DIGLOSSIA IN GERMAN-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

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OVER the last 150 years linguistics has expanded in three major directions. First it explored the dimension of time, and it was as an historical discipline that it first established itself as a scientific method of investigation. It discovered and explained the genetic relationship of languages and the changes that languages tend to undergo with the passage of time on the levels of phonology, grammar, and lexis. From the evidence of earlier recorded stages of a language and by means of ingenious comparisons both of related languages and of chronologically different stages of the same language, impressive and convincing reconstructions of the evolution of individual languages were built up. Linguistics as we know it today is unthinkable without this foundation of historical research.

The second dimension, investigated since the seventies of the last century, was that of space. Language extends not only over time, persists and changes with the years and centuries, it also extends spatially. It has a habitat, and its development is conditioned by geographical factors. Just as it is unstable along the axis of time it is variable along the axis of space. Linguistic geography has taught us much about the interaction of language and space and at the same time has drawn attention to the third direction in which linguistics was to move: the investigation of the relation between society and language. Language is a tool of man, a tool of society. Sociolinguistics has taught us to see what infinitely varied use individuals and societies make of language or of languages. Just as some people might have only one fork, others might have several forks for different purposes and still others might use a spoon where their fellows use a fork, so is it with language. There are societies only modestly equipped while others might have a whole canteen of cutlery.

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester on Wednesday, the 14th of March 1973.
The purpose of this paper is to examine in some detail one such sociolinguistic situation, namely that of diglossia, and to relate it to one particular society, that of German-speaking Switzerland. The word "diglossia" was first used by Charles A. Ferguson in an article, which has by now become a classic. He used it in a precise and clearly defined way to describe a particular sociolinguistic situation. By way of a summary, Ferguson gave the following definition of "diglossia": (i) "Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (ii) (which may include a standard or regional standards), (iii) there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of (iv) a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, (v) which is learned largely by formal education and is used (vi) for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not (vii) used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation".

He thought that it was likely that this particular language situation, that is diglossia, was widespread among language communities, but as defining languages he used Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German, and Haitian Creole. He used these four speech communities and their language situations paradigmatically to examine and characterize the notion of diglossia. He called the superposed variety the "High" variety and the regional dialects the "Low" varieties.

It is, of course, very easy to single out some of the glaring differences between these language communities and thereby to try and make the term "diglossia" meaningless. Even the observer who lacks specialist knowledge of some of these language communities might find it difficult to accept Classical Arabic and the modern German standard language as being sociolinguistically in any meaningful way on a par. In the diglossic situation described by Ferguson they occupy the same position as superposed, so-called "High" varieties in the Arab countries and in German-speaking Switzerland respectively. But Ferguson was not so much concerned with likening the linguistic situations in those

countries with one another as with abstracting certain general features which can usefully be combined to yield the notion of "diglossia". And this notion of "diglossia" is, I believe, a useful fixed point in the amorphous spectrum of innumerable variants in the relationship between language and dialects. The "standard-with-dialects" pattern is probably the normal pattern of modern literate communities, although the notion "dialect" may be predominately geographically determined in some communities, such as nineteenth-century Germany, but predominately socially determined in others such as contemporary England. In this perhaps normal spectrum the state of "diglossia" occupies a quite special, significantly differentiated position. It is important that this uniqueness be realized. Sociologists have found diglossia situations to exist in nearly all except "very small, isolated and undifferentiated speech communities". This, however, can only be said if one neglects Ferguson's important point concerning the high degree of divergence in phonology, grammar, and lexis. He stressed that "... in diglossia there are always extensive differences between the grammatical structures of H and L" (p. 333). Of course, different varieties and registers, different styles and specialist languages (in German Sonder-sprachen, Fachsprachen, Gruppensprachen) exist in all developed speech communities. But going from one register to another, which is necessitated in such communities, is a very different and much more limited step than the obligatory code-switching which characterizes a true diglossia situation.

In the German-speaking countries diglossia prevails almost only in Switzerland. The Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg has a similar but much more complicated situation. There we find two "High" varieties, of which one is a foreign language. Luxembourg thus adds bilingualism to whatever situation of diglossia that may exist. The two "High" varieties are somewhat differentiated in function. Standard German is the lang-

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uage of journalism, the Church, and of lower education. French is the language of the law, of the Grand Ducal court, and of higher education. True diglossia exists in the relation of the Luxembourg dialects and their dialectal standard form, the Letzeburger koine, on the one hand, and standard German on the other. A situation of bilingualism is also found in Alsace and germanophone Lorraine. But diglossia does not exist, not so much because the “High” variety, that is French, is not a variety but a different species, but rather because there one finds a small though growing and significant section of the community using the “High” variety, or in this case, the foreign language, for ordinary conversation. At most a few people, and certainly not the community as a whole, would use standard German as the “High” variety in the functions allotted to a “High” variety in a typical diglossic situation. Austria and most of southern Germany are characterized by an immensely complicated gradualism but not by institutionalized, formalized diglossia. Regional and social communities and individuals within them tend to use forms of language which may vary considerably from near standard to archaic dialect dependent on situation, function, interlocutor and personal experience and inclination of the speaker. Herbert Kufner in his Strukturelle Grammatik der Münchner Stadtmundart, 1961, faced with this extraordinary degree of fluidity, first tried to describe it as “diglossia”, but then realized that the term would be drained of the meaning Ferguson had given it. He also experimented with “polyglossia”. I would prefer to preserve the precise meaning of “diglossia” by not applying it to situations which are not just different in degree but are really basically different in kind. Language behaviour in most of southern Germany and Austria is basically a personal and no longer a social or community feature. There is no institutionalized, functional dichotomy of two language varieties. There are indeed many language varieties but they are nearly all basically subforms of or approximations to the standard language, intentionally or unintentionally. Only in parts of southernmost Baden and in Vorarlberg is the language behaviour of the native population akin to that found in Switzerland. It is, of course, an archaic survival of earlier language behaviour patterns, prevalent in most
of the German-speaking countries right into the early part of this century. As a quaint surviving feature of this earlier state one may even today find many educated people from southern and central Germany who claim that standard German is their "first foreign language". With children now being brought up nearly everywhere in Germany in colloquial standard rather than in local dialect this will become even more of an affectation than it is now.

I believe the term "diglossia" and the definition given to it by Ferguson describe the linguistic situation of German-speaking Switzerland both correctly and precisely. But the details need elucidation and closer examination, furthermore the dynamics of such a situation need also to be investigated. We must therefore ask ourselves such questions as: How do the facts of diglossia manifest themselves in German-speaking Switzerland? What are the results, the rewards and penalties of living with a situation of diglossia? How do the two varieties, the "High" and the "Low", affect each other? Are there tensions and problems arising out of such a situation and what, if anything, is being done about them?

Ferguson makes, I believe, seven major points in his definition. These I should now like to examine in turn.

(i) Stability. It is surely correct to say that the diglossic situation in Switzerland is relatively stable. Everybody accepts diglossia, albeit the French-speaking Swiss and the foreigners with regret. For, having learnt standard German at school, they find themselves confronted with the barrier of Schwyzertüütsch all around them. And, not surprisingly, they agree with Luther's dictum: "es möcht einer schwitzen, ehe er es verstehet." But the natives do not regard it as a problem. Writers and scholars, if they reflect on the issue, realize that writing is always a kind of Verfremdung and requires a conscious step from the spoken everyday medium to the appropriate written medium. If they find this step made more irksome by the diglossia background they accept the extra trouble for political or patriotic reasons, if for no others. No section of the population would today wish to remove the situation of diglossia. Everybody is aware of the existence of diglossia, which according to Ferguson is apparently not the case in all the language communities discussed by him. Many Swiss
people try deliberately to cultivate diglossia by making the distinction between standard and dialect as clear as possible.¹

Ferguson himself makes the tentative prognosis that over the next two centuries the situation will be one of "relative stability" (p. 340). William G. Moulton,² who knows the Swiss-German linguistic situation and the dialects better than any other foreign scholar, agrees with him.

This view can, however, only be held with regard to the relative status of the two language varieties in the diglossic situation. Externally the position of the "Low" variety, of Swiss German, is extremely strong, much stronger, for instance, than at the turn of the century, when another prognosis gave the Swiss-German dialects no more than another half a century.³ Some so-called "progressive" Swiss families had then apparently already started using standard German during meals, and in Zürich's main shopping street assistants were encouraged to begin their sales talk in standard German on the assumption that that was what the customers wanted. Two world wars and the years of Nazism have contributed immeasurably to the strength of the dialects and thereby to the maintenance of diglossia.

The ending of diglossia by the elevation of one of the dialects to the rank of an official standard language and the ousting of standard German from this position has never been a realistic possibility. For one thing, the general attitude to the standard language, including centuries of Swiss cultivation of it and contribution to it, have precluded this. For another, no agreement as to which dialect should be accorded this honour would ever have been reached. In another half century or century, when the dialects will have been sufficiently levelled for this interdialectal rivalry no longer to be a problem, the divergence from the standard language will be so insignificant as to make any unlikely,

¹ This is the policy of the Bund für Schwyzertüütsch, with its headquarters at "Häimethuus", Uraniabrücke, Zürich.
² W. G. Moulton, "What Standard for Diglossia? The Case of German Switzerland", Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics (Georgetown), xv (1962), 133-144.
³ See E. Tappolet, "Über den Stand der Mundarten in der deutschen und französischen Schweiz", Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache in Zürich, fasc. 6 (Zürich, 1901).
belated attempt at establishing a separate standard language not only ridiculous but also impossible.

From this somewhat wild counterprognosis it will be evident that I do not share my American colleagues' untroubled optimism about the stability and maintenance of diglossia. Diglossia, after all, does not only depend on the *status* of the two varieties, but also on the *substance*, in this case, of the weaker partner, of Swiss German. It is true, Swiss German has conquered some new functions formerly held by the "High" variety, for instance the field of political speeches, sports commentaries, talks about public functions and institutions, some advertising, and some scholarly and scientific lecturing. But at a high price. Although there has been no permanent "code-switching", to use a term introduced by Einar Haugen¹ in language contact situations, in favour of the "High" variety, there is much more "interference", to use another of Haugen's terms. Exactly in those areas where the "Low" variety has seemingly gained strength, or has recently gained a foothold, it has done so at the expense of corrosive, ever increasing interference. The diglossic situation may be stable concerning the *status* of the two varieties, but it is highly unstable concerning the *linguistic substance* of one of the varieties. The political and educational authorities of Switzerland are interested in the preservation of the diglossic situation. But they are only concerned with the superficiality of *status* and not at all with the essence of *linguistic substance*. Scholars, too, seem to be preoccupied with *status*² or with the influence of one dialect


² The most recent and most comprehensive study of the linguistic situation in German-speaking Switzerland, that by Rudolf Schwarzenbach, *Die Stellung der Mundart in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz* (Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Mundartforschung, 17), (Frauenfeld, 1969), is almost exclusively concerned with status. For other descriptions of the language situation in German-speaking Switzerland see: A. Senn, "Verhältnis von Mundart und Schriftsprache in der deutschen Schweiz", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, xxxiv (1935), 42-58; Adolf Guggenbühl, *Warum nicht Schweizerdeutsch? Gegen die Missachtung unserer Muttersprache* (Zürich, 1937); L. Forster, "The Language in German Switzerland", *German Life and Letters*, iv (1939), 65-73; G. Thürer,
upon another.¹ Little appears to be done to protect and preserve the linguistic substance of Swiss German as such.

One example must suffice. The oldest generation now alive generally still decline the numeral "two" for gender and say in the masculine for instance *zwee Hünd* "two dogs", in the feminine *zuwoo Chiöe* "two cows" and in the neuter *zuwi Hüener* "two hens". As this gender distinction is not made in standard German we get interference which first of all takes the form of utter confusion so that all three forms of the numeral are likely to turn up with nouns of all three genders. The telephone administration and the army have, of course, helped to create the confusion as they have made people believe that *zuwoo* can be heard more easily. The younger generations are now quite at sea. In the end a one-form system will probably prevail, either *zuwi* which is nearest the standard form or, less likely, *zwee* which will retain at least a phonological difference between dialect and standard. Many people would be only too glad to get some guidance about the correct use of the three forms heard today. By and large, they receive none from the schools or any other authorities who in other countries can be relied upon to insist on the maintenance of a certain amount of language culture. In fact, many a German-speaking Swiss has noted with envy the linguistic elegance, correctness and discipline of his French-speaking compatriots and is aware of the macaronic anarchy in his own linguistic behaviour. This has basically nothing to do with diglossia as such. It is caused entirely by the educational neglect of one of the variants in the diglossic situation. The lack of a norm or the absence of any insistence on a norm or a degree of correctness is,

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¹ The only detailed sociolinguistic study of the present position of dialect, by Heinz Wolfensberger, *Mundartwandel im 20. Jahrhundert* (Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Mundartforschung, 14), (Frauenfeld, 1967), examines the change of one local dialect under the impact of other dialects, not specifically of the standard language.
however, frequent in diglossic situations and is certainly characteristic of Switzerland. There are individual efforts: a competent orthography was devised by Eugen Dieth; a manual of Schweizerdüütsch for foreigners has reached its third edition; a handy dictionary and some descriptive, popular grammars have been produced. But the only kind of support which would really matter, that of the educational authorities, is lacking.

(ii) The second point that Ferguson makes in his definition of diglossia is that the “Low” variety consists of dialects “which may include a standard or regional standards”. The Swiss-German “Low” variety unlike Modern Greek with its Athens-based standard, or Luxembourg with its national koine, has not developed a standard. The term Swiss German or Schweizerdüütsch still denotes a multiplicity of distinct regional dialects of absolutely equal social status. It is only now that the mechanics of modern life is producing a melting-pot situation in the large conurbations. This is leading to the emergence of a number of cantonal koines, of which those of Zürich and Berne are the most significant. In the absence of any educational support for Schwyzertüütsch as such, the process is weakening the linguistic substance of one of the variants in the diglossic situation through increasing confusion and uncertainty. The way out of confusion is nearly always pointed by the other diglossia partner.

(iii) In his third point Ferguson describes the characteristics of the “High” variety as “highly divergent”. This is undoubtedly the case in the Swiss situation, as the following random example will show:

“High”: Sie konnten jenes Häuschen dort drüben nicht kaufen. Es war ihnen zu teuer.

“Low”: Si händ säb Hüüsli deet üne nid chöne chauffe. S isch ene z tüür gsy.

In phonology, grammar, and lexis the divergence between the two varieties is considerable. It can be classified and systematized by any dialectologist. If the term “diglossia” is to be

1 Eugen Dieth, Schweizerdüütsch Dialäktschrift (Zürich, 1938); Arthur Baur, Praktische Sprachlehre des Schweizerdeutschen, 3rd ed. (Zürich, 1969); Albert Weber and Jacques M. Bächtold, Zürichdeutsches Wörterbuch für Schule und Haus (Zürich, 1961); Karl Stucki, Schweizerdeutsch: Abriss einer Grammatik mit Laut- und Formenlehre (Zürich, 1921); Albert Weber, Zürichdeutsche Grammatik (Zürich, 1948).
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meaningful as a specialist term, this aspect of divergence must figure prominently.

Ferguson also correctly states that the "High" variety is grammatically more complex. Standard German distinguishes, for instance, more cases in the definite article. The masculine article distinguishes nominative, accusative, genitive and dative. Swiss German has only a common case for subject and direct object, and an indirect object case. The functions of the standard German genitive are taken over by the indirect object case plus a possessive pronoun or by prepositions. While the "High" variety has two simple tenses in the indicative, the "Low" variety has one unmarked simple form with the meaning non-past and compound forms for past and aspects such as probability. It lacks however a tense form for future time. On the other hand the "Low" variety has much more complicated morphophonemic rules. The feminine definite article is, for instance / before nouns beginning with a vowel (t Aarbet—die Arbeit), with several different phonetic realizations before nouns beginning with other sounds, e.g. p Mueter—die Mutter ; k Chranket—die Krankheit ; Tante—die Tante.

In the lexicon we have the typically diglossic feature of lexical pairing. Lexical pairing means that the range of meaning of two items is roughly the same and the normal pattern is one of phonological correspondence. For instance as there is Haus—Huus, there is Maus—Muus, braun—bruun ; Häuschen, teuer, Leute correspond to Hüüsli, tüü, Lüü etc. As long as there was little interference occasional phonological deviation was tolerated. Thus we have for instance the correspondence rot—root, groß—grooss, but lack of correspondence in hoch where the "Low" form is hööch. But the deviant form is now endangered. Anything that does not fit the phonological formula of a regular correspondence becomes progressively a victim of this polarization. The age-old Alemannic form Chile for "church", does not pair phonologically with standard German Kirche, so a new form Chirche can now be heard. Because in a large number of cases a long vowel of standard German corresponds to a short vowel of Swiss German, e.g. sieben—sibe, lesen—läse, Boden—Bode, dialect words of the Zürich city dialect with lengthened...
vowels such as Naase for "nose", lääbe for "to live" are now shortened to Nase, läbe, which are the general Swiss forms. Again we have the phenomenon of polarization. Phoneme switching to bring about this polarization appears to be typical of the dynamics of a diglossic situation. Polarization appears at first sight to strengthen the divergence between "High" and "Low". But its operation removes innumerable phonological and morphological features, and much more important, does away with lexical items which do not form phonological pairs. Standard German bereits "already" and Swiss biräits "almost", form a phonological pair but not a semantic pair. Now they are made to conform semantically as well and one can hear biräits with the standard German meaning. Basically all words of Swiss German which do not pair phonologically and semantically with words of the standard are at risk. For standard German werfen Swiss has rüere (cf. standard rühren). Now wërfe is being introduced, and one can hear nid berüere in analogy to standard nicht berühren instead of dialectal nid aalange. Further examples of the replacement of words to produce lexical pairing are:

H anziehen — L aalege > L aazie "to dress"

H es hellt auf — L es tueat uuf > L es helet uuf "the weather is improving"

H es wird — L es challet > L es wiirt chelter "it is growing colder"

H die Straße — L s isch hëel > L d Straass isch veryset "the road is icy"

(iv) In his fourth point Ferguson states that the "High" variety is "the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community". It is, I believe, the weakest point if applied to German-speaking Switzerland. It is, of course, synchronically not correct that the German standard language owes its position of "High" variety to "the written literature of an earlier period". On the face of it, observers might, however, be willing to accept that it is "a vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature... of another speech community". It would, I think, be a mistake.
Historically speaking it is correct that the German standard language arose on the basis of written, and later, spoken forms distant from Switzerland. But it should not be imagined that it is an alien vehicle.

As a written medium standard German has evolved over the last four centuries in Switzerland as much as in any other German-speaking country or region. The contribution of Swiss writers to its development has been as great as that of any other region. It is for this reason that the phenomenon of biculturism which seems so often to prevail in diglossic situations is absent in Switzerland. Speakers do not move from one culture to another culture if they move from Swiss German to standard German. The step from a much more concrete to a much more abstract mode of thinking and expressing oneself does not amount to having to bridge the gulf from one culture to another. It has, however, something to do with the difference between a predominantly spoken language and a predominantly written language. The New High German written standard language developed in Switzerland in almost complete conjunction with the development in Germany and Austria. It is true many Swiss writers have commented on the effort required of them to attain an acceptable level in the common standard language. The attitude of the Swiss to the standard language is indeed often ambivalent and does not usually correspond to the views expressed here from the standpoint of a language historian. Emotionally standard German is often felt to be a rather distant, if not exactly alien medium.

Real one-sided dependence only developed when a norm of pronunciation for standard German was laid down and when for this norm the pronunciation of educated North Germans was adopted. The position of inferiority and dependence which this implied affected Austria and the German south as much as Switzerland. The reaction in Switzerland was however symptomatic of its general attitude to the standard language. It was felt that no reason existed why such extreme Prussianization

1 On the ambivalent attitude of the Swiss towards standard German see Bruno Boesch, "Sprachpflege in der Schweiz", in Sprachnorm, Sprachpflege, Sprachkritik (Sprache der Gegenwart, 2) (Düsseldorf, 1968), pp. 220-35.
should be accepted. And while every effort was made to retain the benefit of a common norm in pronunciation as in all aspects of grammar, a Swiss version of standard German pronunciation as a variant of the Siebs version was nevertheless established.¹

As the written German standard language has normally, except in times of political stress, been regarded by the Swiss as also their own, they have to some extent asserted their right to use it after their own fashion. This has shown itself above all in their resistance to purism, that is the periodic German attempt to translate foreign words into artificially created native German terms. Thus Bürgersteig, Kraftwagen, or Fernsprecher and fernmünderlich have not been accepted. Many older forms are retained although they have gone out of use in Germany, for instance ansonst for "anderenfalls", wob, gewoben for "webte, gewebt", ob for "oberhalb", lärmig for contemporary standard German "lärmend". The German standard language has thus a Swiss variant, the Schweizerhochdeutsch, which is not just characterized by dialectisms. In fact, innumerable Helvetisms have no direct support in the dialects. Words like Ständerlampe for Stehlampe, Stand for popular Kanton, i.e. "state of the Swiss confederation", allfällig for gegebenenfalls, or kennerisch for sachverständig, do not derive from the dialects.² Schweizerhochdeutsch manifests itself in differences in pronunciation, stress, orthography, lexis (semantic and lexical), and grammar (morpho-


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Helvetisms are naturally most frequent in the vocabulary of political institutions. Some newspaper editors have rule books giving the permitted words and those to be avoided. The *Basler Nachrichten*, for instance, in its instructions, “Sprache und Stil”, declares the following to be un-Swiss (the recommended Helvetisms are in brackets): Anschrift (Adresse), Bahnsteig (Perron), Belegschaft (Personal, Arbeiter, etc.), Gehsteig (Trottoir), Junge (Bub), Krautfad (Motorrad), Krautfstoff (Treibstoff), Kraftwagen (Automobil, Motorfahrzeug), Redakteur (Redaktor), Rundfunk (Radio), Schriftleiter (Redaktor), Schutzmann (Polizist) (see note 2, p. 142, Schilling, pp. 81-82).

The three different levels of the German language may be seen for instance, in the following versions of the same sentences:

**German standard**

Nachdem er im Magistrat erfolgreich den Vorsitz geführt und abschließend allen für ihre Arbeit gedankt hatte, nahm er ein Taxi und fuhr zum Bahnhof. In der Bahnhofsgaststätte rief er seinen Freund an. Bevor er sich auf den Bahnsteig begab, löste er eine Rückfahrkarte, wobei er mit Schweizer Franken bezahlte.

**German hochdeutsch**

Nachdem er den Stadtrat erfolgreich präsidiert und abschliessend allen ihre Arbeit verdankt hatte, nahm er einen Taxi und fuhr auf den Bahnhof. Im Bahnhofbuffet läutete er seinem Freund an. Bevor er sich auf den Perron begab, löste er ein Retourbillett, wobei er mit Schweizer Franken bezahlte.

**Schweizerdeutsch**

De Stadtraat hat er mit groossem Erfolg presidiert, und wo n er allne für ire Aarbet tanket ghaa hät, hät er en Taxi gnaa und isch uf de Baanhoof gfaare. Im Baanhoofbütsee håt er sym Fründ aaglöütet. Na vor er uf de Përrong ggangen isch, håt er es Retuurbileet glööst und håt mit Schwyzerfranke zalt.

The relationship between “Low” or dialect and “High” or standard German is therefore not an opposition of Swiss, in the national sense, versus German, in the national sense. This statement, of course, only qualifies and describes the nature of diglossia in Switzerland, it does not deny the existence of diglossia.

(v) In his fifth point Ferguson states that the “High” variety “is learned largely by formal education”. It is a fact that the Swiss child has to learn a strongly divergent form in addition to *Schwyzerdüütsch* which he learns in the normal way in
which one learns one's mother tongue. He knows Schwyzer-
tüütsch as a naturally acquired language while standard German
remains a consciously learnt medium in which he is never quite at
home in the same way as in his dialect, but in which, somewhat
paradoxically, he is much more aware of grammaticality or cor-
rectness in grammar and lexis. All those who agree that learning
a foreign language heightens a child's awareness of language and
leads ultimately to greater skill in the use of language, will see an
advantage in the diglossia situation rather than a drawback. But
as no formal schooling is ever given in the "Low" variety, this
onesided process has certain consequences. Grammatical cate-
gories which are encountered in the "High" variety, but are
absent in the "Low" variety, are suddenly found to be needed as
one's level of education and experience expands. People are not
aware and never made aware of the complete sufficiency of the
alternative means of the "Low" variety. This is notably the
case with the standard German future tense which is increasingly
being introduced into the dialects. It is also the case with the
standard German present participle. In a short sports comment-
ary on an Olympic racing event, the following were heard: der
zweite Rang isch no nid feststehend, mangelndi Luft, hervoor-
stächend, füerend. The advantages of a large repertoire of sub-
ordinating conjunctions are envied and the result is wholesale
importation. Collocations and idioms learnt in lessons are more
firmly implanted on the young mind than what is never con-
sciously memorized and simply picked up. So people now tend
to say schlächts Wätter for schlechtes Wetter, instead of wieschts
Wätter. There is nothing genuinely dialectal about di gehobeneri
Form hét sich zuesehends enere grōssere Beliebtheit erfreut (die
gehobenerere Form hat sich zusehends einer grösseren Beliebtheit
erfreut).1 Nothing but a dialectally coloured pronunciation
remains. We have reached the linguistic stage known as
Umgangssprache or colloquial standard. In this situation whatever
is nearer the standard is chosen in preference to what is more
distinct.

1 For a further example see Walther Henzen, Schriftsprache und Mundarten.
Ein Überblick über ihr Verhältnis und ihre Zwischenstufen im Deutschen, 2nd ed.,
Another linguistic feature of standard German has a great appeal. This is the great ease with which German forms compounds. In the same report on the Olympics could be heard *de medallierächtigstes Taag* (der medaillenträchtigste Tag). Frequently one is not quite sure whether the speaker is not simply quoting something in the "High" variety. Quoting is in fact very often the first step to borrowing and is a characteristic of the breakdown of the diglossia situation.

Whole unconsciously learnt word fields go out of use as a different mode of thinking and expression is consciously acquired through education. For instance the dialect distinguishes between *waarte* "to wait a short while", *passe* "to wait a long time with patience", and *plange* "to wait a long time but impatiently". The only word which pairs with a standard German word is *waarte*. It tends to be the only one to survive and the others gradually go out of use and with them subtle semantic distinctions.

(vi) The sixth characteristic of diglossia is the specialization of function of the "High" and "Low" varieties. Ferguson used both the term "function" and the term "situation", without differentiating sharply between the two. I think it would be an advantage to make this distinction, if we are to understand the great tensions which exist in diglossia. He lists the functions as follows, using H for the "High" variety and L for the "Low" variety:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Variety</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction to servants, waiters, workmen, clerks</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal letter</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech in parliament, political speech</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University lecture</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation with family, friends, colleagues</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News broadcast</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio &quot;soap opera&quot;</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editorial news story, caption on picture</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption on political cartoon</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk literature</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One could of course extend this list and it does not in all details apply to Switzerland. Thus it cannot be said that poetry is in H
and folk literature is in L. Everything written is normally in H. But there is poetry and prose of all kinds in dialect, for instance there are some excellent historical novels (by Rudolf von Tavel). But since nobody is taught to read or write the “Low” variety few can or want to make the mental effort required to read, let alone to write, in dialect.

Basically, functional and situational differences exist in Switzerland. Thus “High” functions as the medium of science and technology in lectures, at conferences, in books and written instructions. But the language that is always used in a personal situation or in the situation of the family home is “Low”. If the subject talked about in such a situation is science or technology there is a conflict between function and situation. The language of legislation is “High” but at least one cantonal parliament, though not the others, uses dialect. Many political speeches are now in dialect. The variety which functions as the language of politics and administration is the standard; the variety which is used in the situation of man talking to man is dialect. Where function and situation clash the result tends to be a mishmash of both language forms, in other words there is a breakdown of diglossia. Innumerable cases of such clashes occur in modern society, for instance at a committee meeting of a scientific association, in a sports commentary, in radio discussions, or in the personal instruction of apprentices. A professor lecturing on say the development of Gothic style in fifteenth-century painting would naturally use the “High” variety. But if he afterwards looks round a church with a member or a group of members of his audience the situation is too private for “High”, yet “Low” is unsuited for the function. Where such a conflict occurs the whole thought process and the “mental syntax” tend to be standard, the lexicon will be half “High” and half “Low”. The very extensive borrowed lexicon may look superficially adapted to dialect phonology, e.g. rote Blutkörperchen becomes rooti Bluetkörperli, Hochvoltanlage is Hoochwoltaalaag, Radiosprecher is Radiosprdcher, Marktforschung is Marktforschig, Fernseher is Fëernseher. But this adaptation is only partial and greatly damaging to the native vocabulary, for hoch is dialectal hööch, sprechen is dialectal rede, Markt is dialectal Meërt, fern is
wyτ and for sehεn the dialect says luege. The whole borrowing process with apparent phonological adaptation is therefore a menace to the native vocabulary. Innumerable items are smuggled into the dialect via compounds, such as Markt, fern and sehen, and lead finally to the replacement of the native word. Radio and television, the presence of science and technology in everyday life, scholarship and modern commerce strain the diglossic situation to breaking point. Where the terminology of a specialist language or Fachsprache spreads into dialect the latter's general terms tend to be gradually supplanted by the standard German technical terms, as has recently been shown for the terminology of huntsmen.1 Standard German huntsmen's technical terms like Wechsel “runway” are taken over for native Wäag, or Fährte “trail, scent” for Spur.

Trade and commerce with advertising have, perhaps, done more than anything else to bring this breaking point even into quite ordinary private situations. Trade terms are, of course, in the “High” variety and are then used by the ordinary housewife when out shopping. Who would now dare to ask for Anke instead of Butter, or Guggumere instead of Gurke, in a shop? He or she would be greeted with a compassionate smile. The oldest peasant landlady will now offer a room with Früesięck (Frühstücken) to tourists although she would continue to have a Morgenische in her family circle. For “trousers” the dialect uses a plural form d Hose, but not the shop assistant trying to sell you a pair; it becomes a singular on the analogy of standard German die Hose. For Taschenmesser one would say Taschemieser in a shop, although for Tasche the dialect has Täsche and anyway says Sackmässer for “pen-knife”. This, however, would not sound elegant enough across the counter. For the sake of greater clarity, I assume, shop assistants also say zwänzig for “twenty”, drysigg for “thirty”, and so on instead of dialectal zwänzg, dryssg. Personal names too are rendered in a standard form: Baachme becomes Bachmann, Huuser becomes Hauser and so on. The historical linguist may well formulate the rule that standard German au if it derives from Middle High German ü corresponds to Swiss German ü. But

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1 See Peter Ott, Zur Sprache der Jäger in der deutschen Schweiz (Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Mundartforschung, 18), (Frauenfeld, 1970).
it does not in the command *auf!* for "*lift!** or in personal names like *Hauser*. Or are these standard words quoted in a dialect context? What then is dialect?

It is, of course, a well-known fact among sociolinguists that pidginization is a characteristic of trading situations. Diglossia does not seem to escape this process.

Linguistic scholarship in Switzerland has a fine record with numerous historical grammars, a great dictionary and many dialect geographical studies, above all the excellent *Schweizerdeutscher Sprachatlas*.¹ What is perhaps most needed now is a long, cool look at the tatty edges of the diglossia situation. Sociolinguistic investigations of language behaviour in various situations and functions, such as at the work place in factory, office or shop, at professional and political meetings or in committees; in the army for commanding, instructing, reporting, and so on, would reveal a picture which might not warm the hearts of sentimental antiquarians but it would show to the linguist language in the melting pot.

(vii) The final and seventh point made by Ferguson is that no section of the community uses the "High" variety for ordinary conversation. This appears to me the most important factor in a diglossic situation and one that makes for relative stability. Stability of status, of course, not necessarily stability of the linguistic structures, as we have seen. A comparison with the dialect speaking areas of Germany and Austria shows that it is the absence of this factor which has prevented a diglossic situation from arising there. The leaders of industry, church, state and culture in Germany and Austria have always spoken a "High" variety thus acting as an example to the rest of the community. The final step is taken when it becomes psychologically possible for parents of all or most classes to bring up their children in the "High" variety although they may still speak the "Low" variety among themselves. This is the situation in many of the

¹ See the *Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Grammatik*, 20 vols. (Frauenfeld, 1910-41); *Schweizerdeutsches Wörterbuch* (Schweizerisches Idiotikon), 13 vols. (continuing), (Frauenfeld, 1881 ff.); *Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Mundartforschung*, 19 vols. to date (Frauenfeld, 1949 ff.); *Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*, ed. Rudolf Hotzenköcherle, 3 vols. to date (Berne, 1962 ff.).
last dialect speaking communities of Germany and Austria today.¹ It is not the case anywhere in Switzerland. Indeed it is psychologically impossible for any two Swiss of any class or occupation ever to address each other privately in anything but the "Low" variety. It counts as a matter of immense local pride that anybody can address the head of state, a bishop or a vice-chancellor in his own native dialect and that these dignitaries would equally speak their own form of Schwyzertüütsch. What is, however, overlooked is that it is not only a matter of which form of language is used but also what form. The diglossia situation in German-speaking Switzerland is a fact and while it is not threatened externally it is being eroded internally.

¹ See Werner F. Leopold, "The Decline of German Dialects", Word, xv (1959), 130–53, e.g. p. 134: "But the most striking impression in travelling through Germany today is that one hears everywhere, in the south as well as in the north, from adults and children, prevailingly standard German in the street, where one expects, on the basis of earlier experience, to hear dialect."