

# “SEPARATE AND PECULIAR” — THE SURVIVAL OF ‘PENNSYLVANIA ‘DUTCH’ IN ONTARIO, CANADA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION\*

At the beginning of the 19th century immigrants of German and Swiss origin flooded into Ontario from Pennsylvania bringing with them their particular dialect of German (hereafter PG). Waterloo County, in south western Ontario (approximately 100 kms from Toronto) represents today the largest settlement of Pennsylvania Germans in Ontario and this paper will concentrate on the language spoken in the predominantly Mennonite communities in and around the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo (cf. map below). Unfortunately, this must exclude for the moment the other although admittedly mutually intelligible dialect group; namely, the Amish community in Wellesley. It also excludes the large group of Russian Mennonites in Ontario who speak a form of Low German.

The German-speaking areas of Pennsylvania are well known and the sociolinguistic aspects of this particular contact situation have been well documented (cf. for example, Huffines 1980, Loudon 1987, Moelleken 1983). By comparison, relatively little has been written on the parallel linguistic situation which exists in Ontario, Canada. This paper then is an introduction to some of the most important factors in the history of Pennsylvania German in Canada, particularly with respect to the Mennonite Community. It examines the settlement patterns of the Mennonites in Canada and addresses some of the questions concerning the maintenance of German within this particular group. Some consideration is also given to certain structural changes which are taking place in the language on account of contact with English.

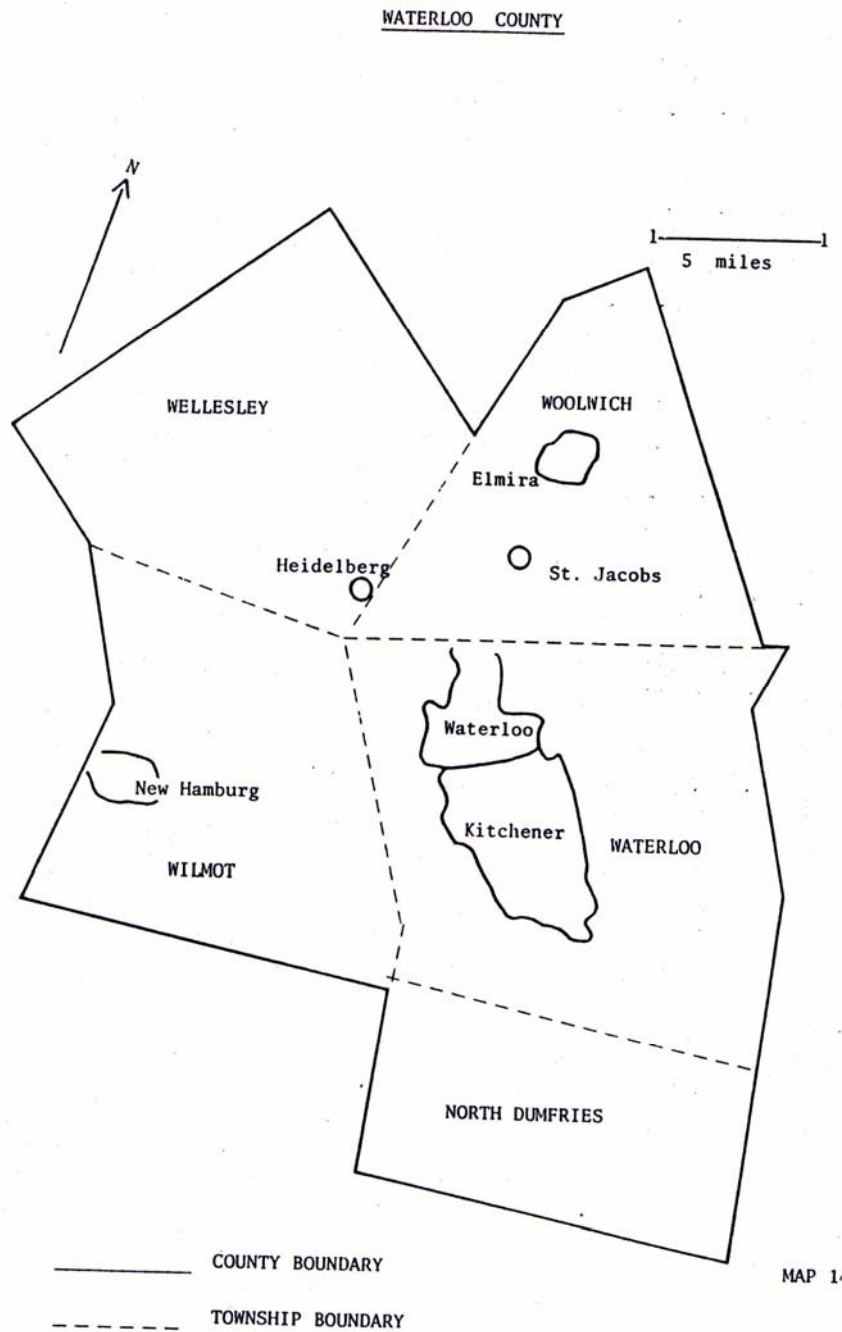
### 1.1 The Mennonites

It is only by examining the religious and historical background of these people that one is able to fully understand the linguistic situation in Ontario. The Mennonites, the Amish and the Hutterites together form the three major groups of the Anabaptist religion. Of these three, probably the Amish are the best known — the recent movie *Witness* did much to publicise these people and their way of life. Within all these groups, however, there are many different splinter groups and within the Mennonite Order particularly this fracturing has important consequences for the maintenance of PG.

The Anabaptist religion arose during the 16th century in Europe as a counter Church movement. It began in Switzerland and from there spread to Holland and Germany. Each of the three Anabaptist groups mentioned followed different leaders and it is from these they took their respective names — Jacob Hutter (a hatter by trade) was the elected leader of the Hutterites, Jacob Amman of the Amish and Menno Simons (a former Roman Catholic priest) of the Mennonites. The term Anabaptist refers to the practice of rebaptizing individuals already baptised as children. Members of these groups argue that infant baptism is not in keeping with their concept of the Church as a voluntary group of believers and accordingly they rebaptise anyone who wishes to join them — adult baptism therefore is a symbol of their faith.

From the beginning, the Anabaptists advocated rigid separation of Church and State and for themselves total separation from the ‘world’. They accepted the Bible as their sole guide of faith and practice. The Bible was their authority — not the Roman Catholic Church and Pope. Not surprisingly, then, they clashed with the Roman Catholic and also the Protestant churches

of the time and suffered severe persecution. Many were imprisoned and burnt at the stake and the strong desire of present-day Mennonites and Amish to maintain a separate existence is not surprising in the light of the persecution they suffered during this time.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Many families have a copy of *The Martyrs' Mirror* - a huge book published first in Holland in 1660 in which vivid accounts are given of all the Anabaptist martyrs of the post-reformation. This book is something which would constantly reinforce this desire for a separate existence.

During the 17th century, the Quaker William Penn issued the Anabaptists with an invitation to settle in Pennsylvania. Britain promised that in America they would be given religious freedom and accordingly many Dutch, German and Swiss immigrated during the 17th and 18th centuries. At the end of *the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century, many resettled in Canada. This* was a direct result of the American revolution— because of their pacifist way of life and because of the anti-German sentiment which followed the war (German mercenary soldiers had been used by the British). They came up in horse drawn buggies, some staying near the Canadian border but most settling in Waterloo County. They were the first Europeans in the province and the people I spoke with are direct descendents of these first settlers.

## 1.2 Why Dutch?

The fact that today both the speakers and their language are commonly called Dutch is usually attributed to an English popular corruption of *Deutsch* (or what in their language is actually *Deitsch*). It has also been suggested to me (Eldon Weber — pers. com.) that the first arrivals in America from Europe were in fact of Dutch origin. In popular use the term Dutch was generally extended to include all the Anabaptist new arrivals. Both are plausible accounts, and both may well have had a part to play in reinforcing the popular name Dutch for these people and their language.

What is now a surprisingly homogenous language grew out of a blend of the many different dialects which came into Pennsylvania during the very first wave of immigration during the 17th century — from the Palatinate in Germany and surrounding areas like Bavaria, Hessen, Swabia and Wurttemberg in Germany, as well as the German-speaking areas of Switzerland. So PG very early on went through a general levelling process when all the different varieties of these early German-speaking migrants mixed to produce what we now know as PG. The outcome of this dialect mix was a language which, in phonology and grammar, now resembles most closely the modern German dialect of the eastern Palatinate — Rhein-Frankisch (cf. Buffington 1970). The languages are remarkably similar in structure although PG is diverging now because of increased influence from English. In morphology there are also some Alamanic elements, seen for example in the diminutive suffix *-ii* and also in some of the verbal morphology (cf. Keller 1961 for a comparison with continental German dialects).

## 2. THE LANGUAGE TODAY

The fact that after over three centuries the language is still alive and well is remarkable — particularly, in light of the fate of other immigrant and minority languages in Canada and the States. How is it that PG of all these languages has been able to resist pressure from English? The question is, of course — will it be able to for much longer? According to at least one account by the German linguist Neufeld (1955), the future of PG is a very bleak one indeed. In his paper, Neufeld writes of the decline of PG in Canada — in fact he goes so far as to claim that the Mennonites in Canada have gone exclusively over to English.

*“Die oben erwähnte kleine Gruppe pennsylvanischer Mennoniten (in Waterloo County) sudwestdeutscher Herkunft hat ihre Mundart bereits aufgegeben und bedient sich heute ausschliesslich des Englischen”* [The above-mentioned small group of Pennsylvanian Mennonites of West German origin have already given up their dialect and today use exclusively English — my translation.]

One wonders how Neufeld could ever have arrived at such a conclusion (1 955:230) — to overlook the 27,000 Mennonite people who speak PG in some form and most importantly

those 5,500 who use only PG (except when they have to interact with the non-PG speaking outside world). While it is true that in many of the so-called ‘progressive’ Mennonite groups, people are moving more and more over to English — and as we will see PG will almost certainly die within these groups — in no way could you say this of the religiously more conservative groups. They show absolutely no sign of giving up their language. For them PG is alive and thriving.

## 2.1 Culture/Society — Different Subgroups

While I do not intend to go deeply into the social and religious background of these people, it is important to consider these details inasmuch as they are relevant to understanding the current linguistic situation and its development. Religion and way of life are intimately connected for the Mennonites. Both govern strongly the attitude of the people towards their language — and it seems to me, it is this alone which will determine the future of PG. And to understand what this future might be, we must first consider the complex make-up of the Mennonite Order since this has important bearing on the progress of shift from German to English. The order itself comprises some 40,000 members but, as mentioned above, this includes many different subgroups.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Swiss-German Mennonites of all the Anabaptist groups in North-America have the largest number of splinter groups. Until 1869 there was only one group. In that year however, a group known as the Ontario Conference Mennonite Denomination broke away and since this time there have been many more splits. The major reason for all these schisms is the different degrees to which members will interpret the scriptural quotation— “And be not conformed to this world” [*Ftellet euch nich dieser Welt gleich*]. The initial split, for instance, came about because certain groups were admitting worldly church practices like Sunday school. They were also more liberal in their attire. The question of non-conformity poses enormous problems and has led to great tension and serious splits within their community. Biblical exactness, as we will see, is an important factor in maintaining their separate status, and close sense of community but paradoxically it is also a reason for the continuing factionalism. To an outsider the situation is complicated and confusing and it is often difficult to tell the sociological and religious differences between the groups. Differences may be subtle, such as a difference in dress styles or can involve more serious issues such as education of the young, or the adoption of new farming methods. To simplify matters, it is perhaps easier to see the Mennonites in terms of two major groups. This is a gross simplification admittedly, but in terms of the sociolinguistic situation it is a useful distinction to make.

### 2.1.1 The Plain Folk

Plain Folk comprise the ultra-conservative members, known also as the Old Order Mennonites. There are some 27,000 Swiss-German Mennonites in Ontario and the Old Order comprise approximately 20% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> They are rural and isolated and alone the group makes up half of the total farming population of Ontario. While the Old Order clearly began as a religious group, it now has really become a distinct cultural group and contrasts remarkably with mainstream Canadian culture. Fishman (1982:33- 35) describes the

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<sup>2</sup> Complicating everything is the fact that this 40,000 includes one third Russian Mennonites who speak a form of Low German. These groups originated in Europe but were later transplanted in Russia and when things didn’t work out for them there they moved to North-America. They keep very separate from the Swiss-German Mennonites.

<sup>3</sup> The figures here are those given in Bausenhardt (1977:1 5-1 6). It is unlikely that they would have changed significantly since this time.

Old Order Amish in Pennsylvania as a rare example of stable societal biculturalism (or what he terms di-ethnia). This also aptly describes the Old Order Mennonites in Canada — as in Pennsylvania we see here a stable situation involving two distinct sets of cultural behaviours. As Alan Buehler, a former Old Order Mennonite, writes (1977:96) — “to us there were two kinds of people, the Mennonites and the Non-Mennonite (sic), the Mennonite or an outsider, or a man of the world”. This insulation, as we will see, is an important factor for the survival of PG within this particular group.

Their separate simple way of life attracts much attention. People often do not understand the theological reasons behind their refusal to accept modern ways, and assume that they are pursuing eccentric behaviour simply in its own right. Once more describing his Old Order heritage, Buehler writes (p. 82) “the Old Order are frequently referred to as a “peculiar” people ... They are a conundrum to those who do not understand their beliefs”. Members of the Old Order have a very distinctive style of dress which has changed little over the centuries. They drive only horses and buggies, are opposed to modern conveniences like cars, radios, televisions, telephones etc. and *refuse all forms of government aid and insurance*. The Old Order want to keep change to a minimum — *ufhalde de alde Wege* [‘maintain the old ways’] — although, it is true, some accommodations are now being made. For example, more members do appear to be accepting electricity (people of the Church are generally not allowed this however) and some of the farms do now have phones. It seems that both electricity and phones are more readily accepted because they are less of a threat to community living. Cars, on the other hand, clearly are a threat since they mean that it is possible to travel vast distances presumably also outside the community where one would be much more vulnerable then to worldly influences. To leave the community means to these people the same as leaving the Church (cf. discussion Bausenhart 1966).

The problem facing the Old Order is that once they start to accommodate to new ways, where is the line to be drawn? Once they start to admit change, the outside culture has a foot in the door and the real fear then is that this contact with the outside will destroy their own sense of community. They have only to look at their more progressive members to see that their fears are well grounded. It is really only the Old Order who have managed to retain this sense of community and remain truly *abgesandert vun die Welt* [‘apart from the world’] and it is the Old Order who are the key to the survival of PG. Their language is their greatest means of keeping themselves separate. For them, the loss of their language would mean the loss of their faith (cf. discussion Section 3).

### **2.1.2 The Non-Plain Folk**

The Non-Plain Folk comprise the other 80% of Mennonites. They can be further divided into two main groups — the conservative and the progressive. The conservative make up roughly 15% and are almost all rural (they have services which are part English and part German). The progressive make up the other 65%. Of this percentage, 50% are urban and only 15% rural. Within this group, only the old generation are PG-speaking

Non-Plain Folk themselves comprise, as you may well imagine, a complex of many different subgroups. Amongst the conservative are the so-called black-bumper Mennonites. They adhere to a simple way of life but drive cars (black vehicles with dark tinted windows). In Waterloo it is usual for these people to hold church services in the meeting house on alternate weeks with the horse and buggy Mennonites. The so-called progressive Mennonites represent the modern groups. Their members are generally indistinguishable from those who participate in mainstream Canadian life. It clearly is best to see the whole complex situation in terms of a continuum — from the ultraconservative Old Order Mennonites to the most progressive. As

we will see, along this continuum it is also possible to plot the different speakers according to their language skills from the most competent to those with a passive knowledge only.

### 3. THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION

In 1945, a linguist by the name of J.W Frey published a paper on the Amish in Pennsylvania which he entitled 'Amish Triple Talk'. This study in many ways preempts all the recent discussion on diglossia, since it is essentially a triglossic situation that he implies exists for these Amish people. The Old Order Mennonites in Canada are also triglossic — PG, English and High German.<sup>4</sup> To begin with, they are bilingual English and PG. PG, as the L-variety, is usually only spoken and is the language of home and community. English, as the H-variety, is read and written and is only spoken when dealing with non-PG speaking outsiders — the so-called *Auswendige*. English is not learned by the Old Order children until they go to school at the age of 6 years. Although there are parents who teach some English at home to make the first school years a little easier, many children know no English before this time. Most Old Order children attend parochial schools taught and run by their own community. Even though English is still compulsory here, these schools are nonetheless very important for language maintenance. Only Old Order children attend which helps to enhance a feeling of group consciousness and means that the children are insulated from any outside influences. School continues until the age of 14 when they return to the land. Understandably, the Old Order Mennonites do not approve of sending their children to High School, believing that it alienates the children from a farming and a Godly life. They fear that too much schooling will mean that the influences of the non-Mennonites around them will take the children away from the community and therefore away from the Church.

At the same time, these people also have a knowledge of High German. This is not the same as Modern High German today but is (archaic) Luther German — the language of the Luther Bible and hymns with influence, from their own PG dialect High German is understandably very important to them and is held in high esteem. As the word of God, everyone must be able to read it and children are taught it by family and at school. It is only ever used for religious purposes although sermons are now given in the dialect — not in High German as is sometimes thought the case. People do not converse in it, unless to quote from the Bible — like their Pennsylvania relatives, though they are triglossic, they are not trilingual. It is clear, however, that High German is functionally very restricted and in this model would best be described as a classical variety.

This was not always the case, however. At the time of early settlement during the 19th century a diglossic situation existed between High German and PG which was not unlike the situation in Switzerland today. High German, as the H-variety, was used in outside-of-home contexts involving education, letter-writing, newspapers, literature, worship etc. Like today, it was acquired through schooling and partly through parents. On the other hand PG, as the L-variety with no standard orthography (and it still does not have one) was used in intimate contexts like conversing with family and friends and some folk literature. As it is still today, PG was learned at home as the first language. A number of factors contributed to the demise of High German as the H-variety but the most important was the simple fact that the German homeland was in Europe and immigration from there was diminishing. This, in addition to the extreme isolation of the Anabaptist groups, meant there was not a productive relationship

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<sup>4</sup> I am using di/triglossia in the same sense as Fishman (1967, 1982). Ferguson's (1959) original definition involved variation between varieties of the SAME language. As Fishman (1982:24) discusses, I assume there to be a number of different relationships which can potentially hold between the H and L varieties.

between Continental German and the form of High German spoken in Canada. It was therefore not a potential source for expressions and terms for new concepts or objects. English, as the national language of North America, was only too ready to fill those gaps. All this made it difficult for High German to remain the H-variety. The language was anyway difficult for speakers, being morphologically much more complex than PG (like Amish High German German today; cf. Frey 1945, it was likely always full of elements from PG). Not surprisingly then High German became more and more restricted in its domains and English supplanted it as the H-variety. It is not unlike the situation of Latin and the different varieties of Vulgar Latin which eventually gave rise to the Modern Romance languages — the important difference, of course, is that PG has never been standardised. The final nail into coffin was the fact that towards the end of the 19th century there was a school act passed (similar to the one in the States) which said that English was the only language of instruction in schools. This meant then, that knowing English was no longer simply a practical need for the Canadian Mennonites — it had become a legal necessity.

### **3.1 The Survival of PG**

As argued earlier, there is no evidence whatsoever that the Old Order Mennonites are about to give up their language and the secret of its survival must surely lie in its symbolic value. Ryan (1979) discusses the fact that many so-called low-prestige language varieties have values for their speakers which are quite different from those associated with the prestige varieties. This is why they so often show such surprisingly strong resistance against the more powerful standard dialects. One important value has to do with group solidarity. This is clearly a very important dimension here as well. However, in the case of the Mennonites, it is more than just a ‘sense of identification’ within a group. As I see it, there are three aspects to the Mennonite way of life and religion which contribute most to the continued survival of PG within specifically the Old Order — their humility, their separateness and their non-conformity.

#### **3.1.1 ‘Love Not the World’ — Humility and Simplicity**

Many describe the language (not only the outsiders but the Mennonites themselves) as a degenerate form of German. It seems that for many, PG has all the negative connotations usually associated with ‘dialect’ or ‘vernacular’ and many people were curious as to why I should be interested in it at all as a language — why not pursue something worthwhile like Standard High German? To an outsider like myself, it seemed that the speakers themselves generally held their language in low esteem and one might very well imagine that this would mean almost certain decline and shift to English. But nothing could be further from the truth. Here, in fact, lies one of the secrets of the language’s success at survival. It has to do with the importance which is placed on the need for humility. As Alan Buehler (1977:98), once more writing on his Old Order heritage, describes —

*Se brauche des Wad ‘Demuut’ viel....zu iere duut des Wad mene plaini Gleder. Es Englisch-Deitsch Dictionary saagt des Wad meent “to be humble and meek”. [They use the word ‘Demuut’ a lot... to them this word means a plain dress. The English-German dictionary says this word means ‘to be humble and meek’ (Buehler’s translation).]*

PG, like plain dress, has therefore an important symbolic function within their community. Their dialect of German is viewed by the Old Order as a sign of humility — and therefore a good and Godly thing. It is not pride — pride is what they abhor the most — but, if you like, pride almost turned on its head. If High German is the word of God, the language of their scriptures, then the low status of the dialect variety which they speak is seen as an appropriate

symbol of their humility — the plainer and the more basic, the better. Its low-status has therefore a positive value for the Old Order.

### 3.12 ‘Be Separated from the World’ — Isolation

*Iere Glawe is — los uns net involved waere mit em Government, awer los Government un Kaerich separate sei. Los uns e separate Volk sei, wu uns egene Noot un Schulde bezale, un unser God diene so wie mir des Wad verschteen. Se dien als bede far des Government, as God mecht des fiere, so as sie in Friede un e ruhich Leve fiere meche. Awer es das Government un Kaerich separate bleive kenne.* [Let us not be involved in any way with the government, or the state. Their belief is — “let us not be involved with the Government but let State and Church be separate. Let us be a separated people, looking after our own needs and obligations, and serving our God in our own way”. They always do pray for the Government, that God may guide it in such a way that they may continue to live in peace and quiet. But the Church must stay separated. (Buehler 1977:174; my translation).]

The Old Order, as discussed, are both isolated and rural and these two facts are crucial for the continued survival of PG. The people have not assimilated into mainstream culture and therefore have retained their language, unlike other German-speaking groups who have arrived in various waves during Ontario’s history (compare, for example the Roman Catholic and Lutheran communities — they do not have the same Pennsylvanian background but came directly from Germany during the middle of the 19th century and onwards; cf. Kloss 1966). PG allows for insider identification and also outsider separation — it is their main means of remaining detached and isolated from worldly influences — *abgesandert vun die Welt*. Its loss would also mean the loss of this separate status and this would be equivalent to losing their faith.

### 3.1.3 “...And be a Peculiar People” — Non-Conformity

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9)

Two linguists, Kloss (1966) and Huffines (1980a), attribute the successful maintenance of PG in Pennsylvania to the fact that any change is per se considered to be sinful by these people. I would argue, however, that it is not change itself, but rather what change entails. Their principles of non-conformity, it is true, mean that they keep change to a minimum but I do not believe that new ways are rejected simply because they are considered necessarily bad things. For example, even though as farmers the Old Order will have nothing to do with the modernisation of machinery, they are extremely interested and, what is more, well up in the latest techniques. These they learn about through reading newspapers and farming magazines (cf. Bausenhart 1966). Many people I spoke with displayed considerable interest in the changes going on in the world. They are not adverse to change as such — in fact they are not adverse to accommodating changes if they think it will benefit the whole community. It is just that most change is seen as working against the community somehow. To maintain the old way of life the conservative Old Order Mennonites realise the importance of keeping their language. Their shared language, their shared dress, their horse and buggy are indispensable — without them their social structure would not continue and to them this would be the same as losing their religion.

## 3.2 The Non-Plain Folk

Needless to say, none of the above factors favouring maintenance hold true for the Non- Plain Folk. The Non-Plain Folk of course share many beliefs and behaviour patterns of the Old

Order (depending on how 'wordly' they are), but they are not part of the one cultural group. The di-ethnia of the Old Order no longer exists within these groups and in the dominant culture in which they are now participating PG has none of the same values and no real domain. Only fragments remain of the contexts of usage where PG used once to be appropriate — for example, speaking with Old Order members of the community. These people started accommodating in what seemed to be fairly harmless ways and the effect on the community could not have been anticipated. But it was devastating — once the outside culture starts to intrude it seems the shift to English swiftly follows. Once they start to accommodate, change accelerates and this destroys the strict "compartmentalization" (to use Fishman's 1982 term) which is necessary if languages are to survive along side one another. The more progressive orders show how precarious a situation the survival of the language is. As soon as the English is allowed to intrude in what were originally PG domains, the shift to English in all other contexts is swift and complete. As Fishman (1982:29) describes — "without compartmentalisation of one kind or another ... the flow process from language spread to language shift is an inexorable one". To quote Buehler (1977:220) once more —

*Des deed weise as die Ald Manishde vielleicht recht sin wan se sage "me misse de ald Weeg ufhalde" un me misse "abgesandert sei van die Weit". Weil wan die jung Leid eemol die Welt versuche no is grose Gfaar as se abfalle deen".* [The Old Order are probably right when they say "we must keep up the old ways" and "we must keep separate from the world" if they want to keep the young people in the Church. Once they have 'tasted' the things of the 'world' there will be a falling away from the Old Order. (Buehler's translation).]

Nearly four centuries have elapsed since PG first came to North America. Clearly the language can no longer meet the communicative needs of these people — expressions for new concepts, objects, particularly those associated not with Mennonite but mainstream North American life do not exist in PG and, as discussed earlier, Modern Standard German is no longer a viable source of reference. The Non Plain Folk see PG as a language without standard (even as far as one without grammar). PG does not have the support of any institution — school or government. It is not a written language. All this does much to destroy any feeling of worth on the part of the speakers for their language. Nothing remains of the symbolic value it still holds for the Old Order. These people are identifying themselves with dominant culture. The low esteem in which PG is held has positive repercussions for the Old Order, who see it has a symbol of their humility — but this is clearly not the case with the progressive orders. The sentimental feelings these people display for their Old Order Mennonite heritage and their loyalty is not enough to keep the language alive within their groups. The sort of values held by these progressive groups, namely social and economic advancement, can be via English only.<sup>5</sup>

Huffines (1980:52) points to an important fact which she argues has contributed to the rapid demise of PG in the equivalent Pennsylvania groups — "the use of Pennsylvania German continues to be associated with having little education". Outsiders perceive the PG people as being against education (this is not the case — it is simply that they see education as having no value for their way of life). Huffines states (p. 52), that her informants "expressed the fear that knowing Pennsylvania German might hold their children back in school, that it might confuse them". This I feel also holds true within the Canadian context. It is a popularly held belief that Mennonites are against education because they refuse to allow their children to attend beyond the eighth grade. I believe there exists still today the image of the ignorant

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<sup>5</sup> Huffines (1980) looks at the question of maintenance of PG among the the equivalent groups in Pennsylvania and also reports rapid death in the non-sectarian groups there.

farmer who speaks an old-fashioned rustic form of German. There is another related issue here which also works against language maintenance. As Huffines (p. 52-53) also points out, many parents in these groups want their children to learn only English in case they acquire a ‘Dutch’ accent and are teased on account of it. These sorts of attitudes are important here and the fact that they still prevail also in Canada is clear from the drawings and quotations you commonly see on serviettes, table-cloths, tea towels, drink coasters — the types of items which are available in souvenir shops. The sorts of examples of so-called ‘verhoodelt Englisch’ give of course a grossly exaggerated picture of the English of these people, but serve nonetheless to reinforce the popular image of the ‘dumb Dutch’, an image which the progressive Mennonites certainly do not want for their children.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. INTERFERENCE

It seems clear that PG will continue to survive among the Old Order, but the question is in what form? Although I am not yet able to give fine details to do with linguistic interference from English, it is useful perhaps to comment generally on just some of the areas which suggest that convergence to English is taking place. The fact that features (particularly to do with vocabulary) of English are now a part of their language is acknowledged even by the Old Order. The following quotation comes from recordings made by Karch and Moelleken (1976) of several PG speakers from Waterloo County: Here the Mennonite farmer interviewed comments on the increasing intrusion of English into PG. His own speech is full of English words (highlighted) in addition to those he is using for illustration:

*“Oh ja. Er hot ... mein Vadder hot noch meer als Hochdeitsche Wadde **gejused**. Ich saag as er hot noch meer **gejused** als wie ich die, und ich **jus** noch meer als wie mei Nachkummenschaft. ‘S werd als meer English neigefedelt — zum Beischpiel. Ach selles is ja kee Pennsylvani Deitsch Wad awwer mir **juse**’s doch. Mei Vadder hot gesaagt — ‘Zimmermann’ — ich saag nu’ Schreiner — nu mei Buwe sage ‘**Contractor**’. Selles is e bissel e ... e Illustration ... wie die Wadde aus meer ausverliere vun eem Geschlecht zum anner ... un me sage aa ‘**Generation**’ ...wan es Englisch alles emool raus ... wan mir es darch e Windmiel deed un die English Wadde all raus blase, dan es waer nimmi viel meer iwwerich. Un wie ich gsaagt hab — vun een Jaar zum annre odder vun ee Geschlecht zum annre vun ee ‘**Generation**’ zu de anner waert als meer seller Weeg”*

[‘Oh yes. He has ... my father used to use even more High German words. I am saying that he used even more than I do, and I use even more than my children. More and more English is being added — for example, oh that’s not even a Pennsylvania German word, but we use it anyway. My father said ‘Zimmermann’, I say now ‘Schreiner’, now my boys say ‘contractor’. That is a little a — an illustration ... how the words are dropping out from one generation to the other ... and we even say ‘generation’.. .if all the English was taken out ... if we put it through a winnowing mill and blew all the English words out, then there wouldn’t be much left. And as I have said, from one year to another or from one family to another, from one generation to the other it will go more this way’.]

<sup>6</sup> Some examples of ‘verhoodelt’ English are the following: *Yonnie stung his foot with a bee and it ouches him terrible, Amos and Becky live the hill a little up, out where the road gets all, the paper wants rain — it wonders me if it don’t gif a storm till evening, the beans and spec is all Pop... but the schnitz un kneep is yet.* The ironic thing is that it seems to be the Non-Plain Folk and NOT the sectarian groups who have the strongest interference from PG in their English, cf. Loudon 1987.

Lexical borrowing is the most obvious area of English influence although in fact there are not as many English words in PG as is commonly believed to be the case. Many of the words which people assume to be English are in fact original German words which are formally very similar to English and which are in fact becoming more so through English interference in the phonology of PG.

One of the most interesting phonological borrowings from English involves the pronunciation of *r*. Kratz and Mimes (1953) describe PG in Ontario (which they call Kitchener German) as essentially *r*-less. The sound is pronounced as a trill only when it appears before a vowel, and elsewhere it is pronounced as a schwa. My impression is that this is changing rapidly. Before consonants and word-finally after long vowels, it is becoming increasingly common to find an *r* which closely resembles the North American retroflex [ɻ] — for example *Darm* ‘intestine’ is frequently pronounced [da:rm]. The retroflex [ɻ] also appears to be replacing the trill in other positions in the speech of some individuals. My observations are confirmed by Richter’s (1969) description of Ontario German phonology. Richter (1969:59) claims that retroflexed [ɻ] is particularly common in the speech of younger and middle-age people. From recordings I have made, however, it seems that there is enormous variation, even in the speech of a single individual. This is also apparent in the fluctuating spellings which can be found in Buehler (1977); for example, *a’ahlich* versus *airlich* ‘honest’ and *A’ahbs* versus *Airbs* ‘pea’. There is considerable lexical variation, as one might imagine in a situation of change in progress — certainly borrowings like *Kar* ‘car’ are reinforcing the pronunciation of *r* before a consonant. There is also dialectal variation. Amongst the Amish speakers, for example, the tendency to pronounce the *r* in all positions is the strongest. Curiously, it seems that this pronunciation is also more apparent in the speech of the Old Order Amish and Mennonite groups. The more progressive speakers are more conservative in this regard and their phonology matches more closely the early description by Kratz and Mimes. It is interesting that the development of the retroflex should occur in the speech of the Old Order, and NOT the more progressive speakers who you would imagine would show a greater degree of interference from English (cf. footnote 6). It seems that the pronunciation may well have entered the language actually via written High German (although Standard High German is *r*-less). Richter notes in a footnote (1969:157) that “Old Order Mennonites pronounce the letter *r* as [ɻ] exclusively when reading the Standard German of the Bible. The same is true of the Old Order Mennonites in Lancaster County Pennsylvania”. Louden (1987:29-33) reports an identical situation for Amish German in Pennsylvania. This is not surprising given the status of High German as the classical H-variety. High German is not spoken and the tendency would be for people to pronounce *r* wherever it appeared in writing. But why not substitute the trilled *r* of PG? The reason is that PG is not a written language for them. It would therefore be natural in this respect to borrow from English which is their written language. As suggested by Louden (1987:31-32), it may also have to do with the slow almost syllable by syllable hymn singing characteristic of the Old Order Amish and Mennonite groups. The retroflex is much more able to be sustained than the trill in this sort of slow careful speech/singing.

Unfortunately, in the area of grammar I have little to say for the moment. As is always the case when you try to argue for foreign influence in grammar, it is impossible to know whether observed changes are in fact due to contact or whether they are simply parallel but internally motivated changes. For example, observed morpho-syntactic changes taking place in PG could be due to contact with English, yet they are also changes which are taking place currently in European German dialects (cf. Burridge to appear). Such changes involve a shift in word order to general SVO and a major simplification or ‘stripping away’ of morphological complexity, such as case syncretism, collapse of gender and number

distinctions, reduction intensifies etc. — in general a movement towards greater analyticity and iconicity, something akin to changes evident in pidginization/creolization processes. All one can say with safety is that English is having an accelerating effect on these changes.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary then, it seems that among the Non-Plain Folk language proficiency ranges from fully competent speakers to real semi-speakers — a continuum which is directly linked to their degree of religious conservatism. The competent speakers, however, are not supported by diglossia and, as discussed, this implies an unstable situation. It facilitates easy spread and ultimately language shift to English. Among the more progressive groups, the crucial thing is that the children of even the most proficient speakers will most certainly not be teaching their own children PG. For these groups of people language death is inevitable. For the Old Order, however, the language will almost certainly continue to survive. It is their firm belief in the scriptures and their insistence on biblical exactness which is the crucial factor in the maintenance of their language — by securing for them their humble, “peculiar” and separate existence. For these people the question of formal maintenance efforts does not arise. For them it is simple — language and faith are one. And yet, paradoxically this has also been responsible for much tension and factionalism which has weakened the community and arguably therefore strengthened the foothold of the dominant language, English. It seems however, that PG will continue to thrive as long as the Old Order can maintain their separate status. One problem may be whether they can physically achieve this. As the twin cities Kitchener and Waterloo continue to grow this is forcing a number to move further and further out, thus causing the community to become more diffuse. The outcome of this could be devastating as it must weaken the community and necessarily increase contact with ‘English’ culture. Developments which have taken place in the more liberal orders suggest that a shift to English may well follow. A good example of exactly this can be seen in Mary Anne Horst’s reminiscences of her Old Order upbringing.<sup>7</sup> She recalls a decision her father made to move a few miles outside the community. This was clearly a crucial factor in bringing about her later decision to leave the order:

‘When I was almost eight my father made a decision that was going to mean quite a change for his family and would bring to an end our life in the little village. The decision he made somewhat alarmed many of his Old Order Mennonite relatives and friends. He decided that he would buy a farm eight miles north of Floradale in a non- Mennonite English speaking community near the village of Alma. Eight miles by horse and buggy was considered quite a long journey and didn’t my father realize, some of his Old Order acquaintance wondered, that the influence of the non- Mennonite English speaking community might cause his children to leave the customs and traditions of Old Order Mennonite life?.. .Despite the well meaning warnings, my father took us to this farm in this English speaking community. To many of his Old Order friends I am sure it seemed as though he was taking us to the other end of the world” (pp. 21-22)

The linguistic situation in Ontario is able to offer great insights not only into the question of language maintenance which has been the main thrust of this paper, but also into the mechanisms of change since it provides the opportunity to observe actual change in progress. Changes like the ones mentioned briefly above, appear to be both internally motivated as well as forced through contact with English (as discussed here, contact with English is causing

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Anne Horst has published the memories of her Old Order upbringing in a little booklet entitled *My Old Order Heritage* (published by the Pennsylvania Craft shop in Kitchener).

changes in the speech of even the most conservative groups). What is interesting is that the changes are now occurring at varying rates across the different speech groups in the community. In order to study these changes, their chronology, direction and how widespread they are in the different speech communities, I intend to survey both sectarian and non-sectarian speakers from a number of different age groups along this continuum of religious conservatism — from the ultra-conservative Old Order Mennonites to the less conservative and finally the progressive groups where the language is ultimately dying. Huffines (1987) does exactly this. She compares the language of both Plain and Non-Plain groups of Amish in Pennsylvania with respect to dative case usage and from this discovers that the speech of the non-sectarian groups is in this regard linguistically more conservative than the sectarian groups. As we found also for the pronunciation of *r*, these latter groups curiously show a greater degree of convergence to English. Language death, it seems, does not necessarily involve convergence. Huffines suggests also that Mennonite speech is even more conservative than Amish speech (she intimates the language has a greater symbolic value for this group). It is my impression (at this stage it must remain an impression) that the opposite holds true for the Canadian situation. The different sizes of the groups must surely have something to do with this. In Pennsylvania, the Amish are the majority and number over 90,000, while in Canada they remain in the minority — 2,000 only. It is interesting in this case it seems that greater numerical strength may in fact work against language maintenance.<sup>8</sup> It would therefore be necessary to expand the study to include the Amish speakers (found largely in and around Wellesley; cf. map). Hopefully, this will then be able to help shed some light on the nature of change. What is it that brings about, accelerates, retards even resists change? What is the exact role which contact plays especially in the sort of grammatical changes which are happening so rapidly in Ontario German?

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<sup>8</sup> Kloss (1966:210) lists this factor as ambivalent for language maintenance; i.e. it seems numerical strength can work either for or against it.

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