

Re: Why don't we spell cat with a K?

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Keith Edgerley wrote:

- > <Kat(h)i> ['kati] is a pretty common
- > > Upper German pet form of <Katherina>, but the spelling
- > > <Kathy> is evidently influenced by the English pet form.
- >
- > This is weird.
- >
- > It's true that when I first met Kathy, I assumed her name was spelt Kathi.
- > But it's not.
- >
- > Why on earth should a Swiss German peasant girl – her parents' are farmers
- > in a really out of the way village – use an English spelling of her
- > abbreviated first name.

Why on earth shouldn't she? A Swiss German peasant girl is supposed to speak, in this order: 1. Swiss German (the local spoken language), 2. standard German (the local literary language), 3. *English* (the main foreign language used in her country), and finally 4. French and/or Italian (the other official languages of her country).

I would expect her to choose her nickname from one of these languages. Did you expect her to choose it from Swahili or Estonian? :-)

English seems a very likely choice, especially for a young person, because it sounds so "trendy" and "cosmopolite".

And that's not only for people's names: how many shops or pubs in Switzerland (or any other non-English-speaking European country, for that matter) bear an English name?

> Talk about ethnocentric!

You seem a bit ethnocentric in assuming that a Swiss German girl must necessarily choose a Swiss German nickname.

- > I know "-i" is used: example "Köbi" (= "Jim") I have only ever seen that
- > way, but Willy, for instance seems to be written that way just as often as
- > Willi. Even for people born 100 years ago.

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Doesn't "y" normally sound like "ü" in German?

And do you pronounce "Willy" as "Wilü"? If you don't, that's a clear hint to a spelling borrowed from some language wher "y" normally sounds like "i" (likely, English or French).

Ciao.
Marco