



## Language Shift and Maintenance in a Diglossia Environment with Its Educational Implications: A Case Study

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### Abstract

The study sheds light on some fundamental sociolinguistic concepts such as bilingualism and diglossia, language shift and language maintenance with particular reference to the Amish context. After depicting a general picture of the Amish society, the study expands on bilingualism and diglossia in the Amish community. The factors that cause language maintenance and language shift/loss are discussed in detail under the light of relevant literature. Based upon Conklin and Lourie's (1983) comprehensive taxonomy of factors affecting language maintenance and language shift, "Amish Pennsylvania German" is evaluated. Further reasons for the long survival of the Amish society are discussed. The last section is particularly allocated to "How could the Amish society succeed in maintaining their language and identity?" By and large, current findings substantiate that along with their tremendous efforts to isolate themselves from the outer English speaking world, the diglossia situation has helped the Amish to protect their language and identity without exposure to language shift in the midst of their bilingual environment.

Key Words: Bilingualism, diglossia, language contact, identity, bilingual education

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### Introduction

Primordial wisdom has it that no language takes place in a vacuum (Deumert & Vandenbussche, 2003a; Finegan, 1998). Each language is spoken within a community either in a large or small scale and needs a society to live and survive in (Haugen, 1972). Languages are living organisms in that they are born, grown and they sometimes die (Nevalainen, 2003; Roberge, 2003). They are also interrelated with the communities or societies they are used in. Moreover, in some regions or societies in the world people need and/or use more than one language to communicate for various purposes (Coulmas, 1998; Omoniyi, 2010; Sankoff, 2002). To illustrate, in Germany, the official language is German while people from different ethnic background or countries such as Turkey, Poland as well as Russia use their mother tongue in their social community. Another example is Turkey where the official language is Turkish and the majority of Turkish population use Turkish language in every aspect of their daily life. However, some people living in the south-east of Turkey use Kurdish

or Arabic to communicate within their community. In these kind of societies people become bilingual (or sometimes trilingual) depending on the amount of exposure and need to the majority language (Coulmas, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1998; Sankoff, 2002).

Furthermore, languages do not take place in vacuum, on the contrary, they are used in communities which are also in constant contact and relation with each other (Deumert & Vandebussche, 2003b; Finegan, 1998). They are almost never stable and affected by each other; thus, some influences as well as changes might occur in between those languages (Stuart-Smith & Timmins, 2010). Moreover, some languages become stronger while some languages diminish or even die due to various sociological reasons (Baugh, 2011). Correspondingly, in most situations this change takes place as a result of the effect of majority language towards the minority language. To put it differently, the majority population, thus their language pressures both the community and the language to change and this change is mostly downwards (Milroy, 2004), for instance, English pressures Pennsylvania German of the Amish society. Various factors may affect this change, thus a wide sociolinguistic analysis is required to understand what happens and why it happens. In the same vein, understanding the various dimensions of bilingual education is not much different in terms of sociolinguistic point of view, if any at all (Lightbown & Spada, 2001). Thus, a considerable amount of effort should be made to depict these phenomena.

### **Who are the Amish?**

The Amish are among the early Germanic folks who moved to William Penn's woods, or Pennsylvania. Their origin dates back to the late seventeenth century and to the Anabaptist movement which caused the rise of some Christian communities (Hostetler, 1993). Some of the distinguished of these communities were the Mennonites of the Netherlands, the Hutterites of Austria, and the Swiss Brethren (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2009). The origins of the Amish go back to a Swiss group, named after Elder Jacob Ammann (in 1697), who insisted on conserving traditions and separation from the outside world far more than other Anabaptist groups. When they first immigrated to U.S. in the eighteenth century, they first settled in Berks, Chester, and Lancaster counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. Hostetler (1993) defines them as: “a sacred society,’ a ‘familistic society,’ as maintaining ‘organic solidarity,’ an ‘integrative social system,’ ‘primary’ (face-to-face) rather than ‘secondary’ relationships, and ‘Apollonian’ instead of ‘Dionysian’ orientations to life” (p. 4). All in all, they are merely a group of immigrants isolated from the outside community they are living within.

The Amish are “a church-community, a community whose members practice simple and ‘austere’ living, a conservative branch of Christianity, a family-oriented labor-intensive economic system” (Hostetler, 1993). Their present life is argued to be still shaped by the faith and struggle of their European past. Correspondingly, Knabb and Vogt (2011) point out: “The Old Order Amish are a unique North American Christian subculture, using horse and buggy for transportation, dressing in plain clothes, resisting modern technology, and striving to remain separate from the world” (p. 290). Moreover, to some extent the Amish can be considered as a little commonwealth since their members are ruled by the law of love and redemption. Besides, they are highly sensitive to each other's needs. They insist on living in friendly and peaceful world and would rather “move to other lands rather than take up arms or defend themselves” (Hostetler, Huntington, & Hostetler, 1992). In the same vein, Hostetler (1993) points out: “The Amish are a church, a community, a spiritual union, a conservative branch of Christianity, a religion, a community whose members practice simple and austere living, a familistic entrepreneuring system, and an adaptive human community” (p. 4). However, the strength of the Amish community cannot be explained simply by the stability of tradition. There are many

social bonds: religious, historic, linguistic, economic, family, and kinship in addition to personal commitment to the faith (Stinner, Paoletti, & Stinner, 1989). There are mainly two groups of Amish: the Swartzentruber and Old Order Amish, the former to be the more conservative while the latter to be the majority group. Furthermore, various other scholars mention some other types of Amish such as Nebraska, New Order, New New Order, Andy Weaver as other types of Amish (Hurst & McConnell, 2010; Tharp, 2007).

All the Amish people, wherever they live, speak three distinctive languages. Their household speech is a dialect called Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch. (“Dutch” derives from Deutsch, meaning German, and does not refer to the language of The Netherlands). The dialect is the first language Amish children learn, and it was the language spoken by German-speaking immigrants. Second, the Amish learn to read, write, and speak English in school and without interference from their language influence. Third, they acquire a passive knowledge of High German, which they use to conduct their sermons and formal ceremonies, by reading the Bible and by recitation (Fishman, 1988; Hostetler, 1993; Stinner, Paoletti, & Stinner, 1989). Thus, reading and/or literacy does not match with today’s psycholinguistic (Goodman, 1967) aspect of reading which implies and focuses on comprehension of the text rather than simply reciting or reading aloud of the texts without any implication of comprehension (Foster & Purves, 1996).

### **Diglossia**

Numerous definitions of diglossia have been suggested within the relevant literature. When people use two languages they are considered as bilinguals; however, diglossia (from French *diglossie*) is a term which is coined by Ferguson (1959) is used when two languages or language varieties exist in a community and each one is used for different purposes and the majority of that community is bilingual (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). The terms were coined by Ferguson (1959) to describe the use of two dialects of Arabic in Egypt; Qur’an Arabic which is used in written communication and the Egyptian Arabic in daily life. Conjointly, McKay (2005, p. 284) summarizes the concept as follows:

The term diglossia was first coined by Ferguson (1959) to describe a context in which two varieties of the same language are used by people of that community for different purposes. Normally one variety, termed the *high or H variety*, is acquired in an educational context and used by the community in more formal domains such as in churches or universities. The other variety, termed, the *low or L variety*, is acquired in the home and used in informal domains like the home or social center to communicate with family and friends. As examples of diglossia, Ferguson points to situations like the use of classical and colloquial Arabic in Egypt or the use of Standard German and Swiss German in Switzerland.

Later, Fishman (1972) extended the term diglossia to express the use of two separate languages one of which is used for formal purposes and the other is for informal purposes within one country rather than limiting it to the use of two different dialects of the same language. Accordingly, McKay (2005) highlights the Singapore case as: “For example, in Singapore, English is generally used in education and government, whereas Hokkien, Malay, and Tamil are frequently used in the home and community” (p. 284). Moreover, Snyder (2002) draws attention to the modern world’s diglossia in Egypt context as, “the predominance of English on the Internet in Egypt is due to a variety of factors and corresponds to the broad use of English in other business and technological domains in the country. However, a diglossia exists in online communication in Egypt, with people using English in more formal e-mail communications and a combination of English and Egyptian colloquial Arabic in informal e-

mail messages and online chats” (p. 68). Thus, the definition of diglossia seems to have gained new aspects.

On the other hand, with the advent of internet, the media of communication have also changed in a considerable degree which affected all walks of life. After Grabe and Kaplan’s (1986) assertion that the 85% of data on the internet was in English, the world and the internet have also changed in a certain degree. Warschauer (2004) claims that the dominance of English on the internet is going to vanish and the status quo will change in certain amount, however, he asserts although there will be a great decrease in the number of web pages presented in English, it will still remain valid in certain aspects which, he believes, will create a kind of diglossia, maybe as in the Egyptian case. This might and most probably is also related with the Lingua Franca role of English worldwide (Seidlhofer, 2005); however, the discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. Warschauer (2004) further argues: “it is suggested that a much higher percentage of the commercial web pages will be in English. A present indication of this trend is the large percentage of English language secure servers used for Internet commerce (see the discussion in *The Default Language*, 1999). This will create a situation of diglossia, where people using their native languages for local or regional communication and commerce use English for international communication and commerce on the Internet” (p. 17). The situation today seems mainly similar to what Warschauer depicted earlier; every single of the world brands offer English version of their web pages along with their native language. Many people today use English to communicate with people from various parts of the world in online domains (Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002).

### **Diglossia in the Amish Context**

Amish society is considered mainly as a typical example of diglossia in that English is associated "with the business world, society and worldliness ... everything outside our church and community, the forces that have become dangerous because they make inroads into our churches and lure people from the faith" (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, p. 67) and Pennsylvania Dutch/German which is used for intra-group communication. Moreover, Huffines (1997) asserts that the Amish once were trilingual: “The Amish are generally viewed as trilingual, using a variety of Standard German in their liturgical life, English with outsiders in their business life, and Pennsylvania German in their more intimate family and community life” (p. 53). Thus, a mention of “triglossia” in the Amish community would not be unwise when the Standard German/Amish High German, which is used only in the church and religious rituals, is taken into account.

From diglossic perspective Baker (2011, p. 66) illustrates the situation with a table and the Amish context is adapted and/or applied in that taxonomy. Since there are some concepts that do not fit with the Amish context, the Amish specific form of the table is presented below.

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| <u>CONTEXT</u>         | <u>MAJORITY LANGUAGE</u><br>(H) | <u>MINORITY LANGUAGE</u><br>(L) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. The home and family |                                 | Pennsylvania Dutch/German       |
| 2. Schooling           | English                         |                                 |

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|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>3. Mass media and internet</b>                       | English (although it is difficult to mention high technology use within the Amish community. |  |
| <b>4. Business and commerce</b>                         | English  | Pennsylvania Dutch/German  |
| <b>5. Social and cultural activity in the community</b> |  | Pennsylvania Dutch/German  |
| <b>6. Email, messaging and texting with friends</b>     |  | Since there are no recent studies available we can only assume that they are going to use Pennsylvania Dutch/ German |
| <b>7 Correspondence with government departments</b>     | English  |  |
| <b>8 Religious activity</b>                             |  | Standard German/Amish<br>High German   |

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The Amish adapted version (Hostetler, 1993; Huffines, 1997; Johnson-Weiner, 1997; Loudon, 1997) of the table (Baker, 2011, p. 66)

Extending the concept of diglossia, developed by Ferguson (1959), Fishman (1972) uses the term *bilingualism* for the dual language command of the individual and the term *diglossia* to characterize the social allocation of functions to different languages or varieties. Thus, in multilingual or bilingual societies four possible patterns can be recognized:

- (1) both diglossia and bilingualism
- (2) bilingualism without diglossia
- (3) diglossia without bilingualism
- (4) neither diglossia nor bilingualism. (as cited in Stern, 1991, p. 232)

In the first pattern within a community there will be both individual bilingualism and community diglossia which means almost all of the members of the community will be bilingual and use both the majority and minority languages for certain purposes such as either in formal or informal situations. This situation depicts the Amish society very well in that the Amish use “English with outsiders in their business life and Pennsylvania German in their more intimate family and community life” (Huffines, 1997, p. 53).

The second pattern is bilingualism without diglossia. In this situation both communities are bilingual and there is no restriction in using either of the languages. In such situations, it is expected that the majority language will gain dominance and force the minority language to vanish through time. It is also believed that the contrary version is only possible in undeveloped societies. Romaine (2002) points out: “a minority language can survive only through separation from a modern world and by remaining undeveloped” (p. 139). This is what happens in the

Amish context as a conservative and close society. However, even in such a conservative society, though the relentless efforts to protect their home language and identity the diminishing effect of the majority language; English, is unavoidable. In a similar vein, Huffines (1997) points out: “English, in contrast to both German and Pennsylvania German, is increasing its functionality in Amish communities, as it has among nonplain Pennsylvania Germans, and continues to exert an accelerating linguistic influence on Pennsylvania German, both directly and indirectly” (p. 53). Thus, bilingualism without diglossia can take place in some societies.

The third pattern is diglossia without bilingualism. In this kind of situation there will be two languages within a country or a particular region. Two groups of people will use two different languages. Baker (2011) points out: “This tends to be a theoretical case, with few, if any, strong examples. Historically, in a colonial situation, a ruling power group might speak the 'high' language, with the larger less powerful group speaking only the 'low' language. For example, English (e.g. in India) or French (e.g. in Haiti) were spoken by the ruling elite, with the indigenous language(s) spoken by the masses” (p. 68). Also the Kurdish language in some parts of the south-east region of Turkey can be given as an example, where only the Kurdish people can speak Kurdish but have to learn Turkish because it is the official language and spoken by the society living in Turkey.

The fourth pattern neither diglossia nor bilingualism is defined by Baker (2011) as: “One example is where a linguistically diverse society has been forcibly changed to a relatively monolingual society. In Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the native languages have been exterminated. A different example would be a small speech community using its minority language for all functions and insisting on having no relationship with the neighboring majority language” (p. 69). All in all, it is a quite rare situation.

### **Language shift and Language Maintenance**

Most, if not all, of the languages in the world have been in constant flux (Chambers, 2002; Tharp, 2007). Perennially, as well grounded in the literature, languages are said to be living organisms like humans, as they are intermingled with them; they are born, grown (spread), get older, and eventually die although not all of them (Harrison, 2008). It is obvious that there is some change inevitable in language(s). When one takes a brief look at the written works of his/her language or society published a few decades earlier, s/he can easily see that some words or structures are not familiar, if not odd. Notwithstanding, this change is quite slow in written medium of language. What's more, the change can take place in various forms: fast, slow or downwards or upwards. This language change, also called “language shift”, refers to a downwards movement. By the same token, Baker (2011) points out: “there is a reduction in the number of speakers of a language, a decreasing saturation of language speakers in the population, a loss in language proficiency, or a decreasing use of that language in different domains. The outcome of language shift is called language death, although a language could be revived from recordings (oral and written)” (p. 72). However, this does not mean that all the minority languages are doomed to vanish or eventually die. On the contrary, some languages can resurrect or revive even if they die (Ottósson, 1987, Pavlenko, 2008). Moreover, some languages like English may spread as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2005) or even some minority languages can maintain their existence in specific domains such as at home, school or for religious purposes like Pennsylvania German/ Dutch or High German in the Amish case.

Conklin and Lourie (1983) highlight various political, social and demographic factors that affect language maintenance and shift. Before any further discussion, it would be wise to reiterate that these criteria do not, present all the factors that affect such a complex phenomenon “language shift/change” and this list particularly refers to immigrants rather than minorities

which is one of the reasons that this list is cited in this study can be righteously discussed within the Amish context in the U.S. However, even in that context all the factors are not enough to explicate the complex structure of the Amish context in the U.S., thus they do not conform in a one-to-one fashion with the characteristics of the Amish society.

Conklin and Lourie's (1983) inexhaustive list encompasses a vast number of factors that affect language maintenance or shift and/or loss. Political and social factors are listed such as the number of speakers living closely or dispersed, recent and continuing immigration or long and stable residence, access or proximity to the homeland and society, occupational shift or stability, the degree of social and economic mobility, the degree of education affecting the loyalty or alienation to the language community, adaptation into ethnic group identity or identity of the majority language. Moreover, cultural factors also are mainly listed as the existence of mother tongue institutions, the language used in the cultural and religious ceremonies, components other language per se that affect ethnic identity maintenance, nationalistic aspirations, attachment to identity and ethnicity regarding the mother tongue, the degree of emphasis on family and community ties, the degree of emphasis on minority language and ethnic awareness, the degree of similarity between mother tongue and majority language in terms of culture and religion. Last but not least, linguistic factors such as the existence of a written form of the mother tongue, the ease at the use of the alphabet that makes literacy common, the difficulty in the writing system that makes literacy common and widespread, the international status of the mother tongue, the degree of literacy or illiteracy in the home land, the degree of tolerance to the loan word from the majority language. All these factors in the list affect the degree of language shift and/or maintenance within the bilingual or diglossic community.

It would be better to restate that these criteria affecting language shift are not an end per se; however, they can be considered as a significant effort to present a general framework. Nonetheless, there are various other factors such as economic, social structural, sociolinguistical, political that affect language shift and not cited here. In the same vein, Baker (2011) also points out: "While such factors help clarify what affects language shift, the relative importance of these factors is debatable and still unclear" (p. 75). Thus, no single one of these factors can be asserted to have more importance than the other.

Certainly, a good many otherwise viable further hypothesis are presented by various other scholars with regards to language maintenance and shift/loss. In line with these arguments, however, some of the criteria discussed with particular reference to the Amish context, as well as the "Three Generation Shift" a term first coined by Garcia and Diaz (1992, p. 14) do not conform with the Amish society. Accordingly, Garcia and Diaz (1992) make a situational analysis of the U.S. immigrant societies and put forward that these immigrants are exposed to a "three generation shift". Hence, Garcia and Diaz (1992) point out:

Most US immigrant groups have experienced a language shift to English as a consequence of assimilation into American life. The first-generation immigrants sustain their native or first language while learning English. The second generation, intent upon assimilation into a largely English-speaking community, begin the shift towards English by using the native language with first generation speakers (parents, grandparents, others) and English in more formal settings. By slow degrees, English is used in contexts once reserved for the first language. Encroachment of English into the domain of the first language serves to destabilize the native language. (p. 14)

According to *Three Generation Shift Theory*, the speakers of the third generation quit using their homeland language and the shift is completed when all the speakers quit using their homeland. However, this theory is not an end per se and can hardly be generalized though it

puts forward a clear framework for language shift. There is ample evidence that there are some communities which provide a contrary sample to this theory. To illustrate, the Greeks living in Pittsburg who try to preserve their Greek language, with a written form, managed to decelerate their language shift process and prolong their Greek language survival (Paulston, 1994). In the same vein, Huffines (1987) mentions the Amish as another contrary example to this theory: “Plain Pennsylvania German (referred to here merely as Pennsylvania German or PG) has had unusual longevity for an immigrant language in the United States and has far outlived the pattern that is reported for many minority languages of language shift by the third generation” (p. 38). Moreover, Baker (2011) also draws attention: “the Pennsylvania Amish historically avoided a three or four generation shift by retaining boundaries between them and the outside world” (p. 76). They have survived their language and identity even more than four generations. What’s more, Thomas (1996) remarks: “With the exception of self-isolating groups such as the Old Order Amish and the Yiddish-speaking Hasidim, ethnolinguistic minorities in the U.S. have been shown to lose their mother tongue by the second or third generation in this country” (p. 134). Correspondingly, Huffines (1987) seems to have predicted their resistance to assimilation: “In comparison with other immigrant languages in the United States, Pennsylvania German has enjoyed a relatively long history despite earlier predictions of its imminent total assimilation. It would be a rather simplistic view to argue once again that Pennsylvania German will die out within the next few generations. It is clear that the language is being vigorously maintained within the Old Order communities, and there is at present no indication of its demise in the near future” (p. 353). All in all, offering a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon is likely to be an inherently difficult endeavor.

Various reasons behind the survival of the Amish: their language and identity can be listed here, if not many of them have already been listed above. However, in line with Conklin and Lourie’s (1983) taxonomy, the following reasons can be counted as setting up the general framework of the reasons as an inexhaustive list adapted from Baker (2011) and Huffines (1987):

1. People are not only bilingual, but also diglossic.
2. No contact with outside/ a close society
3. Strong religious beliefs that prevent them from interacting with majority language speakers.
4. Stability in occupation.

It is difficult to explain the success of language and identity maintenance of the Amish with one single reason, there is ample evidence that it is a multifaceted phenomenon.

### **Language Shift in Pennsylvania German**

Like all the minority languages within a diglossia environment, the Amish language could not avoid the influence, if not invasion, of English language in the U.S. (Stuart-Smith & Timmins, 2010). Although the Amish are a very close and conservative society and have taken many precautions to preserve and strengthen their language, thus identity, yet they could not avoid this outer influence in their language (Kraybill & Nolt, 1994). Even their Parochial Schools in which Amish traditions and language use are enforced could not be enough to remain unaffected from the surrounding society and language. By the same token, Huffines (1997) points out:



The family and community, both of which safeguard Pennsylvania German language use by imposing and enacting sociolinguistic norms, have not prevented the erosion of linguistic forms or the on-going functional loss in Pennsylvania German. English, in contrast to both German and Pennsylvania German, is increasing its functionality in Amish communities, as it has among nonplain Pennsylvania Germans, and continues to exert an accelerating linguistic influence on Pennsylvania German, both directly and indirectly (p. 54).

However, in her study Fuller (1999) draws attention to the fact that even if without the significant influence of English, Pennsylvania German was doomed to certain degree of change as follows: “While English clearly plays a role in the real-life drama of the development of PG [Pennsylvania German], it is the role of best supporting actress rather than the leading lady” (p. 53). Furthermore, Tharp (2007) takes the argument to a further step and asserts: “Amish culture, like all culture, is in constant flux. While this might surprise the romantic American imagination, the Amish condition is marked by a constant struggle to remain separate from worldliness, while regularly accepting compromise: “Oh, there are some things you gonna have to change with. The world keeps moving; you have to make some changes” (p. 51). The implications from the discussion suggest that even Amish society was exposed to a certain degree of language shift.

Like any other minority language, Pennsylvania German is mostly influenced by the American English in its phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax (Baker, 2011; Hostetler, 1993). Firstly, the least influence of American English on Amish Pennsylvania German is on phonological aspect. The Amish seem to have adopted the American retroflexive /r/ and it is apparent in daily usage of language as well as in the pronunciation of German hymns and Bible readings (Baker, 2011; Hostetler, 1993; Huffines, 1997). The fact that underlying voiced stops are devoiced when occurring in syllable-final position can be suggested as another aspect of phonological change in the Amish Pennsylvania German due to the influence of American English (Huffines, 1997). Secondly, with regards to lexicon, as is in any other minority language, mostly loan words seem to have contributed to this language shift paradigm. Thirdly, one of the most outstanding changes in syntactical structure is the use of dative case (Fuller, 1999). In the same vein, Huffines (1997) also puts forward: “Compared to nonplain native speakers of Pennsylvania German, the use of the dative case in Amish Pennsylvania German has practically vanished” (p.55). However, as Louden (1997) points out there are some areas that resisted to change: “it is clearly limited to three areas of syntactic structure, case, tense/aspect and infinitival complementation... One major area, however, is interesting for the fact that it has remained clearly resistant to change, and that is word order” (p. 87). The influence of American English on Pennsylvania German is obvious while it is evident that not all aspects are influenced at the same degree.

On the other hand, although some authors further claimed that the verb system in Pennsylvania German might have changed without the influence of American English, it is apparent that the contact with the American English seems to have great influence on the increase in the amount and rate of change as well as determining the direction of the change. The changes occurred mainly in expressing duration, expressing iteration, use of infinitive marking (Louden, 1997; Huffines, 1997).

All of the expansions discussed in this section indicate changes in the direction of an English model. Contact influence occurs not only at the level of borrowed items which become integrated into Pennsylvania German, but the influence operates on the underlying grammatical rules themselves.

### **How Could the Amish Maintain Their Language and Identity?**

Numerous reasons lay behind the maintenance of Pennsylvania German and the Amish identity can be suggested. However, the main factor that enables the Amish to protect their identity and culture is that they want to and do isolate themselves from the outer world which, they believe, otherwise will spoil their own world (Hostetler, 1993). They have to use English for communication with the outer world from which they want to isolate themselves. They also use the Pennsylvania German which is not a written language (Fuller, 1999; Huffines, 1980). Thus, English is the primary medium for all written communication within the Amish community and with the Amish elsewhere. Moreover, if they cannot speak English they can only communicate with people face to face only in Pennsylvania German. Here rises a question: in spite of all these factors, how can they instruct or learn English and keep the outer world, which they want to isolate from, at bay? They found the solution in an attempt to counterbalance this outside world affect by placing English instruction in an Amish context: The Amish Parochial school (Knabb, Vogt, & Newgren, 2011).

### **Education in the Amish: The Swartzentruber Amish Parochial School**

The Swartzentruber Amish is one of the most conservative of all Amish settlements in that Johnson-Weiner (1997) names them “ultra-conservative”. They, like all the other Amish communities, try to isolate from the outside English world. Moreover, the Swartzentruber Amish do not make use of even school buses, so there are a number of one-room school houses which lack electricity, telephone service, and in-door plumbing (Hostetler, 1993; Hurst & McConnell, 2010).

The materials used in the Swartzentruber Amish school: The McGuffey's Readers and 1919 Essentials of Spelling, present a language and world that is no longer in use. Accordingly, Johnson-Weiner (1997) depicts the situation as follows: “Using turn-of-the-century texts, children in Swartzentruber Amish parochial schools memorize vocabulary words and sentence structures which are no longer used in everyday American conversation; learning an English no longer spoken by their non-Amish neighbors” and further argues, “not only is the language of the readers and spellers often arcane, but also the English community presented in the stories, pictures, and exercises vanished nearly a century ago” (p. 70). Moreover, some other books such as “Pathway, Schoolaid, and Study Time” in addition to McGuffey’s Readers are reported (Hurst & McConnell, 2010) to be used by some school teachers.

### **Methodology in Parochial Schools and its learning outcomes**

The quality of education in these Parochial schools is not considered as good, put it differently, public schools are considered superior to these schools in academics due to various reasons such as the outdated content and language instruction as well as lack of a uniform curriculum (Hurst & McConnell, 2010). Another reason can be suggested is that literacy and reading practices within the Parochial school are not close to modern reading instruction practices in the classroom (Hyland, 2006). The students are expected to read aloud the texts, spell them correctly, memorize words and sentences in the classroom with less focus on meaning, if there is any at all. However, in some situations even the teachers may not know some of the words. Accordingly, Johnson-Weiner (1997) highlights: “a Swartzentruber teacher admitted not knowing what all the words meant and that she picked only words she knew for

the sentence exercises; ‘otherwise’, she said, ‘I wouldn't know what the sentence means’ (p. 70). In line with these, the situation is quite similar with Saudi context in which oral reading of texts highly praised due to cultural and religious reasons (Alshumaimeri, 2011) and similar with many other Asian cultures in which memorization is a commonly taught practice or strategy (Hyland, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Thus, the practices of literacy do not match with the industrialized western society's concept of literacy which encompasses the psycholinguistic aspects of reading (Goodman, 1967) and emphasizes ultimately comprehending the texts rather than vocalizing them out (Foster & Purves, 1996).

The content of the curriculum belongs more to an outdated and isolated world of the Amish themselves. Even the teachers who attempt to change the curriculum or the books are discouraged either by the school board or parents (Hurst & McConnell, 2010). Moreover, Johnson-Weiner (1997) asserts: “The children learn about a world they will never find outside their community in which the virtues such as hard work, thriftiness, and faith in God are extolled” (p. 70). Thus, this outdated curriculum, though does not match current Western literacy concept, are widely used within the Amish Parochial Schools and are believed to help them keep their language and identity safe from the outer influence, thus intact.

### **An Alternative Bilingual Education Approach: The Amish World in English**

Compared to the Swartzentruber Amish, Old Order Amish are not considered as that much conservative in that they use different school materials and practices. Though still far and isolated from the outside world, “The texts employed by the Old Orders to teach English provide a more subtle means of reinforcing the boundaries between the community and the surrounding English society” (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, p. 68). Moreover, Old Order Amish prefer to use mainly The Pathway Series (Hostetler, 1993). The series depict a more contemporary world compared to McGuffey Readers while reflecting solely the world of Amish which contributes, they believe, to the isolation and protection from the detrimental effects of the outside world. The readers offer pictures and stories so much from the Amish world that “Some of the Amish object to having too much of their way of life in print” (Hostetler, 1993, p. 369). However, akin to the other The McGuffey's Readers, Pathway Series, too, focus on and emphasize good morals: thrift, purity, honesty, love, and cooperation.

The McGuffey's Readers or Pathway Series are used through generations. Some teachers can and mostly prefer to use the books that they used when they were students (Hurst & McConnell, 2010). By using the same books throughout generations, thus emphasizing the same values, they believe they can protect their identity better and bonds within the community are strengthened. However, despite the fact that Pathway Readers seem to be better than The McGuffey's Readers with respect to the modern education system and literacy practices, they are not bereft of problems. Firstly, although the language of the world is useful and contemporary, they are excerpts from books no longer published and even dating back earlier than 1950 even to 1860s. Another thing to be considered about Pathway is although illustrated, the Pathway Readers contain illustrations and images from farm life deprived of technology with no pictures of people. Furthermore, they are loaded with too much war stories as well as political and patriotic stories (Johnson-Weiner, 1997). Thusly, Pathway seems to provide a more contemporary aspect of life compared to the McGuffey's Readers, albeit limited with merely the Amish life.

In conclusion, the Amish children appear to succeed acquiring English and the linguistic skills they need to interact with the English world, whether they use McGuffey's Readers or the Pathway Series. However, their main aim is to protect and strengthen the Amish identity and

culture in the young generations, not to be exposed to “three generation shift” (Garcia & Diaz, 1992).

### **Conclusion**

In this study, an attempt has been made to cover as much ground as possible with regards to bilingualism, diglossia, language maintenance and language shift as well as their educational implications. However, in a paper of this kind, it might not be possible to accommodate all aspects. All in all, the Old Order Amish, comprising 95% of Amish groups, can be identified by their use of a horse and buggy for transportation and by their plain dress, resistance to modernity, and separation from the world (Cates & Graham, 2002; Kraybill, 2001). Their lifestyle has been a very interesting subject not only for layman but also for the studies of social sciences and positive sciences. Although various factors have been elaborated in this study, how they have managed to protect their Amish identity and culture still embraces some mysteries. Along with their tremendous efforts to isolate themselves from the outer world, English speaking society, the fact that they are both bilingual and diglossic seems to have helped them protect their identity and culture without being exposed to “three generation shift” (Garcia & Diaz, 1992). By the same token, Huffines (1987) points out: “Speech communities of the Old Orders are diglossic: each language in the speaker's repertoire fulfills a separate function. In this case, Pennsylvania German is used within the family and community; English is used at school and in discourse with outsiders. The allocation of functions also seems to keep the language codes separate” (p. 363). Thus, they could have prolonged their ethnic identity for a lot more than three generations. However, it is impossible to stay without any change in a world of constant flux (Tharp, 2007). Thus, the Amish have been also affected and have changed with regards to preserving their identity and culture through time (Knabb, Vogt, & Newgren, 2011). Moreover, the change or shift is not limited with culture and identity but can be seen in the language (Pennsylvania German) they used. Correspondingly, there is long-standing evidence for linguistic transfer from outside English to Pennsylvania German with regards to surface forms and underlying structures as well as selective displacement of Pennsylvania German by English in communicative situations (Huffines, 1997).

The change in the Amish i.e., linguistic change or assimilation is relatively less in comparison with the other immigrant societies in the U.S. Thus, by preserving their language, identity and culture the Amish continue to be receiving a high degree of appreciation and curiosity. However, the available research on the Amish society does not belong to very recent times. Moreover, what is discussed here can only shed a light on the ongoing process of their change at these specific times. Thus, more research is required to analyze and evaluate the current situation of their immigrant, bilingual, diglossic characteristics.

By and large, language change is inevitable either in a bilingual or diglossic situation. There is ample evidence that a total isolation or so-called purification in language seems impossible. To achieve such a task requires extra-ordinary processes to take place. Due to the very nature of people as social beings, there is always some kind of communication and interaction between people whose natural outcome is the interaction and transaction between the languages. In the same vein, either from the majority language towards the minority language or vice versa some exchange between the languages is expected. Furthermore, scholars have suggested and documented various reasons in countless studies for these changes. However, available literature seems to fail to provide a comprehensive and satisfactory explanation with regards to the nature and possible reasons for this utterly complex phenomenon. Thus, it is suggested that further research in various bilingual and diglossic

environments regarding their linguistic and educational implications would be of great help to provide a comprehensive and satisfactory explanation.

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