

SCHWEIZERDEUTSCH VS. HOCHDEUTSCH: A DIGLOSSIC SITUATION

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Abstract

Swiss German, referred to as Schweizerdeutsch, covers any of the German dialects spoken in Switzerland and in some Alpine communities in Northern Italy. The various dialects of Swiss German must not be confused with Swiss Standard German, a variety of Standard German, referred to as Hochdeutsch. Schweizerdeutsch is not usually intelligible by German people. This unintelligibility is to the extent that, for example, in a talk with a Swiss German speaker on German television, subtitles are necessary. This does not rule out the fact that every literate Swiss German speaker is also able to use Standard German. This linguistic situation is referred to as 'diglossia'. This article aims to scrutinize the linguistic differences between Hochdeutsch and Schweizerdeutsch, at lexical, semantic and morpho-syntactic levels, to show the reasons behind this unintelligibility.

Key words: Standard German (Hochdeutsch), Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch), diglossia

Background

Diglossia

Charles Ferguson (1959) was the first to introduce the term diglossia into the literature:

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly coded (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (p.336).

Ferguson identifies four situations which show major characteristics of this diglossic phenomenon: Arabic, Swiss German, Haitian (French and Creole), and Greek.

Swiss German

"German-speakers in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, likewise switch between standard German and their local varieties of German, which are often not comprehensible to other speakers"(Trask,2007, 73). Keller (1973) asserts that "in the German-speaking countries, diglossia prevails almost only in Switzerland" (p. 132).

Data of the Study

The Swiss German data are collected from two German language guides, titled Swiss German-The Modern Alemannic Vernacular in and around Zurich (Reese, 2007) and Local German- The Complete Course for Beginners (Hatherall & Hatherall, 2005).

The Standard German data are collected from such German text books, as Lernziel Deutsch, Hieber (2010) and Deutsche Sprachlehrer für Ausländer (Schulz & Griesbach, 2008).

Methodology

To illustrate the linguistic differences between Standard German (Hochdeutsch), and Swiss Local German (Schweizerdeutsch), the Surface Strategy Taxonomy can be of help. This taxonomy, "highlights the ways surface structures are altered" (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p. 150).

Categorizing linguistic items according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy helps researchers analyze linguistic alterations, in more details.

Data Analysis

The differences between Hochdeutsch (HD) and Schweizerdeutsch (SD) are manifested in (1) phonology, (2) lexicon, (3) morphology and (4) syntax.

In the forthcoming sections, some Phonological, lexical and morpho-syntactic differences between Hochdeutsch and Schweizerdeutsch will be introduced and analyzed, in detail.

1. Phonological Differences

Phonologically speaking, "the L system will often appear to be the more basic"...[there is quite a difference between Standard German and the local varieties]"(Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 91).

Consonant Neutralization

In standard German, **ch** sounds /x/, after the back vowels /a/, /o/ and /u/, e.g.

In Schweizerdeutsch, /x/ does not have the allophone [ç], but is always [x]. Some examples are:

	<u>HD</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
(1)	ich /ɪç/	/ɪx/	I
(2)	Lichtenstein /lɪçtənʃtaɪn/	/lɪxtənʃtaɪn/	Lichtenstein
(3)	euch /ɔɪç/	/ɔɪx/	you (acc. & dative)

Final Devoicing

In Hochdeutsch, the voiced plosive consonants (/b/, /d/ and /g/) become devoiced syllable finally, i.e. they change to (/p/, /t/ and /k/), respectively. Schweizerdeutsch does not exhibit final devoicing, unlike Hochdeutsch.

(4)	Klub	/klup/	/klub/	club
(5)	Hund	/hunt/	/hund/	dog
(6)	Zug	/t̚ʊ:k/	/t̚ʊ:g/	train

In Hochdeutsch, final -ig becomes /-ɪk/ or /-ɪç/. Schweizerdeutsch does not follow this rule.

(7)	richtig	/rɪçtɪk, rɪçtɪç/	/rɪçtɪg /	right, correct
(8)	Knöig	/kœnɪk, kœnɪç/	/kœnɪg /	king

Deletion of final /n/ after vowels

(9)	Garten	/gartən/	Garte /gartə/	garden
(10)	machen	/maxən/	mache /maxə/	to do
(11)	von	/fɔn/	vo /fɔ/	from, of

(12) sieben /zibΘn/ sibe /zibΘ/ seven

Different Stress Pattern

In Schweizerdeutsch the primary stress tends more to fall on the first syllable than in Hochdeutsch:

(13) Kasino /ka'zi:no/ /'kazino/ casino
(14) galant /ga'lant/ /'galant/ gallant

2. Lexical Differences

	<u>HD</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Numericals			
(15)	eins	äis	one
(16)	zwei	zwäi	two
(17)	drei	drüü	three
(18)	fünf	föif	five
(19)	sex	sächs	six
Adjectives			
(20)	unmöglich	ohnmächtig	impossible
(21)	leicht, einfach	ring	simple
(22)	schnell	tifig	fast
(23)	zu teuer	übrissen	very expensive
Verbs			
(24)	zuhören	lose	listen
(25)	gucken	lügen	look
(26)	Fußball spielen	schutten	play football
(27)	regnen, pinkeln	schiffen	rain
(28)	einkaufen	lädelen	buy
(29)	beeilen	pressieren	hurry
(30)	rauchen	schloten	to smoke

Nouns

Nouns tend to be in complementary distribution, in the two varieties, much more than any other grammatical category:

(31) Arbeit Buez work
(32) Kätzchen Büsi kitten

(33)	Fünffrankenstück	Fünfliber	5-franc coin
(34)	Wippe	Gigampfi	seesaw
(35)	Kopf	Grind	head
(36)	guten Tag	Grüezi	Good day
(37)	Kekse	Guetsli	biscuits
(38)	Kleingeld	Münz	(small) change
(39)	Mobiltelefon	Natel	cell phone
(40)	Polizei	Schmier	police

Borrowed Words

Words borrowed from English

(41)	Reisebus	<u>Car</u>	coach
(42)	Trainingsanzug	<u>Trainer</u>	track suit
(43)	Strassenbahn	<u>Tram</u>	streetcar

Words borrowed from French

(44)	auf Wiedersehen	<u>adieu</u>	good bye, so long
(45)	Gebrauchtwagen	<u>Occasion</u>	used car
(46)	Schaffner	<u>Kondukteur</u>	conductor
(47)	danke	<u>merci</u>	(I) thank
(48)	Hähnchen	<u>Poulet</u>	cockerel
(49)	Fahrrad	<u>Velo</u>	bicycle
(50)	Entschuldigung	<u>Excusez</u>	excuse
(51)	Fahrschein	<u>Billett</u>	ticket
(52)	Waschbecken	<u>Lavabo</u>	basin
(53)	Gehsteig	<u>Trottoir</u>	sidewalk

Loan-translation

(54)	Kartoffeln	<u>Erdäpfel</u> ¹	potato(s)
(55)	Ampel	<u>Rotlicht</u> ²	traffic light

¹- **Erdäpfel** made of **Erd** (earth) and **Äpfel** (apples) is a loan translation of the French word **pomme de terre** (apple of earth).

² - Rotlicht, made of **rot** (red) and **Licht** (light) can be a loan translation of the English **red light**.

Grammatical Differences

Dative Subject

In some languages like German, sometimes, a subject NP, may appear morphologically dative, while it is in agreement with the tensed verb as the subject of the sentence. This phenomenon, referred to as dative subject, usually happens when the subject NP is an experiencer rather than an agent. Dative subjects occur with the verb **sein** (to be), while nominative subjects occur with the verb **haben** (to have). Hochdeutsch and Schweizerdeutsch may use the two structures in complementary distribution.:

(56)

HD	Mir ist kalt
	1 st -Pers.Dat. is cold
SD	Ich ha chalt
	1 st -Pers.Nom. have cold
ET	I am cold.

(56)

HD	Ich habe etwas geschenkt bekommen
	1 st -Pers.Nom. have something given as present(PP) received (PP)
SD	Mir isch oppis geschankt woorde
	1 st -Pers.Dat. is something given as present(PP) become (PP)
ET	I have received something as a present.

In HD complex sentences, when the subordinate clause consists of both finite and nonfinite verbs, the finite verb occurs last, e.g. Als ich meine Arbeit gemacht **hatte**, fur ich nach Haus. (Schulz & Griesbach, 2008: 148). In SD, the finite verb can precede the non-finite one:

(57)

HD	Als du gekommen bist , ...
	when you. come (pp) are
SD₁	Wo du cho bisch , ...
	where you come (PP) are
SD₂	Wo du bisch cho, ...
	where you are come (PP)
ET	When you have come, ...

Pro-drop

In Schweizerdeutsch, the first person nominative pronoun may be deleted:

(58) **HD** Ich bin zufrieden.
I am contented

SD Bi zfride.
am contented

ET I am content(ed).

Total Differences

The above-mentioned partial differences, hand in hand, make the two varieties totally different at the levels larger than phonology and lexicon. HD and SD use drastically different phrases and sentences in the same situations. The following examples clarify the extent of the difference.

(59)

HD Er ist zurück.

SD Ër isch zrugg.

ET He is back.

(60)

HD Er muß nach Berlin gehen.

SD Ër mues uf Berlin gaa.

ET He must go to Berlin.

(61)

HD Ich habe ein Kuchen gegessn, aber nicht ganz.

SD Ich han e Wëëe ggasse, aber nôt ganz.

ET I have eatn a cake, but not completely

(62)

HD Sie ließ ihn nicht schlafen.

SD Si hed ne nid la schlafe

ET She has not let him sleep.

Concluding Remarks

The data of the study manifest a good number of differences between Standard German (Hochdeutsch) and Swiss Local German (Schweizerdeutsch). These differences were found on the levels of phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax. These differences, going hand in hand, have resulted in drastic differences, having made Schweizerdeutsh unintelligible for non-Swiss Germans.