.88	0
Education A	68.42	15.79	0	0	2.63	10.53	2.63	0	0
Education CH	63.64	18.18	0	4.55	4.55	4.55	4.55	0	0
Education F	16.67	0	83.33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education GB	0	90.91	3.03	0	0	0	0	3.03	3.03
Manufacturing industry D	75.19	7.52	0.75	0.75	2.25	3.76	0	6.02	3.01
Manufacturing industry A	82.76	6.90	0	0	0	3.45	0	0	6.90
Manufacturing industry CH	57.89	15.79	5.26	10.53	5.26	0	0	0	5.26
Manufacturing industry F	13.64	4.55	72.73	0	4.55	0	0	4.55	0
Manufacturing industry GB	0	90.91	0	4.55	2.27	0	0	0	2.27
Tobacconists, betting shops, news agents D	56.94	28.47	1.39	1.439	4.86	0	0.69	0.69	5.56
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents A	57.69	38.46	0	0	3.85	0	0	0	0
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents CH	57.89	21.05	0	5.26	0	0	0	0	15.79
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents F	0	15.38	69.23	0	0	0	7.69	0	7.69
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents GB	0	95.74	0	0	0	2.13	0	0	2.13
Chemists D	49.32	34.46	8.11	1.35	1.35	2.03	0.68	0.68	2.03
Chemists A	46.67	26.67	20.00	6.67	0	0	0	0	0
Chemists CH	38.46	34.62	23.08	0	3.85	0	0	0	0
Chemists F	0	14.29	71.43	7.14	7.14	0	0	0	0
Chemists GB	2.38	80.95	4.76	2.38	4.76	0	0	0	4.76
Banks D	90.00	6.67	3.33	0	0.67	0	4.00	1.33	0
Banks A	77.14	5.71	0	0	0	11.43	2.86	2.86	0
Banks CH	53.57	7.14	35.71	0	0	0	0	0	3.57
Banks F	3.45	0	96.55	0	0	0	0	0	0
Banks GB	1.56	87.50	1.56	0	0	0	7.81	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians D	78.40	9.25	0.62	6.17	0	3.09	0	0.62	1.51
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians A	85.00	15.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians CH	62.50	15.63	0	6.25	3.13	12.50	0	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians F	12.00	16.00	56.00	12.00	4	0	0	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians GB	0	72.73	3.03	12.12	0	9.09	0	0	3.03

⁷² This quite high percentage is due to the fact that the vocabulary about motor cars was borrowed from French into German.

Branch and country	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Other businesses D	61.22	35.15	1.13	0.45	0.68	0	0.45	1.36	1.81
Other businesses A	73.56	16.09	3.45	1.15	0	3.45	0	2.30	0
Other businesses CH	47.56	36.59	6.10	1.22	1.22	2.44	1.22	0	3.66
Other businesses F	4.82	12.05	73.49	4.82	1.20	2.41	0	0	1.20
Other businesses GB	0	94.83	0	1.72	0	0	0.86	0	2.59

As has been pointed out, statistics with a low number of entries are no good basis for statistical interpretations. Therefore, only those branches with more than 200 entries in Germany are analysed in this chapter. With such an amount, no bias caused by a single extraordinary shop sign is to be expected. For example, despite of an entry with ten words and one with seven in *Other businesses* this 'branch' has a mere average of 1.76 words per sign. Since *Other businesses* is no real branch, it is left out despite the 395 shop signs in Germany.

The different national languages, marked green, must be taken into account when judging the the languages.

Human health	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	75.30	6.88	2.02	2.43	0.81	6.88	0	0	6.88
Austria	78.13	0	0	3.13	3.13	9.38	0	0	6.25
Switzerland	52.46	18.03	3.28	8.20	4.92	4.92	0	0	8.20
France	0	8.00	80.00	8.00	0	4.00	0	0	0
England	0	90.91	0	3.64	0	0	1.82	0	3.64

The percentage of national languages is high in the health branch, only in Switzerland, it is much lower with a sum of 60.66 %, and English is more popular than in Germany, Austria, and France. All the countries use a relatively high amount of Greek and Latin; Latin is only missing in England, where Spanish occurs in its place. Even if the so-called medical English has become standard, as the editions of the German medical dictionary *Pschyrembel* prove - 1977 without English and 2020 with English translations of the entries throughout -, the impact of Greek and Latin as donor languages for the language of medicine is still undeniable.:

Furniture & household articles	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	66.05	16.97	2.95	0	3.69	0.74	1.11	1.48	7.01
Austria	68.63	19.61	0	0	0	3.92	0	0	7.84
Switzerland	37.84	32.43	0	0	10.81	5.41	5.41	0	8.11
France	9.09	6.06	69.70	0	0	0	6.06	0	9.09
England	0	88.89	1.39	1.39	0	1.39	0	0	6.94

The national languages differ greatly, from 48.65 % in Switzerland to 88.89 % in England. In Switzerland, English is almost as strongly represented as German. Various languages occur, only in England, there are no more than three – disregarding the sample of unclear or rare languages. France is the only country with a low percentage of English, instead, there is a relatively high percentage of German. This fact is possibly due to German proper names like *muller-ott*, *Faller*, *HIRSCHI* in Mulhouse and *Haefeli*, *Zimmerlin* in Lure, which are quite frequent in the region where the signs were collected,⁷³ and to German or Austrian firms expanding into France like *seidensticker*, and *NEUROTH* in Mulhouse.

Jewellers	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	67.32	7.78	9.34	2.33	3.50	0	0	5.45	4.28
Austria	60.34	10.34	3.45	5.17	1.72	3.45	1.72	1.72	12.07
Switzerland	52.63	15.79	12.28	3.51	3.51	5.26	0	0	7.02
France	8.33	11.11	72.22	2.78	0	0	0	0	5.56
England	3.39	79.66	8.47	3.39	1.69	0	0	0	3.39

⁷³ The town Mulhouse belonged to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, joined the Swiss Confederation in 1466, and was affiliated to France in 1798, cf. <https://www.mulhouse.fr/culture/mulhouse-ville-art-et-histoire/label-ville-dart-et-dhistoire/>, accessed 19 December 2025. Lure had only a few inhabitants when it joined France in 1679, people from other regions then settled there, cf. <http://www.lure.fr/histoire.htm>, accessed 22 November 2021. Belfort belongs to France since 1636, and the town could not be conquered by the Germans in the German-French war from 1870-1871, c.f. <https://www.belfort.fr/la-ville-de-belfort/lhistoire-de-belfort>, accessed 19 December 2025

Next to the national languages, English and French are almost at the same level, apart from the low percentage of French in Austria. Here, the German firm *Bijou Brigitte* chose French, which proves the attractiveness of this language.⁷⁴ In the jewellers' branch, English and French are popular in four of the countries.

Shoes & leather goods	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	56.59	25.97	2.71	2.71	4.26	1.94	1.16	0	4.65
Austria	59.46	21.62	8.11	2.70	2.70	0	0	0	5.41
Switzerland	43.90	36.59	7.32	0	9.76	0	0	0	2.44
France	10.81	24.32	40.54	5.41	16.22	2.70	0	0	0
England	7.84	86.27	0	0	3.92	0	0	0	1.96

English and to a lower degree Italian are frequent with shoes & leather goods, only in Austria, it is French instead of Italian. A shoe shop chain with a high number of shops in Germany is *ecco*, which is based in Denmark but picked an Italian name.⁷⁵ This proves the popularity of Italian for shoes.

Barbers & beauty salons	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	41.69	36.25	4.53	0.30	3.63	0.30	0.60	4.23	8.46
Austria	54.35	34.78	8.70	0	2.17	0	0	0	0
Switzerland	18.84	37.68	28.98	1.45	7.25	0	1.45	0	4.35
France	5.00	18.33	70.00	0	0	0	0	1.67	5
England	0	77.62	2.80	0	4.90	1.40	1.40	0.70	0.7

The most striking number in this table is the low percentage of German in Switzerland. The reason could be that many Swiss people are not aware of the French origin of a high number of the words they use. Therefore, they take them for German.⁷⁶ Consequently, barbers have shop signs like *Coiffure Michael* or *Coiffeur Hairtopica*, with both first words being French. The sum of national languages in Switzerland is 55.07 %, in the same range as in Germany and Austria.

As in most of the other branches already mentioned, English is less popular in France than in the German-speaking countries.

Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	54.59	33.82	3.62	0.97	0.97	3.62	0.24	0.24	1.93
Austria	55.36	35.71	1.79	0	1.79	1.79	1.79	0	1.79
Switzerland	50.00	27.42	3.23	1.61	8.06	6.45	1.61	0	1.61
France	2.08	27.08	54.17	0	0	4.17	2.08	4.17	6.25
England	4.69	84.38	3.13	2.34	0.78	2.34	0.78	0	1.56

Apart from England, about half of the entries are in the national language. Summing up English and the national language leads roughly to the amount of English in England. In the branch recreation/ entertainment/ hobbies/ sports, various languages appear everywhere.

Food retailers/ Country	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	74.33	7.79	4.18	0.95	2.66	3.42	0.95	0.95	4.75
Austria	76.25	7.50	3.75	0	0	1.25	0	0	11.25
Switzerland	53.08	7.41	23.46	0	11.11	0	0	2.47	2.47
France	6.58	10.53	73.68	0	2.63	2.63	1.32	0	2.63
England	0	80.49	4.88	0	1.63	0	0.81	0	12.2

⁷⁴ Cf. <https://group.bijou-brigitte.com/unternehmen/#geschichte>, 18 December 2025

⁷⁵ Cf. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecco_\(Schuhe\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecco_(Schuhe)), accessed 18 December 2025

⁷⁶ Even the linguist Georges Lüdi considers *comestible* as an internationalism and therefore as German, although it is not listed in the DWDS (search 07 December 2025), the Digital Dictionary of the German Language, cf. Lüdi 2007: 139.

The percentages of national languages are around three quarters. Again, the Swiss percentage of French is quite high, taken into account that only the German-speaking part of the country was visited. Here, the same explanation can be given as with barbers, because many French denominations are used, which are probably taken for German, like *Praliné Scherrer* and *chocolaterie KÖLBENER*. The entries with various languages are in part due to shops with foreign foods, e.g. *ZABKA* (proper name), subtitle: *POLSKI SKLEP* = 'Polish shop' in Hereford.

Fashion	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	40.26	32.39	7.67	0.71	9.59	1.21	2.93	0.81	4.44
Austria	51.14	23.30	6.82	1.14	10.80	1.70	0.57	0	4.55
Switzerland	29.01	29.01	14.81	0	16.05	1.23	3.70	0	6.17
France	6.41	19.87	56.41	1.28	4.49	2.56	1.92	0.64	6.41
England	3.75	82.50	4.58	0	1.67	2.08	2.08	0	3.33

English is highly in vogue with fashion shops, followed by Italian – apart from England. French also has noteworthy percentage in all countries. These three languages are the most frequent foreign languages in this branch. French is even more popular in Switzerland, because French proper names appear there like *CAPPAUL*, *ANDRE* and *BAYARD Co.*, brands with French names like *ESPRIT*, *TROIS POMMES* or *Clochard*. In addition, the Swiss people are familiar with French, since they learn it as their first foreign language, as a rule. That is why they also call shops e.g. *TOI ET MOI* = 'you and me', or *DU pareil ... au même* = 'from the similar to the same'.

The importance of Italian can be proved with the German chain *GINA LAURA*, which uses two Italian first names.⁷⁷ In France, Italian has a lower percentage, German takes its place. In England, French and German occur with lower percentages, while the national language is high.

Gastronomy has the highest number of entries in Germany. Consequently, the following table should be the most valuable one:

Gastronomy	German	English	French	Greek	Italian	Latin	Spanish	Turkish	Others
Germany	37.51	22.22	11.49	0.93	13.83	0.85	2.33	4.43	6.45
Austria	42.79	16.67	13.51	1.35	14.86	1.8	2.25	1.80	4.95
Switzerland	30.56	27.78	12.78	0.56	15.56	0	4.44	1.67	6.67
France	4.02	16.67	58.62	0	6.90	1.15	2.87	4.02	5.75
England	0.68	62.63	6.70	1.37	11.6	0.51	5.29	1.71	9.23

In this branch, the percentage of national language is relatively low, even in England. The mixture of languages is also clearly visible in all countries. The reason for this fact is that many foreign businesspeople offer their culinary specialities and showcase this already on their shop signs.

To put the language choices in a nutshell, first, English is highly frequent in all the five countries, the only example being the health branch in Austria, where it is completely absent. Second, the percentage of the national language in England is higher than in the other countries, as was also visible in the comparison of the countries. Basically, this proves the attractiveness of this language, which holds for the native as well as for the speakers of other languages. Third, there are languages which appear more often in certain branches, English with electronic equipment branch, tobacconists etc., chemists, shoes, recreation etc., and fashion; French with stationery, chemists (in Austria and Switzerland), banks (in Switzerland); to a lower degree Latin and Greek in the health branch, French and Italian in the fashion branch, Italian in the shoe/ leather goods branch. In many branches, English is more popular in Switzerland than in the other German-speaking countries, and likewise, less popular in France.

⁷⁷ Cf. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gina_Laura, accessed 18 December 2025

4.3. Parts of speech in branches

The following table lists the percentages of parts of speech in branches. The results of the three most frequent branches shall be analysed below:

Branch and country	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
DIY D	0	0	0	0	0	90	0	0	0	0	50	0
Petrol stations, electricity, gas and water supply etc. D	0	0	0	0	0	42.86	0	0	0	0	14.29	7.14
Religion D	7.14	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lawyers & tax counsellors D	0	0	0	0	0	56.25	0	0	0	0	56.25	0
Stationery D	0	0	0	0	0	65.38	3.85	0	3.85	0	53.85	0
Works of art/ stamps etc. D	5.88	0	5.88	0	0	88.24	2.94	0	11.76	2.94	41.18	0
Motor vehicles D	5.13	0	0	0	0	61.53	2.56	0	0	2.56	53.85	2.56
Real estate agents/ architects/ engineers D	2.44	0	0	0	0	56.10	2.44	0	2.44	0	65.85	2.44
Insurances D	2.04	4.08	0	0	0	40.82	0	0	0	0	40.82	0
Accommodation D	10.91	0	0	0	0	92.73	0	1.82	9.09	0	18.18	0
Electronic equipment D	5.45	0	0	1.82	0	58.18	1.82	1.82	1.82	5.45	41.82	5.45
Bookshops D	3.51	0	1.75	0	0	71.93	0	0	1.75	0	63.16	0
Department stores D	6.06	0	0	0	0	74.24	0	1.52	1.52	1.52	15.15	0
Education D	5.61	0	5.61	1.87	0	79.44	4.67	0	5.61	0	23.36	0
Education A	10.41	3.23	12.90	0	0	77.42	6.45	0	3.23	0	6.45	0
Education CH	0	5.26	0	0	0	94.74	0	0	27.70	0	15.79	0
Education F	18.18	0	9.09	0	0	72.73	0	0	9.09	0	18.18	0
Education GB	19.35	0	6.45	3.23	0	87.1	3.23	0	6.45	0	3.23	6.45
Manufacturing industry D	3.64	0	0.91	2.73	0	66.36	0.91	0.91	0.91	0	63.64	0.91
Manufacturing industry A	3.70	0	0	0	0	55.56	0	0	0	0	66.67	3.70
Manufacturing industry CH	6.67	0	0	0	0	86.67	0	0	6.67	0	40.00	0
Manufacturing industry F	0	0	14.29	0	0	61.90	0	0	19.05	0	28.57	0
Manufacturing industry GB	15.00	0	10	0	0	80.00	0	0	2.50	2.50	25.00	7.50
Tobacconists, betting shops, news agents D	6.67	0.83	2.50	0	0	77.50	6.67	0	6.67	0.83	25.00	4.17
Tobacconists, ... A	0	4.17	0	4.17	0	91.67	4.17	0	8.33	0	4.17	4.17
Tobacconists, ... CH	0	0	0	0	0	68.75	0	0	12.50	0	25.00	0
Tobacconists, ... F	22.73	0	45.45	0	0	95.45	0	0	27.27	0	0	0
Tobacconists, ...GB	11.11	2.22	2.22	0	0	64.44	2.22	2.22	0	0	24.44	0
Chemists D	5.76	0.72	8.63	0	0	39.57	0	0	5.04	0	46.76	0.72
Chemists A	0	0	0	0	0	33.33	0	0	0	0	33.33	0
Chemists CH	15.38	0	11.54	0	0	57.69	0	0	3.85	0	34.62	0
Chemists F	7.14	0	14.29	0	0	35.71	0	0	21.43	0	35.71	0
Chemists GB												
Banks D	2.67	0	0	0.67	0	83.33	2.67	0	0.67	0	11.33	0
Banks A	0	0	0	0	0	86.67	0	0	3.33	0	16.67	0
Banks CH	12.00	0	0	0	0	56.00	0	0	0	0	8.00	0
Banks F	48.28	0	0	0	0	75.86	0	0	10.34	0	3.45	0
Banks GB	12.50	0	4.69	0	0	53.13	0	0	1.56	0	17.18	0

Branch and country	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians D	3.33	0.67	0	0.67	0	62.00	0	0	1.33	1.33	69.33	0
Opticians & ... A	0	0	5.00	0	0	55.00	0	0	0	0	80.00	0
Opticians & ... CH	0	3.57	3.57	0	0	57.14	0	0	3.57	0	57.14	3.57
Opticians & ... F	22.73	0	13.64	0	0	81.82	13.64	0	4.55	0	22.73	0
Opticians & ... GB	7.41	11.11	3.70	0	0	74.07	0	0	0	0	40.74	0
Human health D	12.14	0	0.49	0.97	0	78.64	0.49	1.46	8.25	0.49	29.13	0
Human health A	15.38	0	0	0	0	80.77	0	0	3.85	0	23.08	0
Human health CH	17.02	0	2.13	2.13	0	80.85	2.13	0	14.89	0	4.53	2.13
Human health F	17.39	0	17.39	0	0	82.61	4.35	0	26.09	0	30.43	0
Human health GB	33.96	3.77	1.89	0	0	71.7	0	0	0	1.89	41.51	1.89
Furniture & household articles D	4.29	1.29	3.00	0	2.15	59.66	1.72	0.43	4.72	0	38.48	1.72
Furniture & ... A	4.55	2.27	2.27	0	0	59.09	6.82	0	4.55	0	29.55	2.27
Furniture & ... CH	16.67	0	3.33	0	0	73.33	0	0	10	0	23.33	0
Furniture & ... F	20.70	3.45	27.59	3.45	0	79.31	0	0	13.79	0	20.70	0
Furniture & ... GB	15.94	5.80	7.25	4.35	0	60.87	4.35	0	7.25	0	31.88	2.90
Jewellers D	2.58	0	1.29	0	0	49.79	4.29	0.86	1.72	0.86	65.67	1.29
Jewellers A	5.66	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	1.89	3.45	66.04	0
Jewellers CH	2.00	0	2.00	0	0	34.00	2.00	0	2	0	66.00	2.00
Jewellers F	6.25	3.13	3.13	0	3.13	56.25	0	0	15.63	0	50.00	3.13
Jewellers GB	3.45	0	0	0	0	29.31	0	0	1.72	0	74.14	0
Shoes & leather goods D	1.69	0.42	2.11	0.42	1.27	45.56	1.69	0	1.69	0.42	44.88	2.11
Shoes & leather goods A	0	0	0	0	5.71	31.43	0	0	0	2.86	48.57	5.71
Shoes & leather goods CH	0	2.94	0	0	0	79.41	0	0	2.94	2.94	52.94	2.94
Shoes & leather goods F	2.94	0	0	0	0	50.00	5.88	2.94	0	2.94	29.41	5.88
Shoes & leather goods GB	10.00	2.00	2.00	0	2.00	44.00	0	0	2.00	0	42.00	0
Barbers & beauty salons D	9.35	1.22	3.25	0.81	0.41	79.67	0	0.41	3.25	2.44	43.50	1.63
Barbers & beauty salons A	5.71	0	8.57	2.86	0	80.00	0	0	0	0	45.71	0
Barbers & beauty s. CH	19.15	0	2.13	4.26	0	85.11	4.26	0	2.13	2.13	31.91	0
Barbers & beauty salons F	8.00	4.00	8.00	0	0	78.00	2.00	0	10.00	2.00	32.00	0
Barbers & beauty s. GB	5.22	1.49	10.45	1.49	0	64.18	1.49	1.49	1.49	2.24	32.09	2.99
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports D	9.73	1.01	3.02	1.01	0.34	80.54	3.02	0.34	1.68	1.34	31.21	0.67
Recreation, etc. A	7.14	2.38	2.38	0	0	74.42	0	0	0	2.38	34.88	2.38
Recreation, etc. CH	8.51	0	2.13	0	4.26	72.34	4.26	0	2.13	0	29.79	0
Recreation, etc. F	18.92	2.70	8.11	0	0	91.89	2.70	0	16.22	0	27.03	0
Recreation, etc. GB	11.40	0.88	10.53	0	0	73.68	0.88	3.51	0.88	0	16.67	2.63
Other businesses D	8.10	1.01	1.77	1.27	0	62.28	2.28	0.25	3.29	1.01	15.95	0.76
Other businesses A	6.67	0	1.33	0	0	69.33	1.33	1.33	2.67	0	22.67	0
Other businesses CH	8.11	0	2.70	1.35	0	74.32	8.11	0	20.27	0	8.11	0
Other businesses F	19.72	0	8.45	0	0	74.65	0	0	19.72	1.41	12.68	0
Other businesses GB	12.61	0.90	7.21	0	0	66.67	0.9	2.70	2.7	0	9.91	0.9

Adjectives are popular in all the countries in the human health branch, otherwise the choices differ.

In the most frequent branch, almost every part of speech listed can be found in all the five countries (minimum yellow, maximum green):

Gastronomy	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
Germany	9.24	0.62	5.54	0.62	0.51	71.25	1.75	0.82	8.73	0.82	24.23	1.54
Austria	7.93	0	9.04	1.20	0	69.88	3.61	0.60	8.43	0	24.10	2.41
Switzerland	10.96	2.05	6.16	0	0	75.34	1.37	6.16	7.53	0	15.75	1.37
France	9.35	0.72	42.45	2.88	0	80.58	3.60	0.72	23.02	0.72	12.23	0
England	15.56	0.81	15.56	0	0.81	73.33	1.82	2.22	2.83	0.61	18.59	2.42

Prepositions are highly frequent in gastronomy – apart from England. ZU DEN Zipfer BIERSTUBEN, ZUM MOHREN, ZUM STIEGLKELLER, ZUM PETERSKELLER, Zum Ossi are examples from Austria; AU MOUTON BLANC, CHEZ BOSKO ET ANNETTE, AU DRAGON DE JADE, and CHEZ XAV ET DOMI from France. In England, shop names in gastronomy are often quite old or mention history or mythology, e.g. *THE WHITE HARTE*, *THE WELLINGTON ARMS* in Marlborough, *THE BLACK LION*, *THE SARACENS HEAD*, *THE SPREAD EAGLE*, *QUEENS ARMS*, *THE GOLDEN FLEECE*, *THE KINGS FEE* in Hereford, *THE CHEVALIER INN* in Exeter, and *THE LOXLEY* in Nottingham. Next to these traditional signs, modern ones like *Cafe Thirty 8*, *Movida* (Spanish for ‘scene’), or the chain *COSTA COFFEE* were found in England. All these do not use prepositions.

Interjections are the least frequent parts of speech, since they can only be found in Germany and England. Pronouns are absent in Austria and Switzerland. Apart from the already mentioned nouns, proper names, and adjectives, huge differences between the countries can be seen with articles. In England, they are more frequent than in the German-speaking countries, in France, however, their number is four times as high as in Austria and six times as high as in Germany. As has been pointed out in the part about the towns, this phenomenon is due to grammar. The higher numbers of articles and prepositions go on with the other branches, only with jewellers, there are less.

Fashion	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
Germany	10.87	2.40	0.80	0.11	0.34	37.07	0.92	1.14	2.06	1.26	39.36	1.03
Austria	6.54	3.27	0.65	0	0.65	43.79	0.65	0.65	3.27	0.65	45.75	0.65
Switzerland	12.86	3.57	0.71	0.71	0	37.86	0	1.43	2.14	1.43	27.14	2.14
France	12.21	1.53	6.11	3.05	0	58.78	1.53	0.76	9.92	2.29	21.37	0.76
England	19.31	1.29	3.86	0	0.86	55.79	0.86	0.43	0.86	0.86	30.90	0.86

The Austrians prefer proper names, while the French use less than half of that number. The other parts of speech are almost as highly frequent as with gastronomy, which proves again the theory that more competition leads to a greater variety of parts of speech. Overall, in that case the shop owners become more inventive in order to stick out.

Food retailers have almost equal percentages of proper names and nouns:

Food retailers	Adjective	Adverbial	Article	Conjunction	Interjection	Noun	Number	Numeral	Preposition	Pronoun	Proper name	Verb
Germany	4.22	1.11	4.00	0.89	0	63.11	1.11	0	4.22	1.11	55.33	2.00
Austria	4.77	0	2.86	0	0	55.71	0	0	2.86	0	57.14	0
Switzerland	13.11	0	1.64	0	0	54.10	0	0	8.20	0	40.98	1.64
France	15.87	1.59	17.46	1.59	0	69.84	0	0	20.63	1.59	39.68	1.59
England	18.97	4.31	7.76	0	0.86	56.90	1.72	0.86	3.45	0	41.38	0

The most striking difference is with adjectives, since the English shop owners use around 4.5 times as many as the Germans. No explanation can be given for this phenomenon. Two other results of this table have already been explained: the high number of prepositions and the low number of proper names in France.

As a rule, the variety of parts of speech increases with the number of shops of a branch, comparable to what has been said about the numbers of shop signs in a town. In my opinion, shop owners become more creative when there is more competition. Nouns and proper names are the most frequent parts of speech almost everywhere, followed by adjectives, although these do not appear in every branch or country.

4.4. Word formation in branches

The same procedure as with parts of speech is applied to the elements of word formation:

Branch and country	Abbreviation	Acronym	Blend	Chem. etc. symbol	Clipping	Compound	Diminutive etc.	Hybrid	Logo	Neologism	Pun	Reduplication
DIY D	0	10	10	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol stations, electricity, gas, water supply etc. D	21.43	35.71	7.14	0	14.29	14.29	0	0	0	0	0	0
Religion D	0	7.14	0	0	0	57.14	0	0	0	0	7.14	0
Lawyers & tax counsellors D	6.25	18.75	6.25	0	0	18.75	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stationery D	7.69	0	0	0	0	38.46	0	0	0	7.69	3.85	0
Works of art/ stamps/ coins etc. D	0	0	0	0	0	50.00	0	0	0	2.94	5.88	0
Motor vehicles D	5136	28.21	7.69	0	0	33.33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Real estate agents/ architects/ engineers D	9.76	7.32	0	0	4.88	31.71	0	0	0	0	2.44	0
Insurances D	10.20	36.73	0	0	2.04	20.41	0	0	0	2.04	0	0
Accommodation D	0	3.64	0	0	0	40.00	1.82	0	0	1.82	0	0
Electronic equipment D	5.45	7.27	3.63	1.82	3.63	25.45	0	0	1.82	0	0	0
Bookshops D	8.77	1.75	1.75	0	0	50.88	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department stores D	1.52	6.06	0	0	18.18	66.67	0	15.15	0	1.52	0	0
Education D	5.61	11.21	1.87	0	0	61.68	0	0	0	1.87	0.93	0
Education A	0	9.68	0	0	3.23	45.16	3.23	3.23	0	3.23	0	0
Education CH	0	10.53	5.26	0	0	57.89	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education F	0	9.09	0	0	9.09	36.36	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education GB	6.45	3.23	3.23	0	0	38.71	0	0	0	0	3.23	0
Manufacturing industry D	10.00	16.36	5.45	0	0	44.55	0.91	0.91	0	1.82	0	0
Manufacturing industry A	7.41	18.52	0	0	0	22.22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing industry CH	6.67	0	6.67	0	0	40.00	0	6.67	0	20	0	0
Manufacturing industry F	4.76	9.52	0	0	9.52	28.57	0	0	0	9.52	4.76	0
Manufacturing industry GB	15.00	2.50	5.00	0	5	32.50	0	0	0	2.50	5.00	0
Tobacconists, betting shops, news agents D	2.50	4.17	0	0	0.83	32.50	0	0	0	7.50	2.50	0.83
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents A	16.67	0	8.33	0	0	66.67	0	4.17	0	4.17	4.17	0
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents CH	37.50	0	0	0	0	18.75	0	0	0	6.25	0	0
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents F	0	4.55	9.09	0	0	27.27	0	0	0	13.64	4.55	0
Tobacconists. betting shops, news agents GB	11.11	4.44	11.11	0	2.22	15.56	0	0	0	4.44	2.22	0
Chemists D	0.72	14.39	0	0	0.72	16.57	0	0.72	0	1.44	0	0
Chemists A	0	33.33	0	0	0	6.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemists CH	3.85	0	0	0	0	14.79	0	0	0	3.85	0	0
Chemists F	0	7.14	0	0	7.14	14.29	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemists GB	7.14	2.38	2.38	0	4.76	30.95	0	0	0	2.38	2.38	0
Banks D	8.67	18.00	4.67	0	6.00	68.00	0	0.67	0	8.67	0	0
Banks A	3.33	16.67	10	0	10.00	46.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
Banks CH	0	28.00	4	0	4.00	36	0	8	0	8	0	0
Banks F	0	37.93	13.79	0	0	13.79	0	0	0	0	0	0
Banks GB	0	12.50	12.50	0	1.56	21.86	0	0	1.56	0	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians D	1.33	0.67	2.67	0	2.00	28.67	0	0	0	1.33	3.33	1.33
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians A	0	0	0	0	0	15.00	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians CH	3.57	0	25.00	0	0	21.43	0	3.57	0	10.71	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians F	0	4.55	4.55	0	9.09	9.09	0	0	0	13.64	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians GB	0	3.7	11.11	0	0	25.92	0	0	0	0	0	0

Branch and country	Abbreviation	Acronym	Blend	Chem. etc. symbol	Clipping	Compound	Diminutive etc.	Hybrid	Logo	Neologism	Pun	Reduplication
Human health D	7.77	0.97	3.88	0	2.23	58.25	0	0.97	0	4.85	0.49	0
Human health A	7.69	11.54	0	0	0	50	0	7.69	0	0	0	0
Human health CH	6.38	4.53	14.89	0	2.13	53.19	0	0	0	2.13	2.13	0
Human health F	0	0	0	0	0	39.13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Human health GB	1.89	0	0	0	1.89	24.53	0	0	0	0	3.77	0
Furniture & household articles D	6.87	9.01	0.46	0	0.86	26.18	0	1.28	0	4.72	2.15	0
Furniture & household articles A	6.82	9.09	0	0	0	13.64	0	2.27	0	4.55	0	0
Furniture & household articles CH	0	0	0	0	0	26.67	0	0	0	10.00	0	0
Furniture & household articles F	3.45	3.45	3.45	0	10.34	13.80	0	0	0	3.45	0	0
Furniture & household articles GB	7.25	2.90	0	0	0	20.29	1.45	0	0	0	2.9	0
Jewellers D	3.86	1.72	1.29	0	0.86	17.60	0.43	0.31	0	1.72	2.15	0.43
Jewellers A	6.90	3.45	6.90	0	0	13.79	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jewellers CH	8	6	4	0	0	16.00	0	2	0	2	0	0
Jewellers F	0	9.38	3.13	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	3.13
Jewellers GB	15.52	1.72	1.72	0	0	5.17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shoes & leather goods D	2.95	5.91	2.95	0	1.69	21.10	0	0	0	5.91	2.95	0.43
Shoes & leather goods A	2.86	2.86	2.86	0	0	14.29	0	0	0	8.57	0	0
Shoes & leather goods CH	0	0	0	0	0	23.53	0	0	0	2.94	0	0
Shoes & leather goods F	5.88	0	5.88	0	0	11.76	0	0	0	2.94	0	0
Shoes & leather goods GB	6	0	0	0	0	20	0	2	0	10	4	0
Barbers & beauty salons D	5.69	1.63	0.41	0.41	0.81	39.02	0	0	0	2.44	4.88	0.41
Barbers & beauty salons A	2.86	2.86	0	0	0	42.86	0	11.43	0	2.45	4.90	0.41
Barbers & beauty salons CH	2.13	0	8.51	0	0	27.66	0	2.13	0	6.38	0	0
Barbers & beauty salons F	6.00	6.00	0	0	8.00	18.00	0	0	0	4.00	0	0
Barbers & beauty salons GB	11.19	1.49	2.24	0	1.49	29.1	0	0	0.75	1.49	4.48	0
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports D	7.72	15.77	1.01	0	1.01	58.72	0.34	1.68	0	4.70	2.35	0
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports A	11.63	9.30	4.65	0	0	46.51	0	0	0	2.38	2.38	2.38
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports CH	4.26	6.38	0	0	0	40.43	0	4.26	0	8.51	0	0
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports F	5.41	2.70	0	0	13.51	24.32	0	0	0	8.11	2.7	0
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports GB	5.26	12.28	5.26	0	3.51	34.21	0	0.88	0	3.51	2.63	0
Other businesses D	9.62	20.76	5.57	7.09	0.25	38.99	0	0.76	0.25	2.03	1.01	0.25
Other businesses A	8.00	17.33	1.33	0	5.33	42.67	0	1.33	0	1.33	2.67	0
Other businesses CH	6.76	5.41	4.05	0	2.70	29.73	1.35	1.35	0	8.11	0	0
Other businesses F	1.41	12.68	8.45	0	7.04	26.76	0	2.82	0	7.04	0	0
Other businesses GB	3.60	10.81	0.90	3.60	1.80	40.54	0	0	0	1.80	0.90	0.90

The most frequent branch shows these results:

Gastronomy	Abbreviation	Acronym	Blend	Chem. symbol etc.	Clipping	Compound	Diminutive etc.	Hybrid	Logo	Neologism	Pun	Reduplication
Germany	1.85	0.92	1.13	0	0.62	30.39	0.62	1.44	0	3.70	3.49	0.72
Austria	5.42	1.20	3.01	0	1.20	19.88	0	2.41	0	8.43	1.81	0.60
Switzerland	0.68	0.68	2.74	0	0.68	21.23	1.37	1.37	0	3.42	1.37	0
France	3.60	0.72	2.16	0	2.88	24.46	0	0	0	0	0	0
England	3.84	0.40	0.61	0.20	1.21	24.04	0.2	0.81	0.2	1.21	1.01	1.21

Compounds are by far the most frequent pattern of word formation; all the other patterns remain at low percentages. This can be seen as a rule in branches as well as in the towns. The relatively high percentage of abbreviations in Austria can be attributed to restaurants like *etc.*, *HANS W.* or *Spaghetti & Co.* In the same country, neologisms are quite popular.

Examples are *brasserie BRUCKNEREI* in Imst, where Marcel Bruckner uses his proper name.⁷⁸ ‘Venice’ and the Latin word ‘nexus’ = ‘connection’ led to *venexia* in Salzburg⁷⁹ In Germany, the number of puns deserves mentioning. Examples are *probierbar* in Ansbach, where the syllable *-bar* can have two meanings: either ‘bar’ as the English word or the German ending *-bar* = ‘-able’, in the given example ‘one can try’ or ‘tryable’. This pattern was used more often, like in *kostbar*, *Philharmonie Essbar*, and *TRAGBAR* in Miltenberg. *EigenArt* and *LebensArt* both play with the English and German meaning of *art*, in German ‘manner’, thus rendering ‘my own character’ or ‘my art’, and ‘way of living’ or ‘art of life’. The burger-restaurant *ASCHAFFENBURGER* actually is the adjective of the town’s name, but it includes the English word *burger*.

Fashion	Abbreviation	Acronym	Blend	Chem. symbol etc.	Clipping	Compound	Diminutive etc.	Hybrid	Logo	Neologism	Pun	Reduplication
Germany	7.21	4.12	1.72	0.11	1.26	13.27	0.23	0.57	0	12.24	3.32	1.26
Austria	6.54	5.23	1.96	0	0.43	15.67	0	0	0	6.54	3.92	0.65
Switzerland	6.43	6.43	2.14	0	2.86	13.57	2.14	0	0	10.71	4.29	0
France	6.11	6.11	4.58	0.76	7.63	8.40	0.76	0.76	0	9.92	5.34	3.05
England	8.15	2.15	4.29	0	2.58	13.73	0.86	0	0	6.01	0.86	0.86

In addition to the particularities mentioned before, the percentage of neologisms is high in Germany. *CECIL* was attributed to this form of word formation, since the first name picked for the label is probably an allusion to the first headquarter ‘Celle’.⁸⁰ The label *TOM TAILOR* is explained on its homepage. The founders “Schröder and Punjer quickly found out that they needed a handy and memorable label name, which works on the international market as well as in Germany.”⁸¹ That is why they choose English, ‘tailor’ makes clear, what the label is about. The first name ‘Tom’ alludes to ‘any Tom, Dick or Harry’⁸², because the label sells fashion for everybody.

Food retailers in the five countries lead to the following table:

Food retailers	Abbreviation	Acronym	Blend	Chem. symbol etc.	Clipping	Compound	Diminutive etc.	Hybrid	Logo	Neologism	Pun	Reduplication
Germany	3.11	4.82	7.33	0	0.89	37.33	0	0.67	0	2.22	2.89	0.67
Austria	8.57	14.30	2.86	0	0	22.86	0	2.86	0	1.59	1.59	0
Switzerland	1.64	3.28	8.20	0	11.48	22.95	0	0	0	9.84	0	1.64
France	3.17	0	4.76	0	1.59	23.81	1.59	0	0	7.94	1.59	0
England	4.31	3.45	2.59	0	0.86	25.00	0.86	0.86	0	1.72	2.59	0

With food retailers, Germany has the highest percentage of compounds, the other four countries have roughly the same numbers. Again, Austria has the highest level of abbreviations, e.g. *A Hofer* in Steyr, where the *A* shortens the Acronym *ALDI* the firm uses in Germany.⁸³ Blends are popular in Germany, e.g. *Liwell Reformhaus* in Aschaffenburg, most probably derived from ‘live+well’. *Tchibo* puts together ‘Tchilling+Bohne’, and *REWE* means ‘Revisionsverband der Westkauf-Genossenschaften’⁸⁴. Among the Austrian acronyms are e.g. five *SPAR* shops, shortened from the dutch founder’s motto: ‘Through harmonious cooperation everyone benefits regularly’. The Dutch words lead to the acronym *de spar*, which means ‘the fir’; that is why a fir tree is the *SPAR*-Logo⁸⁵.

There are higher percentages of blends, clippings and neologisms in Switzerland. The coffeeshop *moCaffé* in Bülach unifies the Italian ‘*mocca + caffè*’, but changes the accent to the French version, which alludes to the French ‘*mon café*’ = ‘my coffee/ my cafe’. In St. Gallen, *yogurtlandia* consists of ‘yogurt+land’, and adds the ending *-ia*. For clippings, *coop* from ‘cooperative’ should be mentioned, since it appears six times in this branch. This is the legal status of the firm, which is also an important characteristic of its philosophy.⁸⁶

In contrast, the Swiss firm *MIGROS*, another chain with five shops in my sample, was categorized as neologism. There is no reliable explanation for this name, except that it was invented by founder Gottlieb Duttweiler.⁸⁷ France also has a

⁷⁸ Cf. <https://www.brucknerei.at/>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁷⁹ Cf. *venexia* (2020), Salzburg: <http://www.venexia.at/>, accessed 22 March 2020

⁸⁰ Cf. <https://www.cbr.de/company>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁸¹ <https://www.tom-tailor.de>, accessed 28 February 2019, translation R.M.

⁸² OALD 2010: s.v.

⁸³ Cf. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hofer_KG, accessed 18 December 2025

⁸⁴ Cf. <https://www.tchibo.com/at/de/stories/70-jahre-tchibo>, and cf. <https://www.rewe-group.com/de/unternehmen/>, both 18 December 2026

⁸⁵ Cf. <https://spar-international.com/history/>, 18 December 2025

⁸⁶ Cf. <https://www.coop.ch/de/unternehmen/ueber-uns/wer-wir-sind/genossenschaft.html>, 18 December 2025

⁸⁷ Cf. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migros>, 18 December 2025. The article cites a biography by Karl Lüond about Duttweiler.

mentionable number of neologisms, e.g. *CROUST'Y PAIN* in Mulhouse, which combines the French word 'croûte' = 'crust' with the English word 'crusty' in a creative way. [*cabosse*] tries to render the pronunciation of 'ça bosse' [*sabɔs*] = 'we work/ sweat away/ graft'.⁸⁸ Similar patterns can be found in the fashion branch.

Although the English are renowned for their puns,⁸⁹ I found only a few in all the branches. This may be due to the fact that it is difficult for a foreigner like me to identify them. In France, I encountered the same difficulty, since the French use some which are only detectable with a good knowledge of slang like *Argot* or *Verlan*⁹⁰, and vocabulary of Arab origin like *tif* = Arab for 'hair'⁹¹. Without spending a remarkable amount of time in France, it is practically impossible to master all these registers. As a consequence, only obvious finds were listed in France and England.

As has been pointed out, grammar plays a role when the number of words on a sign are counted. In this table, France has the highest word count average in most of the branches. Examples for wordy shop signs in the food retailers' branch in France are: *La Ronde des Gourmandises* 'The treat round', *La Perle d'Amour* 'The love pearl', *la petite ferme de Ganna* 'Ganna's little farm' / 'The little farm of Ganna', and *AU GOUT D'ORIENT* 'To the taste of the Orient'. The German translations show that the number of words declines visibly: 'Die Leckereienrunde', 'Die Liebesperle', 'Gannas kleiner Bauernhof', and 'Zum Orientgeschmack'. Taken into account that German shop owners are not likely to include articles, the first two examples would consist of a single word instead of the French four.

4.5. Vocabulary sections in branches

This chapter sheds light on the four different vocabulary sections.

Vocabulary section/ Branch in Germany	General vocabulary	Proper names	Place names	Other vocabulary
DIY	70.00	50.00	0	0
Petrol stations; electricity; gas and water supply; etc.	35.71	14.29	7.14	0
Religion	57.14	0	28.57	42.86
Lawyers & tax counsellors	50.00	56.25	18.75	0
Stationery	50.00	53.85	15.38	0
Works of art/ stamps/ coins etc.	79.41	41.18	23.53	8.82
Motor vehicles	46.15	53.85	5.13	5.13
Real estate agents/ architects/ engineers	58.54	65.85	4.88	0
Insurances	40.82	40.82	22.45	0
Accommodation	90.91	18.18	27.27	10.91
Electronic equipment	52.73	41.82	1.82	1.82
Bookshops	71.93	63.16	3.51	14.04
Department stores	59.01	15.15	10.61	3.03

The following table compares the vocabulary sections in the five countries.

⁸⁸ Cf. <https://www.patisserie-cabosse.fr/>, accessed 19 December 2025

⁸⁹ Lecturer Elizabeth Rogans pointed this out at the Catholic University Eichstätt when we dealt with tabloids in the summer semester 2007.

⁹⁰ Examples are *le mec* and *la meuf*, cf. *Le Petit Robert*: s.v.v.

⁹¹ Bogatto/ Hélot cite *Infinitif Coiffure*, cf. Bogatto/ Hélot 2010: 11

Vocabulary section/ Branch and country	General vocabulary D	A	CH	F	GB	Proper names D	A	CH	F	GB	Place names D	A	CH	F	GB	Other vocabulary D	A	CH	F	GB
Education	74.77	77.42	94.74	72.73	83.87	23.36	6.45	15.79	18.18	3.23	18.69	38.71	26.32	18.18	51.61	7.48	6.45	0	9.09	3.23
Manufacturing industry	56.36	62.96	3.33	47.62	75.00	63.64	66.67	40.00	28.57	25.00	6.36	0	20.00	4.76	20.00	0.91	3.70	0	4.76	0
Tobacconists, betting shops, news agents	74.17	91.67	68.75	68.18	55.56	25.00	4.17	25.00	0	24.44	19.17	4.17	12.50	13.64	33.33	0	0	0	0	0
Chemists	38.85	33.33	65.38	28.57	54.76	46.76	33.33	34.62	35.71	14.29	6.47	6.67	11.54	28.57	7.14	2.88	6.67	0	7.14	0
Banks	74.67	90.00	56.00	62.07	48.44	11.33	16.67	8.00	3.45	17.18	30.00	46.67	36.00	0	56.25	0.67	0	4.00	0	0
Opticians & hearing aid acousticians	59.33	55.00	50.00	63.64	74.07	70.00	80.00	57.14	22.73	40.74	2.00	0	0	4.55	3.70	8.67	5.00	0	0	0
Human health	73.79	80.77	76.60	91.30	69.81	29.13	23.08	4.53	30.43	41.51	22.33	38.46	19.15	17.39	24.53	6.31	3.85	4.26	4.35	0
Furniture & household articles	57.08	63.64	63.33	72.41	66.67	38.48	29.55	23.33	20.70	31.88	6.44	18.18	16.67	3.45	24.64	1.72	2.27	0	0	0
Jewellers	48.92	54.72	32.00	53.13	29.31	65.67	66.04	66.00	50.00	74.14	7.30	5.66	6.00	0	8.62	2.15	3.45	0	6.25	3.45
Shoes & leather goods	42.62	34.29	79.41	52.94	44.00	44.88	48.57	52.94	29.41	42.00	5.91	8.57	8.82	14.71	6.00	4.22	2.86	0	14.71	0
Barbers & beauty salons	77.64	80.00	87.23	74.00	71.64	43.50	45.71	31.91	32.00	32.09	5.69	0	12.77	8.00	15.67	0.81	5.71	2.13	0	0
Recreation, entertainment, hobbies, sports	72.82	72.09	70.21	78.38	71.93	31.21	34.88	31.91	27.03	16.67	12.75	11.63	12.77	13.51	16.67	2.35	4.65	0	5.41	0
Other businesses	57.97	70.67	59.46	66.20	68.46	15.95	22.67	8.11	12.68	9.91	13.16	22.67	29.73	9.86	25.23	2.53	1.33	4.05	4.23	2.70

General vocabulary is the most frequent vocabulary section in most branches. Only in a few branches, proper names occupy the leading role, e.g. with jewellers. The percentages for place names go up and down in this table, which shows that some branches frequently include them in their shop names. Other vocabulary is usually rare, again, a few branches apply more of this specific vocabulary.

Gastronomy	General vocabulary	Proper names	Place names	Special vocabulary
Germany	66.63	24.23	21.56	5.44
Austria	71.08	24.10	24.70	12.65
Switzerland	73.97	15.75	25.34	5.48
France	76.98	12.23	23.74	8.63
England	75.35	18.59	17.17	4.24

Place names are quite frequent in gastronomy, since foreign food is often indicated with place names of the regions or towns, where it comes from, e.g. *SAPORE D'ITALIA* 'Taste from Italy' in Marlborough, or *CORTINA Eiscafé* in Eichstätt. In Austria and France, more special vocabulary appears. Responsible are finds like *FRANZ JOSEF CAFÉ*, *HUMBOLDT*, *CAFÉ MOZART* or *Restaurant „zum Eulenspiegel“* in Austria, as well as *GUILLAUME TELL*, *COLUMBUS CAFÉ & CO* in France, all including names from history or literature.

Fashion	General vocabulary	Proper names	Place names	Special vocabulary
Germany	40.72	39.36	5.72	2.17
Austria	47.06	45.75	7.84	3.27
Switzerland	46.43	27.14	10.00	2.14
France	51.91	21.37	6.11	3.05
England	58.37	30.90	5.60	3.43

In this branch, Switzerland has more place names than the other countries. Chains like *orsay*, *NILE* or *CAMP DAVID SOCCX* contribute to this, but also individual businesses like *Boutique Skandinavia*, *survivalzone.ch*, *BOUTIQUE ROMA*, *berlin fashion story*, or *MILANO OUTLET*. The Austrian place names, the second highest percentage, usually refer to places

in Austria, like *ZILLERTALER TRACHTENWELT*, *KITZGLÜCK* (the town Kitzbühel), *SALZBURGER HEIMATWERK*, *DIE GISELA* (the street *Giselakai* in Salzburg), *GLORIETTE* (a building in the garden of the castle Schönbrunn in Vienna).

Food retailers	General vocabulary	Proper names	Place names	Special vocabulary
Germany	61.33	55.33	12.44	1.11
Austria	60.00	57.14	4.77	1.59
Switzerland	45.90	40.98	9.84	0
France	66.67	39.68	7.94	0
England	60.34	41.31	19.83	0.86

The high number of place names in England is due to shops selling specialties from certain areas like *THE REAL CORNISH PASTY CO.™*, *WEST COUNTRY ALES 1760*, *WEST CORNWALL PASTY*, *WHITTARD OF CHELSEA*, and *Hereford Butchers*.

The picture rendered by these figures is quite colourful because it varies greatly between the branches.

5. Summary

Analysing shop signs in different towns and branches in five countries brought some parallel results: The percentages of the national languages tend to decrease with an increasing size of the town as well as with an increasing number of shops in a branch, and English increases. English is highly popular in Switzerland, possibly because the country aims at an international touch. In France, however, this language is used much less. There are preferences for specific languages in certain branches, some of them in all the countries visited, others differ from country to country.

The variety of parts of speech and word formation patterns increase with the number of inhabitants and the number of shops in a branch, even though several remains at a low level throughout. Shop owners seem to try harder to make their shop stand out when there is more competition.

In addition, there are features, the shop owners in towns or branches seem to choose specifically for a local colour of an attractiveness of the business. For example, the number of proper names is quite high in Munich, and place names are frequent in the gastronomy branch.

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Sources from the internet are given in the footnotes as full URLs.