Convergence and Divergence in the Swiss German Dialects[*]

Helen Christen

Abstract

In view of the medial diglossia which determines language use in German-speaking Switzerland, the changes presently emerging in this dialect area are of particular interest. Will the use of the speaker's own local dialect with people speaking a different Swiss German dialect lead to convergence of dialects? And will the omnipresent standard German variety lead to convergence with the other German-speaking countries?

This study reports on 'natural' changes in the old 'base dialects' which tend to lead to convergence within German-speaking Switzerland. In a few cases they also lead to divergence from standard German. Furthermore, the use of variants confined to a small area decreases, a process leading to larger dialect areas in the end. On the level of the lexicon there are clear signs of convergence with standard German. Moreover, when inexperienced speakers 'translate' a text written in standard German into the dialect, as is often the case in public speech, the influence of the standard language is undeniable. However, the dialect changes found in the data are not to the extent that the origin of young speakers cannot be localised any longer.

1. Introductory Remarks on Language Use in German-Speaking Switzerland

The specific sociolinguistic situation of German-speaking Switzerland (and some other countries) made Charles Ferguson coin the term *diglossia* in 1959. This was due to the fact that the German-speaking Swiss — as opposed to their German-speaking neighbours — used two language varieties — dialect and (Swiss) standard German — in a complementary way, independent of social factors. The basic fact has not changed in the last forty years. The complementary use of the varieties, however, is developing towards a diglossia in which the choice of variety spoken depends increasingly upon the medium of expression, with the use of dialect as the spoken form and standard German as the written form.

The spread of dialect use in everyday life is therefore in part due to the new role oral communication has attained through telephone, radio and television in

the second half of this century on the one hand and to the decreasing importance of the written language in everyday communication on the other.[1] In addition, a certain 'deformalisation' of formal situations has occurred (Schuppenhauer & Werlen 1983), which inevitably causes the 'formal' standard variety to be considered inappropriate and restricts its use to a few remaining situations such as in church, school and parliament.[2] In the media, this 'deformalisation' has affected the choice of programmes and their stylistic shape and has been followed by an increasing use of dialect as well.

In everyday situations, only dialect is spoken. A fact which is of great importance for the following remarks is that all speakers use their own local variety in interaction with speakers of other regions of German-speaking Switzerland — a phenomenon, which Ammon (1995) calls "polylectal dialogue". A Swiss German koiné which could serve for communication among German-Swiss of different origins does not exist. This polylectal dialogue is very common, which is not surprising considering the small territory of German-speaking Switzerland and its increasingly mobile population. The question arises, therefore, if there are long-term effects of this polylectal dialogue. Do we not inevitably have to expect linguistic convergence, which would cause regional differences to disappear in the long run and which would lead to a homogeneous Swiss German dialect variety?

2. Data

In the following sections, we will describe changes in Swiss German dialects as spoken by young speakers and we will ask whether they lead to convergence or, possibly, divergence. The following arguments are based upon various data: on the one hand I draw upon a corpus containing short dialogues with 42 young people from different parts of German-speaking Switzerland (referred to in the following as 'dialogue corpus').[3] The dialogues are loosely structured conversations between the explorator and the informant. The goal was to find out what Swiss German dialects are like and whether the varieties spoken in everyday conversation are the 'base dialects' (cf. below).[4] Furthermore, I will refer to data taken from students' papers.[5] These were recorded in formal public situations in which Swiss German dialect was spoken. Data sets H and P contain news spoken in dialect, a radio broadcast of a local parliament session, and a general meeting of shareholders. The speeches performed in dialect on the latter two occasions can be compared with the written models in standard German upon which they were based. Occasionally, I will include data from other students' papers and unsystematic personal observations made as a member of the speech community of German-speaking Switzerland as well.

The basis for comparison is the linguistic atlas of German-speaking Switzerland (*Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*, SDS) which represents the lin-

guistic situation of the NORMs (non-mobile, older, rural males) (Chambers & Trudgill 1980), the 'classical' dialectological informants, in the middle of this century. These data are referred to as 'base dialect'.

3. Convergence and Divergence

The term 'convergence' will be used here to refer to individual or collective, variable or categorical innovations,[6] which — when compared with the SDS-data — are closer to or coincide with the variants of a neighbouring variety. The term 'divergence' will be used to refer to innovations which lead to an increase of differences between varieties.

Since the beginnings of linguistics it has been assumed that contact between speakers leads to convergence, whereas isolation leads to divergence. Linguistic similarities and differences are often 'explained' retrospectively in this sense. The conditions of communication in modern societies such as Switzerland should therefore be predestined for convergence, whereas divergence would seem rather unlikely.

3.1 Phonetics and Phonology

The most remarkable differences between the young adults in the 'dialogue corpus' and the data of the SDS concern those phonetic variants which occur in a small area of German-speaking Switzerland only.[7] These are rare in non-elicited data since occurrence in everyday speech is quite limited.

Young speakers from an area in which such a variant could be expected according to the 'base dialect' either show variable use of this variant and a 'new' variant, or else they exclusively use the 'new' variant. The 'new' sound does not necessarily have to conform to standard German nor to a uniform variant used by all Swiss German dialect speakers; rather it corresponds to the variant of the neighbouring dialect, which is usually that of a larger area. Two examples: The diphthongisation of Middle High German ô > ou expected in a speaker from the canton of Schwyz (e.g. brout, StG Brot, 'bread'[8]), is missing in the dialogue corpus. Instead, this speaker pronounces a long back mid tense vowel (broot), which at the same time corresponds to the form used in almost the entire central and eastern Swiss area. The two speakers from the canton of Fribourg, where the base dialect has diphthongal oe instead (broet 'bread'), realise a long back lax vowel (bròòt), which corresponds to the form of the western part of German-speaking Switzerland. Admittedly, this innovation occurred in no more than five tokens.

A second example: In the north-west of Switzerland but also in some areas of the eastern Rhine valley Germanic k is realised as a velar stop [k] while the other Swiss German dialects have an affricate or fricative instead. However, a speaker from the city of Basel variably uses [x] and [kx] instead of [k]. These two variants are the most common ones all over Switzerland, but they do not

coincide with standard German [k]. In this case, the 'new' forms are used nine times (in contrast to 33 realisations according to the base dialect).

As a whole, the tendency of avoiding phonetic variants confined to a small area leads to phonetic convergence. This convergence, however, is neither towards standard German (except when standard German and a corresponding dialectal form happen to be the same, as in the case of the long tense vowels of Eastern Switzerland) nor towards a uniform Swiss German, but towards the dialects used in a large area.

Since the tendency towards convergence only applies to some of the variants and since the variants confined to a small area, although reduced in number, still occur, they must still exist in the competence of the speakers. As shibboleths they may be used to express local identity.

Beside these linguistic innovations which are contact phenomena in the traditional sense, there are others which could be called 'natural sound changes'. This term refers to a sound change in which there is a teleological development toward linguistic structures which optimise a number of prelinguistically given processes (Auer 1990:26). In respect to phonetics, this usually refers to processes which improve articulation or perception. For instance, for Labov (1994:116), the lowering of short tense vowels is a process which facilitates articulation in this position and therefore constitutes an example of a natural sound change.[9]

Natural sound change can result in divergence within German-speaking Switzerland. This is the case when innovations prevail in one confined area only. The sporadic deletion of *r* in speakers from eastern Switzerland in word final position or in the 'tag question' *oder* ('is that not so') is an example.

But natural sound change can also lead to convergence. The previously mentioned lowering of tense vowels, for example, is part of the phonology of the western Swiss German dialects. Lowering in eastern Switzerland, which is 'naturally' emerging in some cases, therefore leads to convergence. Another example: schwa (and sporadically also *i*) in unstressed syllables is common in High Alemannic. Corresponding innovations in Highest Alemannic, in which the traditional full vowels in this position are being replaced by schwa by a natural process of reduction, therefore lead to convergence with the rest of German-speaking Switzerland and at the same time with standard German.

Furthermore, there are phenomena of convergence in a broader sense, e.g. in the inventory of phonemes. Many speakers of the 'dialogue corpus' show a tendency to give up the contrast between diphthongs going back to Middle High German monophthongs in hiatus position (e.g. MHG *trûwen* 'to trust' > traditional Zurich German *troue*) and diphthongs going back to Middle High German diphthongs (e.g. MHG *glouben* 'to believe' > traditional Zurich German *glaube*). Both diphthongs are pronounced the same way by the younger speakers, and it is the quality of the more frequent form which 'survives' (in the case

of Zurich German, the diphthong *au*). The exact quality of the merged diphthong varies from area to area, so that the dialects become more similar to standard German (and at the same time to the dialects of the region of Basel) in the organisation of their phonemic sound systems, but at the same time there remain regional phonetic differences even in the younger speakers.

3.2 Morphology

Most significant with respect to convergence and divergence are the changes which are currently taking place in the inflectional morphology of the Swiss German dialects. Particularly interesting are the effects of the 'polylectal dialogue' on the frequent irregular verbs which take on many different forms in the base dialects, some of which are only used in a small area (cf. the regional variants in the first person plural of the verbs 'to stand': *ständ, stand, stönd, stöö, stèi, stei, stande* ...; and 'to have': *hei, hii, händ, hand, hend, hönd, heind, hän* ... [SDS III, 59-63; 47]).

In the data, the morphology of these verbs is either stable,[10] i.e. the young informants use the 'old' forms already found in the SDS, or else the forms differ from the ones in the SDS, but can be localised within Switzerland. For instance, if speakers from central and eastern Switzerland do not use the form *hènd*, which would be expected according to their base dialect, they will use *händ*, the form found in Zurich and the eastern Aargau; speakers from the western part of Switzerland, who have *hei* in their base dialect also use *hènd*, etc. The alternatives never are the standard German forms, but always those already occurring in coexisting dialects. Here again, as in the field of phonetics, the tendency is not for one single Swiss German form to prevail; rather, alternatives come into play which usually are the forms used in a larger area.

The deletion of final syllables as a long-term effect of root syllable stress is more frequent in varieties which are only spoken, such as the (Swiss German) dialects, than in varieties with codified (written) norms. In the varieties examined here, the morphological consequences of this deletion go beyond those documented for the base dialects. Cf. the following examples: the schwa of the (very rarely documented) dative plural tends to be lost (e.g. *de Chind-e > de Chind* 'the children'); the first person singular loses its *e*-suffix (*ich sing-e > ich sing* 'I sing'). All of these changes lead to convergences with those dialects, in which these forms are already part of the norm. The result of these changes is a state which shows more modern features than standard German in its codified form, though not necessarily in its colloquial realisations.

Concerning the inflection of the adjectives, the corpus shows signs of a regularisation of the paradigm. While the SDS lists attributive adjectives of the 'weak' inflection (no affix), there seem to be new affixes coming into use in the nominative and accusative singular among young speakers (e.g. *de alt-i Maa* 'the old man', *di alt-i Frau* 'the old woman', *s chliin-e/i Chind* 'the small

child'). These suffixes do not coincide with those of the strong inflection, however. The inflection of attributive adjectives can be looked upon as a morphological innovation that has a precursor in standard German, where they are also inflected. It is remarkable, however, that the 'typically Swiss' *i*-suffix is chosen (instead of standard German schwa). Again, the development is not entirely uniform all over German-speaking Switzerland. As shown by Marius Götschmann (in Christen 1993), in the most western part of German-speaking Switzerland, the canton of Fribourg, the *i*-ending lately also appears in the dative plural, while all other dialects have the schwa (e.g. Fribourg: *mit de aut-i Mane* vs. rest of German-speaking Switzerland: *mit de alt-e Man[n]e* 'with the old men').

Further evidence for natural morphological changes on a specifically Swiss German basis comes from the plural of nouns; here, dialectal suffixes such as *-ene* are being extended to paradigms with the Ø-allomorph in the base dialect. Following a principle of iconicity the *ene*-plural occurs not only with feminine nouns derived of verbs and adjectives, ending in *-i* (e.g. *techi/techene* 'blanket/blankets'), but also with feminine nouns ending in *-e*, which in most base dialects take the Ø-plural (e.g. *gruppe/gruppene* 'group/groups').[11] In addition, umlaut is a very productive, spreading plural marker for monosyllablic masculine nouns which take the Ø-plural in the base dialect (e.g. *torn/törn* 'thorn/thorns'), and it even occurs (partly beside the 'new' *s*-allomorph) in foreign words (e.g. *tschop/tschöp* 'job/jobs' beside *tschops* and *tschöps*).

In all German dialects except for Saxony, the genitive has long been replaced by periphrases using *von* ('of') (Schirmunski 1962:432). As was to be expected, no deviations are documented in the 'dialogue corpus'. But there seems to be a recent tendency for the dative case to be expressed by a prepositional phrase in some areas as well. The following statements are based upon personal observations, albeit supported by similar comments by Lötscher (1983:93).

Fischer (1960:189) lists the following examples of the dative in the base dialect of Lucerne: sg. *em Gascht* 'to the guest', *(e) der Achsle* 'to the shoulder', *em Müüsli* 'to the mouse'; pl. *(e) de Spatze* 'to the sparrows', *(e) de Zaale* 'to the numbers', *(e) de Netze* 'to the nets'. What Fischer puts in parenthesis as optional seems to have become common usage today: the dative is formed as a prepositional case with the preposition *e(m)/i(m)* followed by the dative form (e.g. *i wem git er s buech?* 'to whom does he give the book?'). The source of this grammaticalisation is the definite article of the masculine or neuter singular *im/em*, in which the initial dental stop has been dropped; in time it seems to have become reanalysed, and is now considered to be a preposition, since it is homophonous with the preposition *im* 'in the'.[12] This new preposition, which in some areas can also take the form *am*, seems to be in the process of establishing itself as a dative marker with feminine nouns and in the plural as well, thus

radically changing the case system in a number of Swiss German dialects and at the same time removing it from the system of standard German.

In conclusion, we can note that there are a number of changes going on in inflectional morphology in the Swiss German dialects which can be interpreted as morphological reactions based upon preceding sound changes. The deletion of final syllables — as shown above — has led to the loss of some plural markers. According to the available evidence, this deficiency is overcome through analogy, i.e. the use of other formal means of the dialect.

Since there exists no explicit codification of the Swiss German dialects and since sound changes establish themselves more easily in spoken language than in standardised varieties, the dialects can be said to be on a more advanced level than standard German. The tendency to optimally encode the units of meaning proceeds from different phonetic and phonological conditions in the various dialects and in standard German. These conditions affect the functioning of morphology more or less strongly. Consequently, the subsequent morphological regularisations which optimise the encoding of units of meaning are different from variety to variety and lead to the results described above, which can in general be interpreted as divergences from standard German.

3.3 Lexicon

The lexicon proved to be the linguistic level on which adaptations are most likely to occur in polylectal dialogues. Considering the above-mentioned socio-pragmatics of the dialect and standard, this was expected. Since we can presuppose an almost unlimited use of Swiss German in oral communication, without any thematic restrictions, the dialect needs to accommodate lexemes necessary to encode all domains of life. It is hardly surprising that the Swiss thereby make use of the resources of standard German. 'New' lexemes usually spread through the written language, i.e. standard German. Thanks to dialectal morphology and phonology, these lexemes can be fit into the dialect without any problem.[13] (E.g.: *geschter sind ja ganz weesentlichi technischi underschtützige verloore-gange und daas zum erschte maal sit em uufwärtstrènd vo aafangs januaar*; StG: *gestern sind ja ganz wesentliche technische Unterstützungen ver-lorengegangen und das zum erstem Mal seit dem Aufwärtstrend von anfangs Januar*; 'yesterday, very essential technical assistance was lost, and this for the first time since the upward trend early in January'; source: Radio 24, Zurich, March 1997 [P]).

Lexical adaptations are an extremely economical solution, from the communicative as well as from the cognitive point of view, since they save the speakers the task of making up 'new' words by themselves; the fact that the differences between dialect and standard are small guarantees that the 'new' dialect words have a 'transparent' meaning, i.e. that of the corresponding standard word. Moreover, a lexicon with an increasing number of dialect-/standard-

duplicates would strain the cognitive apparatus much more than the present solution 'one significatum — two signifiers'.[14]

In the autochthonous dialectal vocabulary, many words which are bound to traditional and nowadays obsolete domains of life disappear 'naturally' or live on in metaphorical modifications (cf. *Rääf*, 'basket carried on one's back', nowadays used for a wicked, ill-humoured woman). Many dialectal lexemes are being replaced by standard German words (e.g.: new *arbeiten*, old *schaffen* 'to work'; new *lieben*, old *gern haben* 'to love'; new *Schmetterling*, old *Sommervogel* 'butterfly' and other heteronymes; new *Butter*, old *Anken* 'butter');[15] variation can be made use of for stylistic reasons. Very frequent lexemes seem to be excluded from this process, however (e.g.: *öpper*, StG *jemand*, 'somebody'; *öppis*, StG *etwas*, 'something';[16] *luegen*, StG *schauen*, 'to look'; *losen*, StG *hören*, 'to listen'), as well as (rare) words from children's language, such as *Ääli* 'caress', *Büsi* 'pet name for cat' or *Bääbi* 'doll'.

To conclude, we can state that the lexicon tends to converge with standard German.[17]

3.4 The Use of Dialect in Formal Situations

Whereas the above observations refer to linguistic data taken from informal contexts this section focuses on phenomena of dialect use specific to the language of formal, public situations. Dialect use in such contexts is not exceptional at all. Rather, because of the trend towards medial diglossia, dialect can be and is used even in public and highly formal speech situations, such as speeches and lectures (Schwarzenbach 1987). The news are read in dialect on private radio and television stations, and the national television station broadcasts local news in dialect in regional programmes. In church, only the strongly ritualised elements are more or less excluded from dialect, whereas in all other parts of the sermon the use of dialect is possible, depending upon the personal preferences of the priest (Rüegger *et al.* 1996).

The result of this extensive use of dialect are (probably new) dialectal style registers, between oral and written language. Many of these dialectal texts are based upon a draft written in standard German; their styles are influenced by the density of information characteristic for the media. Syntactically, this leads to complex noun phrases and complex sentences consisting of main and subordinate clauses, phenomena typical of (planned and formal) written language, but untypical of (unplanned and informal) spoken varieties.[18] The use of written drafts does not require the 'usual' direction of translation from Swiss German into standard German by means of rules of adaptation,[19] but rather translation from the standard language into the dialect. This different starting-point is mastered by the speakers to varying degrees.[20] There are speakers who try to translate the standard German model into dialect, thereby adhering to the model to such a degree that — due either to a lack of routine and/or a lack of attention —

striking deviations from 'natural', spontaneous dialect result. The most often cited and (by purists) also the most criticised phenomenon of this type is the use of the relative pronouns of standard German instead of the dialectal pronoun *wo*. (E.g. written model: ... *hat der Verwaltungsrat die Sprache vom rauhen Wind, **der** ihm der Rechtsvertreter von den besorgten Aktionären ins Gesicht geblasen hat ... verstanden*; oral realisation: *hät de Verwaltigsròòt d Spròòch vom raue Wind, **dä** im de Rächtsverträter vo de bsorgte Akzionäär is Gsicht blòòse hät ... verstande*[H]; 'the member of the managing board understood the language of the harsh wind, which was blown into his face by the legal representative of the concerned shareholders ...').

Since the syntax of these formal texts is by nature more complex than the syntax of spontaneous, unplanned language, a whole system of conjunctions is necessary. Speakers with little experience translate these conjunctions directly from standard German into Swiss German which is not compatible with the norms of the dialect, though, and therefore criticised by purists: "In vermundart-lichten Wendungen werden heute auch Formen wie *fòlglich, somet* [somit], *methee* [mithin] usw. verwendet, sollten aber in guter Mundart vermieden werden" (Fischer 1960:414).[21] Complex noun phrases, which occur in this style but are very rare otherwise, lead to deviations from informal dialect usage as well: e.g.: written model: *Die Tatsache, dass jetzt auch **die erst gestern ausgehandelte** Zusicherung* ...; oral translation: *die Taatsach, das jez au **die erscht geschter uusghandleti** Zuesicherig* ... [H]; 'the fact, that now even the guarantee agreed upon only yesterday ...'. The occurrence of present participles is also considered non-autochthonous in archaising normative grammars of dialect (e.g. written model: *der Tradition von* [sic] *seiner Familie **folgend*** ...; oral translation: *de Tradizioon vo sinere Famili **folgend*** ... [H]; 'following the tradition of [sic] his family ...').

But even among speakers who have little experience or who are not very conscious of this problem we must assume that certain translations from standard to dialect occur automatically according to the norm of the dialect. This can be seen, for example, in cases where highly frequent words are concerned, which are always realised correctly. Thus, the past participle of *sein* 'to be' is always *gsi*, not **gwese* or any other form similar to standard German. The neutral indefinite article is always realised as *es*; the *ein* of the written model, which is identical with the masculine indefinite article, never leads to any dialectal 'slips'. Also, no deviations are documented from dialectal word order in the verbal phrase: in Swiss German dialects, the modal verb precedes the infinitive, in spite of the written model with the opposite word order. (E.g. written model: *Wir haben diesem Bericht **entnehmen können*** ...; oral translation: *mir händ dem Bricht **chönne entnèè*** [H]; 'we have been able to learn from this report ...').

Problems may arise, though, when genitives have to be translated from standard German into dialect, e.g. written model: *in Anbetracht der **langfristigen Erhaltung***; oral realisation: *i Aabetracht de **langfrischtige Erhaltig** ...* [H]; 'in view of the long-term conservation ...').[22] Speakers tend to make a word by word translation in which a preposition which is missing in standard German (viz. *von*, 'of') cannot occur in the dialect, either. Further problems arise with the translation of certain lexemes. Speakers tend to translate above all the main bearers of information, the prototypical autosemantica, sometimes taking heteronyms into consideration (e.g. written model: *erhalten*; oral realisation: *überchoo* [H]; 'to receive'). All other lexemes are translated with little care, i.e. with morphological and/or a phonetic adaptation, or not at all. Particles, for example, remain untranslated (e.g. written model: *verfügt man **nun** rechtzeitig wieder über beste Vorausetzungen ...*; oral realisation: *verfüegt me **nun** rächtziitig wider über beschti Voruussetzige ...* [H]; 'we now have at our disposal best conditions just in time ...'; or written model: ***selbst** vor zwei Jahren nicht*; oral realisation: ***sälbscht** vor zwäi jòòre nid* [H]; 'not even two years ago').[23] We are dealing here with particles which do not (yet) exist in this form in the Swiss German dialects (the correct dialect forms would be *jez* in the first case and *sogaar* in the second). These findings indicate that there could be a 'translation hierarchy' in the oral dialect realisation of written standard German, presumably depending upon factors such as the semantic content of the units to be translated, frequency and the linguistic level on which the translation takes place.[24]

There are other speakers of course who compose their speeches carefully, paying more attention to language. These are, on the one hand, professional speakers, who have to meet certain standards concerning 'good language'. Their oral texts in Swiss German as well as in standard German mostly manage without complex sentences. On the other hand, there are lay speakers who could be called 'dialect conscious'.[25] These speakers try to use 'good dialect', i.e. they try to meet the sociolinguistic norm, which currently requires a 'pure dialect' not only grammatically correct, but distinguished by a select lexicon, usually differing from standard German and indeed often archaic. (E.g. written model: *grosse **Springe** kann man im Präsidium in einem Jahr nicht machen ...*; oral realisation: *grossi **gümp** cha mer ...* [H]; 'you cannot get far in the presidency in one year...').

With respect to convergence and divergence, we can state that — due to the circumstances of translation — many speakers show a strong convergence towards the written and therefore standard German model in formal dialect use. The question remains, however, what effects this convergence will have upon other speech styles, and for speakers who are never required to produce speeches or other texts in which translation from (written) standard German is necessary/usual. 'Bad translations' from standard German into Swiss German are evaluated negatively and referred to as *Grossratsdeutsch* ('German spoken

by members of a cantonal parliament'); the same negative sanction of this language use can be found in the grammar-books. Fischer (1960:430) for instance, writes: "Der echten Mundart wird starker Schaden zugefügt, indem oft Sätze nach schriftdeutscher Art miteinander verknüpft werden."[26]

Could it be that the Swiss will become so accustomed to 'insufficient' phonetic adaptations, 'wrong' relative pronouns, standard German conjunctions, etc., that these phenomena lose the status of stylistically marked or even of grammatically incorrect elements in the long run? After all, as Mattheier (1983:1461) points out, norm and language use always belong together: "Eine Trennung der Veränderungen im Sprachverwendungsbereich von den Entwicklungen im Sprachsystem selbst ist nur auf einer heuristisch-analytischen Ebene möglich."[27]

4. Conclusion

The innovative tendencies discussed in the preceding sections can be summarised as in table (1).

Table 1: *Tendencies of convergence and divergence in Swiss German dialects (D = dialect, StG = standard German)*

	PHONETICS/ PHONOLOGY	MORPHOLOGY	SYNTAX	LEXICON
dialogue corpus	convergence of D (partially at the same time convergence towards StG)	convergence of D divergence from StG		convergence of D/ towards StG
formal dialect (data sets H and P)	convergence towards StG (partially incomplete phonetic adaptation)		convergence towards StG (syntactic connectives; standard inflection instead of dialectal periphrases)	convergence towards StG

The table clearly shows that the strongest evidence of convergence of the dialect towards standard German is found on the level of the lexicon. If divergence from the standard occurs, it is most likely to be found on the morphological level. As a result, local affiliation is less and less expressed by means of 'typical dialect words'; rather, the information which enables us to localise a speaker within Switzerland is conveyed most clearly by means of morphology and phonetics/phonology. Phonetic as well as morphological features furthermore help

to maintain — and in some cases even to expand — the distance from standard German.

The expression of local affiliation by means of phonetic as well as morphological features can be considered an optimal communicative solution for the 'polylectal dialogue' within German-speaking Switzerland: heteronyms which might hinder or delay communication and which would require an actual translation do not occur. Local identity, which still plays an important socio-cultural role in Switzerland, can manifest itself in linguistic elements whose understanding is largely ensured, for instance in auxiliary and modal verbs. Phonetic differences are mostly regular and can easily be decoded by the listener. From a pragmatic point of view this solution can be considered as 'economic': Locality to one's own dialect is encoded in a way which does not endanger the propositional content of an utterance.

Finally, there remains the question of quantification. What dimensions do these phenomena reach? The idiolects of the 'dialogue corpus' show that the diverging as well as the converging innovations which occur in the language of young speakers are very few.[28] The large majority of the dialectal features is realised according to the base dialect; it is sufficient to enable us to localise the speaker in a territory which is smaller than German-speaking Switzerland.[29] The fact that a person's origin can be localised by his or her speech is due on the one hand to the specific combination of more wide-spread dialect features and on the other hand to the use of variants confined to a small area, whose localising potential is stronger. There is a tendency, however, to replace these latter variants by those of the larger neighbouring dialects. From these convergences, as well as from natural change, dialectal varieties result which are used in a larger area than the base dialects. One could call these new dialects "Regiolekte", as suggested by Scheuringer (1990), but one should take into account that these varieties are — at least for some speakers — simply a modern form of the 'old' base dialects.

In the manner of an excursus this article also dealt with dialectal registers which appear as a result of medial diglossia. It cannot be estimated yet to what extent these translations from standard German into Swiss German, which often show a strong dependence on the standard model, will have as its effect a convergence of the dialects in the direction of (Swiss) standard German.

Address of the Author

Helen Christen
Université de Genève
Département de langue et littérature allemandes
12, bd. des Philosophes
CH-1211 Genève (Switzerland)
e-mail: christen@uni2a.unige.ch

Notes

1   Time will show whether fax and e-mail will help to restore the importance of written language. The question depends upon how widespread these new media will become in society.

2   This usage obviously has an effect upon the speakers' attitudes toward the two varieties. The low prestige of the "low variety" postulated by Ferguson certainly does not apply to the Swiss German dialects.

3   Cf. Christen (1996).

4   For a detailed statement of the problem and the research design, cf. Christen (1995).

5   Many thanks to my students Sarah Panagiotounakos (data P), University of Geneva, and Regula Heiniger (data H), University of Fribourg, who put their data at my disposal.

6   The term 'innovation' will be used in the sense of *Neuerung* as defined by Haas (1978).

7   'Confined to a small area' is a relative notion of course. In this paper, a variant is considered to be restricted to a small area, if it occurs in a smaller area than that of the canton of Bern.

8   Data were transcribed by means of the dialectal transcription system conceived by Eugen Dieth (1986) which is based on standard German orthography. <sch> therefore equals [ʃ], double letters indicate length, and ')' indicates a lax vowel.

9   It seems to be uncontested today that 'natural sound change' exists. Not all linguists, however, agree in their judgements of specific phenomena of change or in the establishment of hierarchies of naturalness.

10   It must be pointed out here that the 'dialogue corpus' contains mainly the most common verbs of spoken language, i. e. auxiliary and modal verbs and so-called 'short verbs' (*Kurzverben*).

11   Highest Alemannic dialects are different in that they distinguish the singular and plural feminine nouns referred to here by the final vowel.

12   I have personally observed that children, too, consider the dative to require the preposition *in* even when they speak standard German in play, producing sentences such as *ich gebe in der Nina* ... 'I give to Nina ...'.

13   The extent of the adaptation necessary for the lexical item to be considered dialectal by the members of the speech community needs to be investigated.

14   In some cases, duplicates of the same word, one with an autochthonous dialectal pronunciation and one with a standard German pronunciation, can be found, which differ in their stylistic meaning: the standard version is intensifying (cf. dialectally adapted *gruusig* vs. non-adapted, 'standard German' *grausig* 'disgusting').

15   Wolfensberger (1967) stresses the central role compounds play for the entry of new words into the vocabulary: new, complex lexemes tend to be taken over as a whole and are phonetically adjusted. Standard lexemes are thereby rarely replaced by dialectal heteronymes, which are, however, usually simplicia (cf. *Stääge* 'stairs', but *Rollträppe*, not *Rollstääge* 'escalator').

16   The etymological connection of the assimilated dialect form with the non-assimilated standard form is probably no longer transparent in this case. It is therefore justified to assume two different lexemes synchronically.

17   When Swiss Germans complain that the dialects are 'dying out', they usually give examples from the vocabulary ('old words'). The intuitive, lay conception and the linguistic findings are therefore quite compatible in this respect.

18   In their analysis of the language used in protestant church services, Rüegger *et al.* (1996) cannot find any relevant syntactic differences between passages in standard German and dialectal utterances.

19   Auer (1993:9f.) assumes that between two "horizontally" related varieties so-called rules of correspondence establish connections between corresponding morphemes or lexemes. They are therefore not to be equated with the rules that, for example, derive standard structures from dialectal structures. However, in exceptional cases, rules, namely in speech communities in which a specific imbalance between the dialect and the standard variety exists, one

variety is indeed taken as a starting-point for the construction of the other one (mostly during the process of the acquisition of the standard variety). In this case, speakers generalise learned rules of correspondence to a so-called adaptation rule.

20 To be sure, this also holds for the oral realisation of standard German, where routine plays an important part as well. It may be pointed out here with Ammon (1995), that this routine depends upon the requirements of certain professions and is therefore at least indirectly linked to social factors.

21 "In dialectalised utterances, forms such as 'consequently', 'in this way', 'thereby', etc. are used; they should be avoided in good dialect, however."

22 Typically enough, in the standard German draft of the speech from which this example is taken, almost all genitives have already been 'pre-formulated' with a periphrase with *von* (e.g. *die Erhaltung von unserem Aargauer Tagblatt* 'the preservation of our Aargauer Tagblatt'). All genitives which had not been preformulated in this way were translated in the 'wrong' way.

23 In the sense of Anderson (1988), the cognitive faculty of this translation would not reach autonomous, but only associative status.

24 We can also assume a 'hierarchy of ratings': if the informal dialect is used as a point of reference, the differences in formal dialect may be seen as merely 'stylistic' by the speech community or they may be considered to be 'grammatical mistakes'.

25 An example in data set H is the farewell speech of a politician who — due to the special occasion — violates the convention of speaking standard German in the cantonal parliament, which he explains as follows: written model: *Nachdem ich bereits meine Eröffnungsansprache auf Fricktaler Mundart gehalten habe, bleibe ich konsequent ...* 'After having given my opening address in "Fricktaler dialect", I intend to stay consistent ...'. Typically enough, the politician does not categorise the chosen variety as Swiss German nor as the dialect of the canton Aargau, but as a regional variety spoken in a smaller area within the canton, i.e. it is important for the speaker not only to use non-standard in his address, but to use one particular variety which identifies him as the inhabitant of a particular region.

26 "The real dialect is massively damaged, when, as often, sentences are joined in the way of the written language."

27 "A separation of changes in the area of language use of those in the system itself is only possible on a heuristical-analytical level."

28 In 100 verb forms, only between 2 and 30 divergent phonetic or morphological tokens per speaker could be found in the speech of 42 informants. A verb form usually is made up of several dialectal variables; for instance in an infinitive form such as *schtelle* 'to put' there is variation with regard to primärumlaut, the realisation of /t/ and that of the final syllable /-e/ in German-speaking Switzerland.

29 For all speakers analysed, comparison with the SDS data allows the origin of a speaker to be identified in an area smaller than the canton.

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