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Plautdietsch in Canada

1 Introduction: Historical background

This chapter provides an overview of the history, sociolinguistic profile, and structural features of Plautdietsch (ISO 639-3: pdt) as it is spoken in Canada today. The majority of the Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch considered here are maintained by Russian Mennonites and their descendants, members of Anabaptist Christian denominations that emerged in central and northwestern Europe during the Radical Reformation of the 16th century. Some sources refer to these varieties collectively as 'Mennonite Low German,' emphasizing the predominance of Mennonites and their descendants among Plautdietsch-speaking populations. This chapter follows Siemens (2012) and others in applying the label 'Plautdietsch,' instead, reflecting both speakers' own name for their language and the plurality of religious beliefs represented among present-day Plautdietsch speech communities worldwide.

Canadian Plautdietsch represents a constellation of related West Germanic varieties that have their roots in the Low Prussian (*Niederpreußisch*) dialects of Eastern Low German (*Ostniederdeutsch*). These dialects were spoken in northern Poland until the end of the Second World War, but are now maintained exclusively by diasporic communities in other countries. Mennonite varieties of Canadian Plautdietsch varieties show evidence of historical contact with Low Franconian (e.g., Dutch, Flemish) and Frisian, reflecting the origins of most contemporary Mennonite Plautdietsch-speaking groups in 16th and 17th-century Anabaptist migrations from the lowlands of northwestern Europe into areas of northern Poland where greater tolerance of Anabaptist religious practices could be found. Most Mennonite varieties also show signs of linguistic developments related to settlement in the Russian

Empire between the late 18th century and the present, involving both contact with neighboring non-Mennonite speaker groups (e.g., primarily Russian and Ukrainian, but also Yiddish; cf. Quiring 1928; Thiessen 1963) and relative isolation from most other Germanic speech communities. Although the cover term 'Canadian Plautdietsch' is useful in singling out speech communities who share these attributes, it should not be taken to suggest overall linguistic or religious-cultural uniformity among speaker groups. As the following sections describe in more detail, the sociolinguistic profiles of individual Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities often vary considerably from one another, with differences commonly being intimately tied both to community, family, and individual experiences of linguistic contact and separation, as well as to language ideologies represented among present-day speakers and speech communities.

Similarly, while this chapter focuses primarily on varieties of Plautdietsch spoken by Mennonites and their descendants in Canada, it should also be noted that other, non-Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities exist in Canada, as well, although the varieties of Plautdietsch that they maintain are less robustly documented. Epp (1993) brings attention to a small community of Catholic Plautdietsch speakers in the area of Humboldt, Saskatchewan, who trace their origins to the same region of northern Poland where Mennonites acquired Plautdietsch. This community's later migrations to Ukraine and western Canada parallel those of many Canadian Mennonite Plautdietsch communities. Unlike Mennonite Plautdietsch speakers, however, members of this community do not trace their origins to the lowlands of northwestern Europe, and their varieties offer particular insights into the role that substratal contact with Flemish, Dutch, and Frisian may have played in the historical formation of other, non-Catholic varieties of Plautdietsch. As with many other varieties of Plautdietsch brought to Canada and the Midwestern United States in the early 20th century, these Catholic varieties are moribund, with the youngest fluent speakers now in their early 70s. The dearth of linguistic information concerning these varieties represents a serious gap in the overall picture of Canadian Plautdietsch available today; with few published sources of information on these varieties (cf. McIver 1996; Cox 2015 for brief discussion), however, further research would be required to give them proper treatment in this chapter, despite their clear importance.

For their part, Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites arrived in Canada throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries in three major waves of immigration. Each wave involved members of diasporic Mennonite communities in multiple countries, often speaking distinct local varieties of Plautdietsch and often having distinct motivations for relocation:

1. 1873–1918: The first major wave of Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonite immigration to Canada took place in 1874, primarily involving Mennonites from colonies that were founded almost a century earlier in present-day Ukraine. Migration into Canada during this period formed part of a larger pattern of Mennonite emigration out of settlements in the Russian Empire, which would eventually see almost a third of all Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites emigrate to the New World. The causes of this migration are complex: while Mennonites' decision to leave the Russian Empire has often been viewed as one response to governmental policies of russification enacted in the 1860s that some Mennonites viewed as a threat to their educational and religious freedoms, more recent historical scholarship also points to economic motivations among at least some migrant groups (Dyck 1993:207).

Mennonite immigrants initially settled on tracts of land in southern Manitoba that had been negotiated with the Canadian government for exclusive Mennonite use. This colonial mode of ethnic block settlement, while reliant on agricultural trade with outside communities to be viable, served to limit linguistic contact with non-Mennonites during the first decades of Mennonite settlement in western Canada. Mennonite immigrants subsequently expanded westwards across the Canadian prairies throughout the 1890s and early 1900s into areas of present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta (Guenter et al. 1995).

Mennonite immigrants to Canada during this period were primarily from the Chortitza colony in Ukraine and its daughter settlements, and typically represented more conservative, Flemish-descended Mennonite denominations. A smaller number of settlers descended from the Molochnaya colony, arriving as members of the *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonite denomination and, later, as immigrants from Russian Mennonite communities in the Midwestern United States (particularly following both political and popular backlash in that country against their pacifist beliefs in the wake of the First World War). Much smaller groups of Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites also immigrated to Canada directly from Poland during this period, although none of their varieties of Plautdietsch appear to still be spoken in Canada today (Brednich 1977:17).

2. 1918–1930: Following the Russian Revolution and a period of anarchy in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) that destabilized most Mennonite settlements, over 20,000 Mennonites from the Chortitza and Molochnaya colonies and their respective daughter settlements arrived in Canada as refugees between 1922 and 1929 (Epp 1962; Dyck 1993:188; Guenter et al. 1995:344). These 'Russian' Mennonites (*Russländer*) eventually settled throughout western Canada, often in areas where Mennonites

who arrived in the previous wave of migration by 'Canadian' Mennonites (*Kanadier*) had established settlements, leading to population mixing in at least some areas. Mennonites immigrants during this period were typically members of less conservative Mennonite denominations, and show marked linguistic differences compared with earlier Mennonite immigrants to Canada (Dyck 1964; Epp 1993).

3. 1940s: A third wave of Mennonite emigration from the Soviet Union followed the Second World War, when Mennonites arrived in Canada as refugees from all major Mennonite settlements in the Soviet Union and from other areas to which they had been deported during Stalinist purges. This migration involved fewer individuals than either of the preceding migrations (ca. 7,000 people between 1946 and 1954; cf. Dyck 1993:211), but contributed notably to the composition of the overall Russian Mennonite population in Canada.

During the first wave of immigration, Mennonite communities in western Canada quickly established the traditional social service infrastructure common to most Russian Mennonite settlements, building churches, village schools, and establishing social welfare and insurance agencies that all functioned in Mennonite Standard German (see below). Newspapers and periodicals published in Mennonite Standard German were also established by Mennonite communities in the first and second waves of immigration. While some of these publications continue today (e.g., the *Mennonitische Post*, formerly the *Steinbach Post*, which largely serves conservative Russian Mennonites in the Americas who are descended from 1870s immigrants), other prominent German-language publications (e.g., *Der Bote* and *Der Mennonitische Volkswarte*) have either transitioned to publication in English or have ceased to be published at all. All of these publications have occasionally printed materials in Plautdietsch, although this has been the exception, rather than the rule.

While the majority of Mennonite Plautdietsch-speaking communities in Canada trace their origins to either these first three waves of immigration or subsequent dispersals within Canada (e.g., westward migration from Manitoba and central Saskatchewan into northern Saskatchewan and Alberta during the Great Depression; Guenter et al. 1995:419–421), many contemporary Canadian Plautdietsch communities have more complex histories of migration than this summary suggests. For one, migrations into Canada often coincided with migrations outwards to regions of Latin America where many conservative Mennonites perceived opportunities for greater autonomy and religious freedom, especially after the forced closure of Mennonite private schools by the Canadian government after 1916–1917 (Ens 1994). Such migrations continued into the late 1960s, and established

close ties between Canadian Mennonite groups and new settlements in Mexico (1922–), Paraguay (1927–), Belize (1958–), and Bolivia (1963–), among other countries, where Canadian Plautdietsch was often one of, if not the primary linguistic source for new, local Plautdietsch varieties. Importantly, these migrations were not unidirectional: groups of Mennonite settlers frequently returned to Canada either permanently or periodically, whether prompted by economic conditions in either settlement area or by connections to extended networks of kinship and denomination that often spanned multiple states. This migration has resulted in the gradual emergence of a trans-statal community among some Old Colony Mennonites, one of the more conservative Mennonite denominations who were prominent participants in many of these movements (Cañás Bottos 2008). As the following sections describe, historical and ongoing migration between Latin American and Canadian Mennonite communities has had significant consequences for the overall vitality of Plautdietsch in Canada today.

2 Sociohistorical and sociolinguistic aspects

A key sociolinguistic feature of many Russian Mennonite speech communities is their maintenance of community-internal diglossia (alongside other individual competencies in languages; see below). Community-internal diglossia has been a hallmark of Russian Mennonite speech communities for centuries, with the diglossic arrangement of varieties maintained in many contemporary settlements stabilizing in its present form by the late 18th century (Moelleken 1992a; Hedges 1996; Cox 2013). In this system, Plautdietsch serves as the L-variety, and is used as the language of informal, in-group oral communication; while Mennonite Standard German, a variety of Standard German heavily influenced by religious texts (e.g., Martin Luther's translation of the Bible) acts as the language of education, worship, and written communication (Moelleken 1992b). This assignment of varieties to particular linguistic roles has been an historical feature of almost all Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities, and bilingualism in these varieties has contributed notable contact-induced features in both varieties (cf. Moelleken 1987; Moelleken 1992b; Moelleken 1992c).

Traditionally, this community-internal diglossia was supported by the Russian Mennonite educational system, which offered primary education in Mennonite Standard German to Plautdietsch-speaking students. This was further reinforced by linguistic practices elsewhere in the community, such as the conventional use of Mennonite Standard German as the language of worship and of in-group written communication. In some communities, certain aspects of these linguistic practices were codified as part of the

Ordnung, or established social order of a local Mennonite denomination (cf. Hedges 1996). These institutions and the conventions of language use that they fostered provided not only a marker of linguistic identity for the members of many Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities, but also served as a bulwark against language shift and loss as linguistic minorities interacting with their non-Mennonite neighbors (Cox 2013).

Alongside this stable, community-internal diglossia, many members of Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonite communities also had some familiarity with the language(s) of non-Mennonite communities in their settlement areas. As these languages were not traditionally part of some Mennonite educational systems, in many cases it was only those individuals whose activities placed them in regular contact with non-Mennonites (e.g., through agricultural trade and commerce) who initially acquired proficiency in community-external languages. In most contemporary Canadian Mennonite communities, multilingualism with English is essentially universal, with Plautdietsch-speaking children now acquiring English either at the same time as Plautdietsch or upon entering school. For these communities, the relative isolation from the speech norms associated with non-Mennonite varieties of Standard German, combined with the weakening of traditional community-internal diglossia and extensive contact with English, has led to structural influence from English on varieties of Plautdietsch spoken in Canada, as described in Sections 3–5 below.

In most Canadian Mennonite communities, the system of community-internal diglossia described above has largely dissolved, and English now serves most of the roles once occupied by Mennonite Standard German. The forced closure of the Mennonite private school system between 1916–1919 and the subsequent imposition of public schools conducted almost entirely in English can be argued to have acted as a significant catalyst in this transition, removing from community control the domain in which primary competence in the community H-variety was developed. Some Mennonite denominations eventually introduced their own private, home or church-based weekend schools to provide compensatory basic education in Mennonite Standard German, a practice that continues in some Canadian Old Colony Mennonite communities today. Nevertheless, the loss of this standardized education contributed to a widening generation gap in linguistic competencies in most Canadian Mennonite communities, with only the oldest generations maintaining full, adult-level proficiency in both varieties. Most Mennonite denominations continued to use Mennonite Standard German as their primary language of worship and written communication until the 1950s, when a general (and often divisive; cf. Draper 2011) shift to the use of English began in all but the most conservative Mennonite denominations

(some of whom transitioned to Plautdietsch as the primary language of worship, instead). In comparison with other diasporic Plautdietsch-speaking communities around the world, this transition represents a radical departure from the stable diglossia common to most Russian Mennonite groups, and has contributed to much closer linguistic contact between Plautdietsch and English (and, at the same time, lessened influence from Mennonite Standard German).

The forced closure of Mennonite schools was one of several developments in Canada that contributed to the marginalization of many Plautdietsch-speaking communities' traditional linguistic practices during the 20th century. The mass emigrations to Latin America that followed these school closures significantly reduced the proportion of Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites in many areas in western Canada, while opening parts of formerly homogeneous Mennonite settlements to non-Mennonite ownership, thereby increasing the level of linguistic contact with non-Mennonite groups. The Great Depression and successive years of crop failure during the 1930s had a further destabilizing effect on both the traditional Mennonite social service infrastructure and the agricultural economy common to most western Canadian Mennonite communities, both of which supported traditional sociolinguistic practices rooted in local communities. This period also saw increased assimilatory pressure in the years preceding and following both World Wars, during which time Mennonite groups were often viewed as being both ethnic Germans and, as a result of their doctrinal insistence on non-violence, at odds with the wider non-Mennonite society's wartime efforts (Doell 1987; Ens 1994). The increased mechanization of agriculture and expansion of urbanization in Canada following the Second World War saw widespread migration from rural Mennonite communities to larger regional centers, where Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites typically formed a small and geographically disparate minority speech community. While not preventing successful intergenerational transmission of Plautdietsch outright, on the whole, these factors contributed both to a marked decline in the general use of Plautdietsch in Canada following the Second World War and to much closer linguistic contact between Canadian Plautdietsch and English.

Despite these trends, the maintenance of Plautdietsch in Canada differs considerably from group to group. Among more conservative Mennonite groups and trans-statal communities in Canada, use of Plautdietsch for in-group communication and for some functions in worship (e.g., commentary on sermons and scripture read in Mennonite Standard German) has been maintained as an important marker of group membership, and intergenerational transmission still often extends to include the youngest generations. For most other established Russian Mennonite communities in

Canada, intergenerational transmission of Plautdietsch is much less common. In some cases, the relative geographical isolation of some communities (e.g., in areas of northern Alberta and British Columbia) has contributed to situations in which Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites form the majority of the local population, and intergenerational transmission is on the whole more common across all Mennonite groups. With exception of geographically isolated communities and those with ties to religiously more conservative denominations, however, most varieties of Plautdietsch spoken by the descendants of 1870s and 1920s Mennonite immigrants are now moribund, with youngest speakers typically in their 50s and 60s.

Estimates of the present number of Plautdietsch speakers in Canada are challenged to reflect the simultaneous decline of speech communities descended from the earliest waves of Mennonite immigration together with the rapid growth of more recent Canadian Mennonite communities with ties to Latin America. Epp (1993:103) proposes an estimate of 80,000 first-language and 20,000 second-language speakers of Plautdietsch in Canada,[1] although this figure does not take into account either the significant attrition-based decline or immigration-based increases in speaker populations over the past four decades. In consultation with Mennonite community service agencies, Kulig and Fan (2016:6) estimate that 80,000–100,000 Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites with ties to Latin America live in Canada today (20,000 in Alberta, 15,000 in Manitoba, 40,000–50,000 in southern Ontario). If one tentatively assumes that one third of the earlier-established Canadian Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities remain (following estimated rates of speaker population change between the late 1970s and the present for Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities in central Saskatchewan presented in Cox 2015), the overall number of Plautdietsch speakers in Canada would likely be closer to 100,000–130,000 speakers, with recent immigrants from Latin America now constituting the majority. Although a significant minority language group in Canada, Plautdietsch has no official status in any Canadian jurisdiction, and there is limited recognition outside of Russian Mennonite communities themselves and agencies that work closely with Mennonite populations that Plautdietsch represents a variety distinct from other forms of German.

Despite ongoing language shift towards English in many Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities, there are also signs of use of Plautdietsch expanding into domains previously occupied by Mennonite Standard German or English. While written communication was traditionally conducted in either Mennonite Standard German or an outside language of wider communication, a tradition of Plautdietsch creative writing (particularly for theatre; cf. Glendinning 2006) has long roots in Canada, with authors

such as J. H. Janzen (1878–1950) and Arnold Dyck (1889–1970) producing significant works in Plautdietsch before the mid-twentieth century (Loewen & Reimer 1985). Canadian-born Plautdietsch authors such as Reuben Epp (1920–2009) and Jack Thiessen (1931–2022) have continued in this tradition, often in parallel with significant linguistic scholarship concerning Plautdietsch (e.g., Epp 1987; Epp 1993; Epp 1996; Thiessen 1963; Thiessen 1989; Thiessen 2003; Thiessen 2006). For their part, the introduction of Canadian federal policies of official bilingualism and multiculturalism during the 1970s and 1980s and the centenary of Russian Mennonite settlement in Canada in 1974 brought renewed attention to Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonite cultural and linguistic practices (Reimer, Reimer & Thiessen 1983), which, in turn, fostered the spread of Plautdietsch-language literature. Efforts were made towards the standardization of Plautdietsch orthographies in Canada throughout the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Reimer 1982; Epp 1996; Loewen 1998, a.o.), and were later taken up again by agencies seeking to promote a unified orthographic standard for Plautdietsch Bible translation. No single orthography has yet emerged as dominant. Despite this lack of overall consensus, there is widespread acceptance among Canadian Plautdietsch authors of certain common orthographic representations of most Plautdietsch phonemes (e.g., *oo* for /əʊ̯/, *ee* for /əɪ̯/, *ää* for /eɐ/, etc.), albeit with considerable variation involving certain others (e.g., palatal stops /c/ and /ɟ/, with orthographic forms *kj~tj~tch*, *gj~dj*, etc.). In some cases, this variation in writing reflects equally extensive variation in the phonetic realizations of the corresponding phonemes among Canadian Plautdietsch varieties (see Section 3).

The complexity of individual and community histories of linguistic separation and contact has contributed to considerable variation in the forms of Plautdietsch spoken in Canada today. Traditionally, Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch are seen as dividing into two macro-varieties, each named after historically significant Mennonite settlements in Ukraine: Chortitza, or 'Old Colony' Plautdietsch, and Molochnaya, or 'New Colony' Plautdietsch. In each of these varieties, some studies make further distinctions between the forms of Plautdietsch spoken by different waves of Mennonite settlers (e.g., Molochnaya Plautdietsch as spoken by the descendents of 1870s immigrants versus 1920s refugees; cf. Epp 1993). Several scholars have argued that linguistic differences between these two macro-varieties are not primarily related to particular colonies in the Russian Empire, but likely have deeper historical roots in geographical linguistic variation that existed in northern Poland (and possibly even in Mennonite colonists' earlier affiliation with either Flemish or Frisian-Dutch Anabaptist populations; see Siemens 2012 for discussion).[2] While the origins of these distinctions are contested, there is linguistic evidence

of a long-standing division between major Russian Mennonite subgroups, with few signs in Canadian communities of significant koinéization (Dyck 1964). Instead, recent studies observe a considerable degree of variation within each macro-variety, with little evidence of statistically significant correlations with common sociolinguistic factors of age, gender, class, or level of education (Cox 2015). This contrasts with the results of variationist studies conducted in Mennonite Plautdietsch speech communities in Paraguay and Brazil (e.g., Kaufmann 1997; Kaufmann 2003), where particular linguistic variables were found to be associated with age and gender. Coming to terms with the dynamics of language variation and change among contemporary Plautdietsch speech communities in Canada remains a standing challenge for research, given both the intricacies of historical migration and settlement throughout the twentieth century and ongoing movement between speaker groups in Canada, the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia today.

3 Phonetics and phonology

Considerable research has been conducted into Canadian Plautdietsch phonology (e.g., Goerzen 1950; Goerzen 1972; Epp 1996; Loewen 1998; Moelleken 1972, a.o.), contributing to a clearer picture of the major segmental features of most Canadian varieties. While the earliest of these studies focused largely on establishing phonemic contrasts and describing phonotactic constraints, more recent research has sought to bring greater attention to phonological aspects of language contact—whether historical 'substratal' contact between other West Germanic languages and the varieties of Plautdietsch that Mennonites in northern Poland would later come to adopt, or more recent contact between Plautdietsch speakers and languages outside of their communities. The following sections discuss the overall structure of the phonemic inventory of Canadian Plautdietsch and related phenomena, focusing first on the inventory of consonants (3.1), monophthongs (3.2) and diphthongs (3.3) before considering the phonological effects of language contact in greater detail (3.4).

3.1 Consonants

Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch typically have 29 phonemic consonants, as summarized in Table 1 below (after Cox, Driedger & Tucker 2013; and Cox 2015:74–76):

Table 1: Consonant phonemes in Canadian Plautdietsch

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d		c ɟ	k g	(ʔ)
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
Affricate			ʦ	ʧ			
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ	ç	x (ɣ)	h
Trill			r				
Approximant					j		
Lateral approximant			l		lʲ		

Several of these segments are sometimes treated as allophones of other phonemes, or are seen as being phonologically predictable in certain environments and thus not warranting independent phonemic status. In particular, glottal stops generally appear only as epenthetic onsets in syllables that would otherwise lack one (e.g., *oam* /oam/ [**ʔ**oə̯m] 'poor'; but see Loewen (1998:131) for an alternative analysis). Similarly, [ɣ] is often treated as an intervocalic and word-final allophone of /g/ (Loewen 1998:135). Unlike many other Germanic varieties, Canadian Plautdietsch does not regularly devoice final obstruents, where [±voice] contrasts maintain both grammatical and lexical distinctions (e.g., *Peat* 'horse' [pʰiə̯**t**] vs. *Pead* [pʰiə̯**d**] 'horses', *wiet* [viː**t**] 'far' vs. *Wied* [viː**d**] 'willow', etc.).

While most of this consonantal inventory is shared with other closely related languages, the palatal stops /c/ and /ɟ/ are typologically unusual and have received considerable attention in previous research on Plautdietsch (e.g., Baerg 1960; Moelleken 1966; Nyman 1978:52; Kanakin & Wall 1994; Naiditch 2005; Siemens 2012:93–98; a.o.). While some scholars have suggested that these phonemes' emergence is attributable to regular, language-internal developments (e.g., Naiditch 2005), others (e.g., Siemens 2003; Siemens 2012) have argued that these segments represent an areal effect that reflects the historical participation of Plautdietsch in the Baltic linguistic area (*Sprachbund*). These stops show considerable variation in their phonetic realizations across Canadian Plautdietsch varieties. While most 1870s Chortitza and Molochnaya-descended Plautdietsch speakers in Canada realize /c/ and /ɟ/ as [kʲ] and [gʲ] (e.g., *Kjoakj* [kʲoə̯kʲ] 'church', *Brigj* [bɾɪgʲ] 'bridge') many speakers among later *Russländer* immigrant groups realize these stops as [tʲ] and [dʲ] (e.g., *Tjoatj* [tʲoə̯tʲ] 'church', *Bridj* [bɾɪdʲ] 'bridge'). Some scholars attribute this shift in pronunciation among the latter groups to increased contact with East Slavic languages, where these palatalized alveolar stops are more common (Epp 1993:92).

In many Canadian and Latin American Plautdietsch speech communities, similar variation is encountered in the realization of /r/. In addition to the more common trilled and flapped allophones [r] and [ɾ], several Canadian varieties also feature an additional retroflex allophone [ɹ] in complex codas (e.g., *Korn* /kɔrn/ [kɔɹn] 'corn (maize)', *Worscht* /vɔrʃt/ [vɔɹʃt] 'sausage'). Varieties with the retroflex allophone also often show reduction of final /rən/ to [ɚn] in connected speech (e.g., *Bäaren* /bɛarən/ [bɛ.ɚn] 'berries'). Retroflex pronunciations are sociolinguistically marked as a feature of 'Old Colony' speech in some Canadian communities, as reflected in the teasing statement in (1):

(1) *Wi schmää**re*** [ʃmɛ̰ɹə] *onse Koa**re**däa**re*** [kɔ̰ɹədɛ̰ɹə] *daut se nich knoa**re*** [knɔ̰ɹə] *woa**re*** [vɔ̰ɹə]*, oba jane schmää**ren*** [ʃmɛːɚ**n**] *äare Koarendää**ren*** [koːɚ**n**dɛːɚ**n**] *daut se nich knoa**ren*** [knɔːɚ**n**] *woa**ren*** [vɔːɚ**n**].
'We grease our car doors so that they don't squeak (*with* [ɾə]), but those guys over there grease their car doors so that they don't squeak (*with* [ɚn]).' (Jake Buhler, p.c.)

The retroflex allophone of /r/ is sometimes attributed to contact with English (Dyck 1964:92; Moelleken 1967:244–245), but Moelleken (1993) observes that retroflex pronunciations were also present historically in the Vistula Delta, and argues that this allophone likely represents an instance of inheritance, rather than contact-related innovation. Subsequent research has suggested that this allophone may itself have been earlier innovation in the Vistula Delta, introduced by contact with East Flemish (Siemens 2012).

3.2 Monophthongs

Canadian Plautdietsch varieties distinguish ten phonemic monophthongs, although with notable differences in realization between Chortitza and Molochnaya-descended varieties. These are summarized in Table 2.[3]

As this table suggests, /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ are all significantly longer in duration than /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /ɔ/, and /ʊ/, suggesting length to be another cue to phonemic identity (Jedig 1966; Cox, Driedger & Tucker 2013). Among Chortitza varieties, short vowels are generally lowered and centralized. This can be viewed as a chain shift in progress, with front short vowels lowering as part of a larger pattern of ongoing sound change (cf. Burns 2015:72–73). Further research is needed on Molochnaya varieties in Canada to determine whether or not this pattern holds there, as well.

Canadian Plautdietsch varieties also differ in their realizations of /u/.

Table 2: Canadian Plautdietsch monophthongs (examples reproduced from Cox, Driedger & Tucker 2013; and Cox 2015:77–79)

Phoneme	Chortitza	Molochnaya	Examples
/i/	[iː]	[iː]	*Biet* /bit/ 'a bite'
/ɪ/	[ɻ]~[ɛ]	[ɪ]	*bitt* /bɪt/ 'bites'
/u/	[yː]	[uː]~[ʉː]	*buut* /but/ 'builds'
/ʊ/	[ʯ]~[ɵ]	[ʊ]	*butzt* /bʊtst/ 'bumps'
/e/	[eː]	[eː]	*bädt* /bet/ 'prays'
/ɛ/	[ɛ̨]~[æ]	[ɛ]	*Bett* /bɛt/ 'tub'
/ə/	[ə]	[ə]	*bediedt* /bəˈdit/ 'means'
/a/	[ɐː]~[ɑː]	[aː]	*bat* /bat/ 'until'
/ɔ/	[ɐ]~[ɑ]	[ɔ]	*Bott* /bɔt/ 'bid'
/o/	[oː]	[oː]	*bodt* /bot/ 'bathes'

Chortitza-descended varieties typically have only the realization [yː], whereas Molochnaya-descended varieties more often feature either [uː] or [ʉː] (cf. Moelleken 1967:245–246). The absence of [uː]~[ʉː] creates a typologically unusual gap in the Chortitza vowel space, with the high-back quadrant left largely empty. Siemens (2012) attributes this situation to historical contact in the Vistula Delta between some varieties of Plautdietsch and East Flemish, where this same vowel space configuration is observed. On this model, Flemish-speaking immigrants to the Vistula Delta would have come to adopt local varieties of Plautdietsch, while maintaining their distinctive Flemish realizations of the corresponding Plautdietsch phonemes. Siemens provides similar arguments for viewing the realization of certain Chortitza diphthongs as a consequence of shift-induced phonological interference, as well (see below). He notes that these potentially Flemish-origin features are retained today only among those groups of Plautdietsch speakers who have the closest historical ties to Flemish populations in northern Poland, suggesting this model to be plausible from the perspective of Mennonite history.

3.3 Diphthongs

Canadian Plautdietsch varieties maintain at most eleven contrasts among diphthongs, although one diphthong, /uɪ/, is marginal, appearing only in a single interjection *fuj* 'yuck, phooey' in most varieties. All of the diphthongs ending in /a/ also feature allophones with schwa in closed syllables (e.g., *Boa* / bɔa/ [bɔɐ̯] 'bear' vs. *Boat* / bɔat/ [bɔə̯t] 'beard'). There is considerable variation in the realization of these diphthongs among Chortitza and Molochnaya-descended varieties, and the synopsis in Table 3 below is likely not exhaustive.

Table 3: Canadian Plautdietsch diphthongs.

Phoneme	Chortitza	Molochnaya	Examples
/ia/	[iɐ̯]	[iɐ̯]	*Bia* /bia/ 'pillow case'
/ea/	[ə͡ɪɐ̯]~[iɐ̯]	[ə͡ɪɐ̯]	*Beea* /bea/ 'beer'
/ɛa/	[eɐ̯]	[eɐ̯]	*Bäa* /bɛa/ 'berry; pear'
/ɛɪ/	[ɛɪ̯]~[aɪ̯]	[ɛɪ̯]	*beid* /bɛɪd/ 'both'
/əɪ/	[əɪ̯]	[əɪ̯]	*beed* /bəɪd/ 'bid!'
/əʊ/	[əʊ̯]	[əʊ̯]	*Bood* /bəʊd/ 'shack'
/aʊ/	[aʊ̯]~[ɒː]	[aʊ̯]	*Bauss* /baʊs/ 'boss'
/ɔa/	[ɔɐ̯]~[ɒɐ̯]	[ɔɐ̯]~[ɒɐ̯]	*Boa* /bɔa/ 'bear'
/ɔa/ (*pre-velar*)	[œɐ̯]~[eɐ̯]	[ɔɐ̯]~[ɒɐ̯]~[ɒːɐ̯]	*Boage(n)* /bɔagə(n)/ 'bow'
/oa/	[oɐ̯]~[ʊɐ̯]	[oɐ̯]~[ʊɐ̯]~[əʊ̯ɐ̯]	*Buah* /boa/ 'Buhr (surname)'
/oa/ (*pre-velar*)	[yɐ̯]	[oɐ̯]~[ʊɐ̯]~[əʊ̯]	*Buak* /boak/ 'book'
/ua/	[yɐ̯]	[uɐ̯]~[ʉɐ̯]	*Buua* /bua/ 'builder'
/uɪ/	[oɪ̯]	[oɪ̯]	*fuj* 'yuck!'

In many Chortitza-descended Canadian Plautdietsch varieties, separate, rounded allophones of the back diphthongs /ɔa/ and /oa/ exist in pre-velar environments (i.e., before /g/, /ɣ/, /k/, /x/). Additionally, some Chortitza and Molochnaya-descended varieties make no distinction between /oa/ and /ua/, treating them as a single phoneme. As Table 4 shows, these two features contribute to a range of realizations in back diphthongs across different varieties, with as few as two and as many as five allophones attested in Plautdietsch:

Table 4: Back diphthong allophones in Plautdietsch

	/ɔa/ (*elsewhere*) *woah* 'true'	/ɔa/ (*pre-velar*) *Woag* 'dare'	/oa/ (*elsewhere*) *wua* 'where'	/oa/ (*pre-velar*) *wuak* 'woke'	/ua/ *Buua* 'builder'
Quiring (1928)	*ōə~ōo* [ɔɐ̯]	*ŏo* [œɐ̯]	*ôə* [oɐ̯]	*ôo* [øɐ̯]	*ûə* [yɐ̯]
Rempel (1995), Loewen (1996), Zacharias (2009)	*oa* [ɔɐ̯]	*oa, øa, ŏa* [œɐ̯]	*ua~oua* [oɐ̯]~[əʊ̯ɐ̯]	*ua, üa, ŭa, ya* [yɐ̯]	
Goerzen (1950)	*ôa* [ɔɐ̯]		*oa* [əʊ̯ɐ̯]		*ua* [oɐ̯]
Epp (1996)	*oa* [ɔɐ̯]		*ua* [oɐ̯]		

Siemens (2012:62ff.) proposes that phonological interference from East Flemish has contributed historically to the arrangement of these diphthongs in Chortitza-descended Plautdietsch varieties, arguing that the typologically unusual rounding of West Germanic **au* to [yɐ̯] is unlikely to be a coincidental shared innovation in both languages.

3.4 Language contact and phonology

As the preceding sections have observed, several historical instances of language contact have been argued to have exerted an influence on the phonology of contemporary Plautdietsch varieties. For some Mennonite

Plautdietsch varieties, this contact may have involved shift-induced phonological interference from East Flemish (in the terms of Thomason 2001), which contributed to asymmetries in the present-day vowel space of many Chortitza-descended varieties, and potentially also to the introduction of retroflex realizations of /r/. Likewise, areal linguistic influence from the Baltic *Sprachbund* has been argued to have favored the emergence of contrastive palatal stops in Plautdietsch, as are found across other languages in the region. Later instances of contact with community-external languages may similarly have contributed to shifts in the realization of these stops, with many *Russländer* groups now having palatalized dental (rather than palatal or palatalized velar) stops, as are common in East Slavic languages. Many of the outcomes of historical instances of language contact such as these are not restricted to Canadian Plautdietsch alone, but are nevertheless well represented among contemporary Canadian varieties.

In contrast to these historical cases of contact with community-external languages, the phonological effects of more recent contact with English in Canada are somewhat less conclusive. While Moelleken (1993) argues against viewing retroflex realizations of /r/ as a contact-related innovation from English, this does not preclude influence from English as a contributing factor in the spread of this allophone, which, for some Canadian speakers, appears in free variation with non-retroflex allophones in codas. Further research is required to determine what, if any, effect intense contact with English has had on Canadian Plautdietsch phonology.

There is some evidence of inter-variety contact and levelling among Plautdietsch-speaking communities in Canada, although this does not appear to have substantially affected the phonological structure of present-day varieties. Varieties of Plautdietsch spoken by minorities within the Mennonite community have repeatedly been reported to have been absorbed into larger dialect groups. The descendants of most Polish Mennonite immigrants to Canada (among those who maintained Plautdietsch as a home language in the Vistula Delta; see Quiring 1928:47; Tolksdorf 1985:323–324 for discussion) generally formed a minority among Chortitza and Molochnaya Plautdietsch speakers, and gradually assimilated into those speech communities (a pattern reportedly mirrored among Polish Mennonites in Paraguay; cf. Rohkohl 1993:107–108). Similarly, there is evidence of some degree of levelling between Chortitza and Molochnaya *Russländer* varieties in Russia in the period following the 1870s migration to North America, likely resulting from the increased prominence of the Molochnaya Colony in Russian Mennonite educational and economic affairs during this time (cf. Quiring 1928; Mitzka 1930; Dyck 1964; Epp 1993).

Nevertheless, with the exception of the Polish Mennonite case noted above and several 'mixed' speaker groups identified in Cox (2015), there is less evidence of contact between Mennonite communities in Canada leading to the levelling of linguistic distinctions or the development of new, koiné varieties. In part, this may be due to long-standing social divisions between Chortitza and Molochnaya Mennonite communities, which were maintained in many cases until recently by differences in denomination, largely separate extended kinship networks, and diverging attitudes towards separation from the outside world. Social conditions in most Canadian Plautdietsch-speaking communities thus often favored the maintenance of group-internal linguistic conventions, rather than a wholesale convergence towards the norms of any one speaker group.

4 Morphosyntax

4.1 Nominal system morphosyntax

Nominals in Canadian Plautdietsch are categorized by both gender and plural formation class, and inflect for number and case. This section focuses on the realization of case in and across Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch (4.1.1), nominal gender (4.1.2), and plural classes (4.1.3).

4.1.1 Case

Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch show marked differences in the number of case categories that they distinguish and how case-marked forms are deployed across different grammatical contexts. In part, this variation can be attributed to influence from Standard German, which exerts normative pressure on both the forms that case-marked lexical items take, as well as on the degree to which case marking patterns encountered in Standard German are applied in cognate Plautdietsch constructions.

In general, case is marked only on pronouns, adjectives, and articles in Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch, and not on nouns themselves. In some varieties, however, some historically weak-declension masculine nouns are attested as having distinctive case-marked forms. Quiring (1928:85) offers the example of the masculine noun *Hos* 'rabbit' becoming *Hosen* in the accusative singular, though he notes that the unmarked form *Hos* is also acceptable. Nieuweboer (1999:147) finds similar examples in the works of Canadian author Arnold Dyck, both with weak masculine nouns and with proper names (e.g. *Jehaun* 'John' becoming *Jehaune* in the accusative), though the uninflected equivalents are attested, as well. Such examples are rare in most

contemporary varieties, and likely do not represent productive inflectional patterns.

Several distinct systems of case marking are attested among Canadian Plautdietsch varieties, differing both in the number of case categories distinguished and in the forms that case marking assumes across different lexical classes. Table 5 summarizes three of the most common systems reported in previous studies of Canadian Plautdietsch, which are divided here by the number of cases that they recognize.[4]

Table 5: Case systems in Canadian Plautdietsch.

Case system	Case categories distinguished	Sources
Four-case system	Nominative, accusative, dative, genitive (*semi-productive)*	Goerzen (1950)
Three-case system	Nominative, accusative, dative	Reimer, Reimer, and Thiessen (1983), Loewen (1996)
Two-case system	Nominative, objective (accusative-dative)	Mierau (1964)

While Goerzen (1950) describes a variety of Canadian Plautdietsch with a productive and fully defined genitive case, other studies of Canadian Plautdietsch treat instances of the genitive as largely lexicalized. In most varieties, examples of the genitive are restricted to fixed expressions, as in (2a–b); to semi-fixed lexical constructions like *om Xs haulwe(n)* 'for the sake of X', as in (3); and to kinship and naming constructions (the so-called "Saxon genitive"; cf. Jedig 1966:64; Reimer, Reimer & Thiessen 1983:27), as in (4) below:[5]

(2) a. *eenes* *Doages*
one.MASC.GEN day.MASC.GEN
'one day, on one particular day' (Epp 1972:35, 46)

b. *too* *Gottes* *Preis*
to God-GEN.SG praise
'to God's praise' (Fehr 1993:30)

(3) *om Fräds* *haulwen*
for peace-GEN.SG sake
'for the sake of peace' (Fehr 2001:10)

(4) *Jeat* *Jiesbraichts* *Jehaun*
George Giesbrecht-GEN.SG John
'George Giesbrecht's (son) John' (Fehr 1993:49)

Further differences exist within each system as to the forms that case-marked lexemes take in different varieties. As an example, Table 6 summarizes the definite article forms for 1870s Molochnaya and Chortitza-descended Canadian Plautdietsch varieties, as attested in the works of Saskatchewan Mennonite authors Reuben Epp and Jacob M. Fehr, respectively. Both authors' varieties represent two-case systems, although with differing forms for the objective masculine singular definite article:

Table 6: Definite articles in 1870s Canadian Plautdietsch

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter		Plural	
Case	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr
Nominative	*de*	*de*	*de*	*de*	*daut*	*daut*	*de*	*de*
Objective	***däm***	***dän***	*de*	*de*	*daut*	*daut*	*de*	*de*

While most definite article forms are common to both varieties, they differ in the form of the masculine singular objective definite article, where Molochnaya-descended varieties generally have *däm* (resembling an historical dative form) and Chortitza-descended varieties have *dän* (resembling an historical accusative form). At first blush, this may seem to suggest a straightforward diachronic explanation for these differences, with Molochnaya varieties having repurposed earlier dative forms as markers of a merged objective case, and Chortitza varieties having enlisted earlier accusative forms for the same purpose. While intuitive, evidence from other constructions makes it clear that the situation is not so simple. In the demonstrative pronouns that correspond to the above definite articles in Table 7, for instance, both varieties have objective forms that appear to be related to historical dative forms (e.g., the plural *dän* and feminine *däah*), and Chortitza varieties have the dative-descended form *däm* in the masculine singular (forms in boldface highlight differences from the preceding definite articles):

Table 7: Demonstrative pronouns in Canadian Plautdietsch

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter		Plural	
Case	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr	Epp	Fehr
Nominative	*dee*	*dee*	*dee*	*dee*	*daut*	*daut*	*dee*	*dee*
Objective	*däm*	***däm***	***däah***	***däah***	*daut*	*daut*	***dän***	***dän***

Moreover, several works on Plautdietsch note variation between these forms, even in the same dialect. Neufeld (2000:13) observes that, while these articles sometimes resemble accusative and dative forms, in casual discourse "these forms are often used interchangeably, and cannot be clearly

characterized as other than non-nominative." Historical processes of case merger in two-case varieties of Canadian Plautdietsch such as these has thus not involved the wholesale replacement of one set of historical case-marked forms over the other. Instead, contemporary varieties have conventionalized the use of former dative and accusative forms across different constructions in different ways, and continue to show variation in the use of these forms, both across different varieties and in the speech of individual speakers.

The existence of several distinct case marking systems among Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch brings attention not only to differences in the ways that language-internal processes of case merger have unfolded over time in different speech communities, but also to contact-related processes of inflectional borrowing that have contributed to the emergence of three and four-case systems. Mierau (1964) argues that sporadic alternation between seemingly 'accusative' and 'dative' case marking in Canadian Plautdietsch "stems undoubtedly from High German interference," and notes that "speakers with a considerable knowledge of High German feel that more distinctions must be made" in Plautdietsch, as well (69–71). While not ruling out the possibility of historical retention as a source of some features of case marking in Plautdietsch inflectional morphology, it would appear probable that Standard German, in its role as the language of writing, worship, and more normatively constrained 'Sunday-like' communication (cf. Hedges 1996; Cox 2013) under traditional Russian Mennonite community-internal multilingualism, has served as a linguistic model for case marking in some, but not all, Canadian Plautdietsch varieties— a situation also reported in Plautdietsch speech communities outside of Canada, as well.[6]

On this perspective, the environment of intense, sustained linguistic contact that stable, community-internal multilingualism with Mennonite Standard German long presented in many Canadian Mennonite communities, coupled with positive attitudes towards Mennonite Standard German as a normative model for some socially important linguistic practices, provided favorable social conditions for extensive inflectional borrowing to take place in several varieties of Plautdietsch. If one accepts that inflectional formatives in some three and four-case varieties are borrowed forms, rather than retained cognates, then these varieties can be seen as having borrowed large parts of whole inflectional paradigms from Mennonite Standard German, incorporating both phonological material (the case endings themselves) *and* the patterns under which borrowed forms are expected to appear (the contexts in which accusative and dative endings occur, which are otherwise undifferentiated in varieties with a single, objective case). This kind of borrowing is uncommon cross-linguistically: inflectional borrowing, in general, appears at the highest level of the borrowing scale of Thomason and Kaufman (1988:74–75), and

Gardani, Arkadiev, and Amiridze (2015:7–8) note that it is particularly rare for formatives representing inflection dependent on syntactic agreement or government to be borrowed, and rarer still for entire inflectional paradigms to be incorporated wholesale. As in other instances of inflectional borrowing, care must be taken to distinguish the possible retention of historical case distinctions in some varieties of Plautdietsch from the contact-induced introduction of separate dative and accusative cases into varieties where these were no longer present. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that the increased familiarity with Standard German noted particularly in some later Russian Mennonite immigrant communities in Canada (cf. Epp 1962:207) could have contributed to paradigm borrowing in associated varieties of Plautdietsch, where three and four-case systems are most often observed.

4.1.2 Gender

Nominals in Canadian Plautdietsch varieties are categorized into one of three gender categories: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Gender is not distinguished in plural forms. Gender assignment for nouns is covert, and is typically follows the same pattern as Standard German, albeit with some exceptions (e.g., *Kjees* 'cheese' (feminine, versus Standard German *der Käse*), *Beea* 'beer' (masculine, versus Standard German *das Bier*), *Vöagel* 'bird' (neuter, versus Standard German *der Vogel*), *Dialekjt* 'dialect' (neuter, versus Standard German *der Dialekt*), all from Thiessen (2003:xxiv)).

In some Canadian communities, there is evidence of gradual loss of grammatical gender contrasts and their replacement by semantic gender, a phenomenon reported by Toebosch (2011) for varieties of Plautdietsch spoken in Nebraska. This is not observed across all speakers in all communities, however, and appears correlated with language shift towards English. As Thiessen (2003:xxiv) notes, further research is required on gender assignment in Plautdietsch, in general.

4.1.3 Noun plurals

Nominals in Canadian Plautdietsch also inflect for number, distinguishing singular and plural forms. Siemens (2012:138–139) distinguishes four regular plural classes for Plautdietsch, as in Table 8 (see Reimer, Reimer & Thiessen 1983:27–28 for a similar analysis):

Table 8: Noun plural classes in Canadian Plautdietsch

Plural class	Examples
1. Plural with –e(n) (–re(n) after final /a/)	*Pogg ~ Pogg**e(n)*** 'frog(s)' *Koa ~ Koa**re(n)*** 'car(s)'
2. Plural with –(e)s (–sch after final /a/)	*Schlätel ~ Schlätel**s*** 'key(s)' *Baikja ~ Baikja**sch*** 'baker(s)'
3. Plural with –a (with possible umlaut)	*Steen ~ Steen**a*** 'stone(s)' *Brat ~ Br**äda*** 'board(s)'
4. Plural with –Ø (with possible umlaut and/or final obstruent voicing)	*Foot ~ F**ee**t* 'foot, feet' *Frint ~ Frin**d*** 'friend(s)' *Faut ~ F**äd*** 'barrel(s)'

Other analyses sometimes propose subclasses of these paradigms to account for different phonological alternations, particularly concerning changes to stem forms seen in Classes 3 and 4 above (cf. Mierau 1964). In addition to these regular classes, irregular plural forms exist, as well (e.g., *Staul ~ Stalinj* 'barn(s)', *Woold ~ Weela* 'forest(s)', *Hoof ~ Heefta* 'hoof, hooves').

Both historical and recent loan words are typically assigned to Classes 1 or 2, which are open and synchronically productive: *Bockelzhonn ~ Bockelzhonne(n)* 'tomato(es)' (Class 1, from Russian *baklažan*), *Mejall ~ Mejalles* 'girl(s)' (Class 2, from Latvian *mergẽlė*, Lithuanian *mẽrǵele*, or Kashubian *marjäla*; cf. Siemens (2012:207)), *Pracha ~ Prachasch* 'beggar(s)' (Class 2, from Kashubian *praxǒř*; Siemens (2012:210)). English nominal loans into Canadian Plautdietsch typically appear in Class 2, which is phonologically closest to English plural *–s*: *Auga ~ Augasch* 'auger(s)', *Betschla ~ Betschlasch* 'bachelor(s)', *Trock ~ Trocks* 'truck(s)'.[7]

4.2 Verbal morphosyntax

Verbs in Plautdietsch express tense, modality, voice, person, number, and, more marginally, aspect. Several of these categories are marked synthetically on inflected verb forms (e.g., present and preterite tenses, person, number), while others are expressed analytically through multi-verb constructions involving finite lexical or auxiliary verbs and non-finite verbal complements (infinitives, past participles, and present participles). The following sections present the major inflectional classes of Plautdietsch verbs (4.2.1), and consider constructions related to tense, modality, voice, and aspect in more detail (4.2.2–4.2.4).

4.2.1 Verbal inflectional classes

As in other Germanic languages, verbs in Canadian Plautdietsch are

conventionally divided into two major inflectional classes based on how their preterite and past participle forms are marked. In the first class, the so-called 'weak' verbs, preterite and past participle forms are marked by the addition of the suffix *–d/–t* (marked in boldface below) after the verb stem:

(5) Inflection of weak verb *ranne(n)* 'to run'[8]

PRES	SG	PL
1	*rann*	*ranne(n)*
2	*rannst*	*ranne(n)*
3	*rannt*	*ranne(n)*

PRET	SG	PL
1	*rann**d***	*rann**d**e(n)*
2	*rans**d***	*rann**d**e(n)*
3	*rann**d***	*rann**d**e(n)*

Past participle	*jerann**t***
Imperative (SG)	*rann!*
Imperative (PL)	*rannt!*

There are several subclasses of weak verbs that feature the suffix *–d/–t*, but differ from the above example in how certain inflected forms are marked. In the case of verbs ending in *–eare(n)*, as in (6) below, 2SG forms take the allomorph *–zhd* /ʒd/,[9] and do not usually have past participle forms with the prefix *je–* found in most other Plautdietsch verbs (see Baerg 1960:193 on variation in past participle prefixation):

(6) Inflection of weak verb *spazeare(n)* 'to visit'

PRES	SG	PL
1	*spazea*	*spazeare(n)*
2	*spazeascht*	*spazeare(n)*
3	*spazeat*	*spazeare(n)*

PRET	SG	PL
1	*spazea**d***	*spazea**d**e(n)*
2	*spazea**zhd***	*spazea**d**e(n)*
3	*spazea**d***	*spazea**d**e(n)*

Past participle	*(je)spazead*
Imperative (SG)	*spazea!*
Imperative (PL)	*spazeat!*

By contrast, the other major class of Plautdietsch verbs, the so-called 'strong' verbs, are marked by stem vowel ablaut and have past participle forms

ending in *–e(n)*. Siemens (2012:171–179) offers a recent, synchronic analysis of Plautdietsch strong verbs, dividing them into three classes based on their stem ablaut pattern (with each class having two phonologically determined subclasses, depending on the coda of the stem). These classes are summarized in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Strong verb classes in Plautdietsch

Strong verb class	Infinitive	Preterite (3SG)	Past participle
Class I (*ea ~ ää* before stem coda /j/, /ç/)	*schrieejen* 'to scream'	*schr**ea**g*	*jeschr**ää**je(n)*
Class I (*ee ~ ä* elsewhere)	*jriepe(n)* 'to catch'	*jr**ee**p*	*jejr**ä**pe(n)*
Class II (*ua ~ oa,* typically before velar stem coda)	*bräakje(n)* 'to break'	*br**ua**k*	*jebr**oa**ke(n)*
Class II (*oo ~ o* elsewhere)	*stähle(n)* 'to steal'	*st**oo**hl*	*jest**o**hle(n)*
Class III (*u ~ u* typically before stem coda / nC/)	*binje(n)* 'to tie'	*b**u**nk*	*jeb**u**nge(n)*
Class III (*o~o* elsewhere)	*halpe(n)* 'to help'	*h**o**lp*	*jeh**o**lpe(n)*

Not all verbs fall neatly into one of these two regular inflectional classes. Irregular verbs sometimes appear with both the weak verb *–d/–t* suffix in their preterite forms and show stem vowel ablaut in their past participles, as in *fröage(n)* 'to ask' in Table 10 below. Similarly, in some other verbs, there may be stem vowel ablaut in the past participle and the weak verb suffix *–d/–t* in the preterite, as in *schliepe(n)* 'to grind',[10] or there may be both vowel change and *–d/–t* suffixation in the preterite and past participle forms, as in *denkje(n)* 'to think':

Table 10: Irregular verb classes in Plautdietsch

Irregular class	Infinitive	Preterite (3SG)	Past participle
Ablaut in preterite, suffix *–d/–t* in past participle	*fröage(n)*	*fruag*	*jefröagt*
Suffix *–d/–t* in preterite, ablaut in past participle	*schliepe(n)*	*schliepd*	*jeschläpe(n)*
Ablaut and suffix *–d/–t* in both preterite and past participle	*denkje(n)*	*docht*	*jedocht*

There is variability between varieties of Canadian Plautdietsch in how some verbs are assigned to strong, weak, and irregular classes. In some varieties, for instance, *läse(n)* 'to read' and *growe(n)* 'to dig' are strong verbs with past participles *jeläse(n)* and *jegrowe(n)*, while other varieties treat these as irregular with the past participle *jeläst* and *jegrowt* (cf. Baerg 1960:199–200; Siemens 2012:174, 177). While some of these cases may be due to inflectional levelling, most strong and irregular verbs appear to be stable in most varieties. Both strong and irregular verbs represent closed lexical classes; new verbs, whether borrowed or coined, are consistently treated as weak verbs in Canadian Plautdietsch.

4.2.2 Tense

Canadian Plautdietsch has four tenses: present, preterite, perfect, and pluperfect. The present and preterite tenses are formed synthetically through suffixation and/or ablaut, while the perfect and pluperfect are formed analytically through verbal complementation constructions.

The present tense is marked by inflectional suffixes on the verb stem indicating subject person and number (and, in the case of 2s and 3s forms of some strong and irregular verbs like *bräakjen* 'to break' in (7), stem vowel ablaut, as well). With weak verbs, the preterite is formed by a distinct set of inflectional suffixes on the verb stem indicating subject person and number, as in (5) and (6) above. With strong verbs, the preterite is expressed by stem vowel ablaut and a distinct pattern of subject person-number suffixation (with 3s –Ø), as in (8) below.

(7) Present-tense inflectional endings for the strong verb *bräakje(n)* 'to break'

PRES	SG	PL
1	*bräakj*	*bräakj**e(n)***
2	*braikj**st***	*bräakj**e(n)***
3	*braikj**t***	*bräakj**e(n)***

(8) Preterite-tense inflectional endings for the strong verb *bräakje(n)* 'to break'

PRET	SG	PL
1	*bruak*	*bruak**e(n)***
2	*bruak**st***	*bruak**e(n)***
3	*bruak*	*bruak**e(n)***

The perfect and pluperfect are expressed through the combination of the auxiliary verbs *habe(n)* 'to have' or *senne(n)* 'to be' with a past participle complement. As in (9) below, the present-tense form of the modal is used in perfect tense constructions, while the preterite form of the modal appears

with the pluperfect, as in (10):

(9) Perfect-tense inflection for the strong verb *bräakje(n)* 'to break'

PRES	SG	PL
1	***hab*** *jebröake(n)*	***habe(n)*** *jebröake(n)*
2	***hast*** *jebröake(n)*	***habe(n)*** *jebröake(n)*
3	***haft*** *jebröake(n)*	***habe(n)*** *jebröake(n)*

(10) Pluperfect-tense inflection for the strong verb *bräakje(n)* 'to break'

PRES	SG	PL
1	***haud*** *jebröake(n)*	***haude(n)*** *jebröake(n)*
2	***haudst*** *jebröake(n)*	***haude(n)*** *jebröake(n)*
3	***haud*** *jebröake(n)*	***haude(n)*** *jebröake(n)*

4.2.3 Modality

Canadian Plautdietsch distinguishes three moods: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. Imperative forms are derived from the verb stem, as in (5) and (6) above. Singular imperatives having no overt suffix (e.g., *rann!* 'run! (sg.)'), while plural imperatives have the suffix *–t* (e.g., *rann**t!*** 'run! (pl.)').[11]

Singular and plural imperative forms are found in all Canadian Plautdietsch varieties, but show substantial differences in their usage (Howell & Klassen 1971). Some communities employ only these two forms, paralleling French *tu–vous*, while other communities have a three-way distinction, mirroring Standard German *du–ihr–Sie*. Table 11 summarizes the typical social uses of these forms across Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities.

Table 11: Social uses of imperative forms in Canadian Plautdietsch

Pattern A	Pattern B	Contexts of use
du	*du*	Single human addressee of same age or younger than speaker Low degree of social distance, formality, politeness Non-human addressee (e.g., animals, God in prayer)
ji	*ji*	Plural interlocutors of same age or younger than speaker Low degree of social distance, formality, politeness
	Se	Singular or plural addressee(s) older than speaker Heightened degree of social distance, formality, politeness

The subjunctive mood is now formally indistinguishable from indicative preterite forms, with some historical subjunctive forms (e.g., *kjeem* 'came', *neehm* 'took') now appearing as variants of indicative preterite forms in some varieties (cf. Siemens 2012:178–179). Even so, the subjunctive function is still present in many conditional clauses like (11):

(11) ***Haud*** *ekj daut mau bloos jewisst,* [...]
have:SBJV.1S I that only just know:PST.PTCP
'If I had only known that, […]'
(Reimer, Reimer & Thiessen 1983:31)

4.2.4 Voice and aspect

Canadian Plautdietsch distinguishes two voices: active and passive. Passive voice is expressed analytically through the combination of a finite form of *woare(n)* 'to become, get' with a complement past participle, as in (12) below:

(12) *Oba Plautdietsch* ***woat*** *lang nich äwareen* ***jerädt****.*
but Plautdietsch gets long not same speak:PST.PTCP
'But Plautdietsch is certainly not spoken uniformly.'
(Driedger 2011:11)

Aspect is more marginal as a verbal category. As Reimer, Reimer & Thiessen (1983:31) note, progressive aspect is still apparent in present participles, which are formed regularly with the suffix *–end* on verb stems, but is rare in actual usage outside of derived adjectives, as in (13):

(13) *Daut Holt em Heitza knostad un de*
the wood in.the heater cracked and the
jleajende *Lauten kjnikjaden un*
glowing logs crackled and
daunzden aum Bähn.
danced on.the ceiling
'The wood in the heater cracked and the glowing logs crackled and (their light)danced on the ceiling.' (Fehr 2005:90–91)

4.3 Word order

Varieties of Plautdietsch spoken in Canada employ different surface orders of clausal constituents in different clause types. In declarative main clauses, finite verbs appear as the second constituent (V_2), with non-finite verbal complements and separable verb prefixes appearing towards the end of the clause, as in (14). In subordinate clauses, finite verbs appear together with

non-finite verbs towards the end of the clause (V_{Final}), as in (15):

(14) Oohm Fraunz siene Fruu **haud** dän väajen Dag **jebackt**
Mister Franz his wife had the preceding day bake:PST.PTCP
'Mister (or minister) Franz's wife had baked the day before.' (Fehr 2001:14)

(15) Faust wisst, daut he ditmol fer'et Läwe **wudd striede motte**
Fast knew that he this.time for.the life would fight.INF must.INF
'Fast knew that he would have to fight for his life this time.' (Epp 1972:57)

Other clause types sometimes involve different orders of verbal constituents. Typically, interrogative clauses representing polar (yes-no) questions have verb-initial (V_1) structure, with any overt subject appearing after the verb, as in (16a). Some rhetorical questions (typically accompanied by the emphatic particle *oba*) share this same constituent order, as in (16b):

(16) a. ***Habe*** ***se*** *däah noh'm Knochenarzt jenohme?*
have they her to.the bone.doctor take:PST.PTCP
'Have they taken her to the chiropractor?' (Epp 1972:114)

b. [He meend,] "***Es*** *mi* ***dit*** *oba*
he opined is to.me this EMPH
aulatoop vedorwen."
altogether ruined
'[He said,] "Well, if this hasn't all been ruined for me."' (Fehr 2001:39)

Imperative clauses also typically show V_1 order, as in (17), as do cohortative clauses, as in (18). Imperatives frequently omit an overt subject, but pronominal subjects can still appear after the initial verb, as in the example below:

(17) ***Doo*** ***du*** *vondöag [un ekj woa morjen]*
do.IMP.SG you.SG today and I will tomorrow
'You do today [and I'll do tomorrow('s work)].' (Fehr 1993:52)

(18) ***Well'*** ***wi*** *omzaicht* *oabeiden*
want we in.turns work.INF
'Let's take turns working.' (Fehr 1993:52)

Likewise, V_1 constituent order also appears in some conditional clauses, as in (19) below. These kinds of conditional clauses are less common than ones introduced by *wan* 'if', which typically have the same V_{Final} constituent order as other subordinate clauses. Finally, V_1 constituent order is sometimes used as a means of introducing events in narratives, as in (20).

(19) ***Haud*** *he* *kunnt* *siene* *Kjeaj* *vekjeepen,*
had he could.PST.PTCP his cows sell.INF

[wudd he sea rikj jewast senn'.]
'Had he been able to sell his cows, [he would have been very rich].'
(Contributor M04, 2011-08-02 (02), 04m54s910–05m04s030; cf. Cox 2015)

(20) ***Fraigt*** *de* *Maun* *siene* *niee* *Bruut:* [...]
asks the man his new bride
'(So) the man asks his new bride: […]' (Driedger 2011:38)

Both finite and non-finite verbs may introduce verbs as complements, which sometimes leads to chains of verbal complements appearing close to one another near the ends of clauses (cf. Bech 1955; Evers 1975; Kaufmann 2003; Kaufmann 2007). The preferred orders of constituents in these verb clusters differs markedly between Canadian varieties of Plautdietsch (Cox 2008; Cox 2011). While variation is attested between many West Germanic languages in cognate constructions (cf. Wurmbrand 2004), it is not clear whether these differences between Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities should be attributed to inheritance (e.g., from similar differences between Dutch-Frisian and Flemish as possible substratal source languages for Mennonite Plautdietsch) or to more recent innovations induced by contact with languages like English and Spanish, where the surface order of verbal constituents shows much less variability. As in other aspects of Canadian Plautdietsch, influence from Standard German is likely a relevant factor here, as well, with forms of Plautdietsch assuming Standard German as their normative model generally showing less deviation from the complement orders permitted in

that language.

5 Lexicon

Considerable research has been conducted into the structure of the Plautdietsch lexicon, with much of this literature focusing on Canadian speech communities or their immediate forebears in Europe and western Asia (e.g., Quiring 1928:106–118; Wiens 1957; Thiessen 1963; Thiessen 2003; Thiessen 2006). This research has brought particular attention to historical strata of language contact reflected in the contemporary Plautdietsch lexicon. Table 12 summarizes major periods of language contact involving Mennonite Plautdietsch (with etymologies from Siemens (2012) where not otherwise noted):

Table 12: Periods of Plautdietsch language contact

Period	Contact languages	Example loan words
ca. 1550–1789	Dutch-Flemish, Frisian	*Eemskje* 'ant' (< Dutch *eemke*) *Kjast* 'wedding' (< Frisian *kest* 'choice'; cf. Nieuweboer & de Graaf (1994)) *lot* 'late' (< Dutch *laat*)
	Lithuanian, Latvian	*Kujel* 'boar' (< Old Prussian *cuylis*, Lithuanian *kuilỹs*, Latvian *kuilis*) *Kunta* 'gelding' (< Lithuanian *kunteris*) *Me(r)jall* 'girl' (< Old Prussian *mergo*, Lithuanian *mergẽlė*, Latvian *mẽrgėle*)
	Polish, Kashubian	*Blott* 'mud' (< Polish/Kashubian *błoto*) *Glomms* 'cottage cheese' (< Polish/Kashubian - *glomza*) *Kos* 'goat' (< Polish/Kashubian *koza*)
1789–1874	Russian, Ukrainian	*Bockelzhonn* 'tomato' (< Russian/Ukrainian *baklažan* 'eggplant') *Schessnikj* 'garlic' (< Russian *česnok*, Ukrainian *časnik*) *Laufkje* 'general store' (< Russian *lavka*)
1874–1922	Russian, Ukrainian (in Russian Empire/USSR)	*Kuchne* 'summer kitchen' (< Russian/Ukrainian *kuchnja*) *Plemennikj* 'nephew' (< Russian *plemjannik*, Ukrainian *plemynnik*)
	English (in Canada)	*Kottaluag* 'catalogue' (< English) *Stua* 'store' (< English) *Riefa* 'river' (< English)
1922–present	English, Spanish	*Jet* /dʒɛt/ 'jet; airplane' (< English) *Wratschen* 'sandals, slippers' (< Spanish *huaraches*)

Loan words and constructions from language contact in the earliest of these periods may, in some cases, predate Mennonite entry into the Vistula Delta, and instead be the result of prior contact between other Plautdietsch speakers and outside linguistic groups (cf. Mitzka 1930; Siemens 2012:204). Among Baltic and West Slavic borrowings, concrete nouns are most prevalent, and are often centerd on the domains of food (e.g., crops, fruits and vegetables, prepared foods) and agricultural life (e.g., farm animals and implements), although a limited number of verbs and adjectives are also posited to come from these languages. By comparison, Low Franconian and Frisian borrowings are more varied in their semantic domains, and also extend to include verbs (e.g., *feede(n)* 'to feed', *schobbe(n)* 'to scratch an itch'), adjectives and adverbs (e.g., *vondöag* 'today', *leeftolig* 'kind-hearted'), prepositions (e.g., *täajen* 'against, towards; in comparison to') and multi-word expressions (e.g., *'et / daut drock habe(n)* 'to be busy', from Dutch-Flemish *het druk hebben*; Siemens (2012:204). In terms of Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) borrowing scale, this suggests casual contact between speakers of Plautdietsch and Baltic and West Slavic languages (Level 1 on this scale), with slightly more intense to more intense contact (Levels 2–3) involving Dutch, Flemish, and Frisian. Loans from this earliest period also show the greatest degree of phonological and morphological integration into Plautdietsch, and are not generally recognized as borrowed terms by Canadian speakers.

While these earliest borrowings are common to all contemporary Plautdietsch varieties, later periods of loans show much more variability in their present-day distribution across speech communities. Many East Slavic borrowings are attested only among Mennonite immigrant groups who arrived in Canada after 1920, with many such lexical items being unfamiliar among the descendants of earlier Mennonite immigrants (cf. Epp 1993). Borrowings from East Slavic languages that are attested among all contemporary Mennonite Plautdietsch groups consist primarily of concrete nouns related to agriculture and basic commerce (e.g., *Borscht* '(beet) soup', *Wrennikje* 'perogies', *Schessnikj* 'garlic', *Poppaross* 'cigarette', *Peklatjes* 'washers, thin pieces of metal', *Laufkje* 'general store'). These nominal loans show thorough phonological and morphosyntactic integration; borrowings from other parts of speech are practically non-existent. This likely reflects the limited familiarity with dominant Slavic languages that historical accounts of early Mennonite settlement in the Russian Empire describe, with contact restricted by relatively closed, colonial systems of settlement and education (casual contact, or Level 1 on Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) borrowing scale). East Slavic loans among Plautdietsch-speaking communities who remained in the Russian Empire after the 1870s are considerably more common, and extend

to include kinship terms (e.g., *Plemennikj* 'nephew'), nicknames (e.g., *Wanja* 'Johnny', *Katja* 'Katie'), as well as lexical items related to education and civic institutions (e.g., *jegrommt* 'educated', *Chelodne* 'prison'). These forms show less phonological adaptation to Plautdietsch norms (e.g., word-initial /x/ is maintained as such). Taken together, the lexical outcomes of contact between East Slavic languages and these later immigrant groups reflect considerably greater familiarity with Russian social institutions and linguistic practices than is attested among earlier Mennonite immigrant groups, and likely represents Level 2 (slightly more intense contact) on Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) borrowing scale.

For Plautdietsch speakers in Canada, the most recent and intense period of language contact has been with English, especially as the degree of geographical and cultural separation between Plautdietsch and English-speaking communities rapidly decreased after the first decades of the 20th century. Widespread bilingualism in English contributes to frequent code mixing and code switching in casual discourse in many communities, as in examples (21) and (22) from a Mennonite church event in Saskatchewan in 1992:

(21) *He foaht vondöagdändag noch Koa, he haft noch <u>license</u>, un he haft noch kjeenmol 'en <u>accident</u> jehaut.*
'He still drives (his) car to this day, he still has (his) license, and he has never had an accident yet.'

In religious contexts such as these (in communities where Plautdietsch has become one of the languages of worship, possibly alongside Mennonite Standard German and/or English), code switching and mixing with Mennonite Standard German is also attested, and often serves to introduce fixed expressions or scriptural references retained from Mennonite Standard German's earlier use as the primary language of worship. Unlike with English, however, there is little evidence of active, oral compositional ability in Mennonite Standard German cases of code switching and code mixing (cf. Moelleken 1992b), although there are clear signs of familiarity with an extensive repertoire of religious and scriptural references that are conventionally encoded in that language, as in examples (22a–b).

(22) a. *Wäa dän Sinda bekjeaht haft, <u>von dem Irrtum seines Weges</u>, dee haft 'ne Seel vom Doot jeholpen.*
'Whoever turns a sinner back <u>from the error of his ways</u> has helped a soul from death.'

b. *Oba en Klagelieder dree Farzh tweeuntwintig, do' saigt ons daut: die Güte des Herrn es et, daut wi nich goa gaunz ut send. Siene Barmherzigkeit haft noch kjeen Enj, und daut haft ons daut de groota Gott aun disem Brooda, uk aun Oohm Hendrikjen, uk bewäsen. Siene Barmherzigkeit haud noch kjeen Enj.*

'But in Lamentations three verse twenty-two, it tells us: the goodness of the Lord is the reason that we're not completely without hope. His mercy has no end, and God has shown that through this brother, as well as through Pastor Heinrich. His mercy had no end.'

Discourse markers (e.g., *so* /so/ 'so', *see* /si/ 'see', *eniwä* /ˈɛnive/ 'anyway') from English are not uncommon in many Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities, although bilingualism causes the line between code mixing and borrowing to sometimes become blurred. Contact has also contributed to loan translations, as in (23), where the English *better V* construction has been mapped onto equivalent Plautdietsch forms:

(23) *[…] se*	***bäta***	***packen***	***opp***	*un*	*seehnen*	*trigj*	*noh*
they	better	pack	up	and	see	back	to
Saskatchewan too	*komen*	*[…]*					
Saskatchewan to	come.INF						

'[…] they **better pack up** and see to getting back to Saskatchewan […]' (Fehr 1993:42)

Contact has also led to semantic shifts, where native Plautdietsch lexical items have come to be used in new contexts similar to their English equivalents. This is the case in (24), where the Plautdietsch verb *(sikj) wundre(n)* 'to wonder, marvel, to be perplexed' (Thiessen 2003, s.v. "wundre") now also appears in a non-reflexive, intransitive form *wundre(n)* 'to wonder, be curious to know', mirroring English usage:

(24) *Un ekj*	***wunda***	*eenzjemol,*	*wua*	*kjriggt*	*de*	*Onkel*	
and I	wonder	sometimes	where	gets	the	uncle	
aules	*häa.*						
everything	hither						

'And I sometimes **wonder**: "Where does the guy get it all from?"' (Fehr 1993:11)

The close typological alignment between English and Plautdietsch, coupled with widespread Plautdietsch-English bilingualism, contributes to the advancement of contact-related innovations in Canadian Plautdietsch. Even so, borrowing is generally restricted to Level 2 (slightly more intense contact) on Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) borrowing scale, with some function words and relatively minor phonological, syntactic, and lexical semantic now appearing in Canadian Plautdietsch as a result of contact with English.

6 Conclusions

As a diasporic language having strong associations with a particular religious tradition, Plautdietsch is perhaps most readily compared to other Germanic languages spoken outside of their traditional linguistic territories by geographically disparate religious minorities, including Pennsylvania Dutch, Hutterian German, and Yiddish. Detailed sociolinguistic comparisons involving these languages represents a nascent area of research (but see Kloss 1989 for one notable exception). Both historical and present-day contact between Plautdietsch-speaking communities and these groups is documented, and merits further attention.

While comparisons with other Germanic-speaking religious minorities may provide insights into both parallel developments and areas of difference, Canadian Plautdietsch still most closely resembles varieties of Plautdietsch spoken elsewhere in the Russian Mennonite diaspora. Among these varieties, however, Canadian Plautdietsch stands out in several respects. For one, the intensity of sustained contact with English and the diminished role played by Mennonite Standard German in most Canadian Mennonite communities is otherwise found only among Plautdietsch-speaking communities in the United States. The diversity of Mennonite and non-Mennonite varieties of Plautdietsch represented in Canada is also largely without parallel, with different waves of immigration offering potential insight into the historical progression of linguistic changes across communities and periods of time that would be difficult to gain in communities with less extensive migration histories. Canadian Plautdietsch also represents an important point of comparison for studies involving other diasporic Plautdietsch-speaking groups. This is perhaps most relevant for those varieties spoken in thriving Plautdietsch speech communities in Latin America, many of whom have their origins in the Canadian Plautdietsch linguistic landscape, but also more generally for cross-community comparisons of the effects of language contact with outside linguistic majorities over time.

Such connections to other diasporic Plautdietsch speaker communities are

thus important for appreciating Canadian Plautdietsch in its proper context, but they also present challenges for attempts to draw a clear, uncontroversial boundary around what should be considered 'Canadian' Plautdietsch. Under this seemingly innocuous cover term, it is not uncommon to find individuals and families with strong ties to diasporic groups elsewhere, often through extended kinship networks separated by emigration or exile. The traditional view of diasporic Russian Mennonite communities as linguistic enclaves (*Sprachinseln*), isolated from one another amidst dominant outside linguistic majorities (and thus seemingly presenting ideal test cases for observing parallel linguistic changes in progress; cf. Klassen 1969:19) is challenged by extensive inter-group contact and the increasing mobility of individual speakers between diasporic settlements. Indeed, mobility within the diaspora is a hallmark of many Plautdietsch speech communities today, and the striking diversity of individual linguistic attitudes, experiences, and competencies that accompany this mobility present new challenges for ongoing sociolinguistic and linguistic research.

Canadian Plautdietsch also stands out among many extraterritorial Germanic varieties in its general vitality. Taken as a whole, Plautdietsch is still spoken by a significant population in Canada, and instances of stable, intergenerational language transmission are widely attested. Yet, marked differences in vitality exist between individual Canadian speech communities. Most Plautdietsch varieties spoken by Catholics and non-traditionalist Mennonites are now moribund, and, in the absence of revitalization efforts, are likely to disappear in the coming decades, as has been the case in formerly Plautdietsch-speaking communities throughout the American midwest (Buchheit 1982; Buchheit 1988; Moelleken 1994). In contrast, trans-statal and other traditionalist Mennonite groups show considerably greater linguistic vitality, with most children still learning Plautdietsch as at least one of their first languages in most such communities. Even where intergenerational language loss is encountered among these groups, ongoing migration between Canada and the rapidly expanding speaker communities in Latin America continues to ensure that these varieties are in no danger of disappearing from Canada in the foreseeable future.

This shift in the proportional representation of different speaker groups has significant consequences for the overall linguistic character of Canadian Plautdietsch, and thus also for the direction of future research involving Canadian Plautdietsch speech communities. In the case of non-traditionalist communities, this demographic transition arguably calls for deeper engagement with baseline documentation and description in collaboration with the remaining proficient speakers of these communities' varieties, bearing in mind the potential use of such information in both present linguistic

research and future revitalization efforts. For traditionalist and trans-statal communities, this shift brings increased attention to and encourages further appreciation of the linguistic practices and attitudes of these groups, who have long been marginalized in Mennonite linguistic research, but who are now increasingly the primary representatives of Plautdietsch in Canada. The range of contrasts and seeming paradoxes presented by Plautdietsch in Canada—of intercontinental mobility alongside fixed, agrarian settlements; of increasingly critical levels of linguistic endangerment alongside instances of exceptional vitality; of extreme underdocumentation of some varieties alongside extensive lexical and grammatical descriptions of others—hint at the richness of the linguistic situation encountered in contemporary speech communities, and invite further attention in linguistic research.

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Notes

[1] Epp draws these numbers from an earlier study by Kloss and McConnell (1978). This same study apparently forms the basis of the estimate presented in Salminen (2007), which in turn serves as the source of information in the current Ethnologue entry on Plautdietsch in Canada (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2016). For his part, Epp appears to doubt these estimates, commenting elsewhere that a significantly lower number of L1 Canadian Plautdietsch speakers seems more plausible (Epp 1993:122).

[2] The same features commonly cited as points of differentiation between Chortitza and Molochnaya Plautdietsch (e.g., variation in -e(n) endings, /oa/ realized as [œa] or [oa] before non-palatal velars, etc.) are also reported by members of the Catholic Plautdietsch-speaking community in Canada as being present in their varieties. While certainly not ruling out the relevance of colonial settlement histories on the development of distinctive varieties of Mennonite Plautdietsch, given that Catholic Plautdietsch speakers did not participate significantly in either of the primary Russian Mennonite colonies, it seems probable that these particular features are historical retentions from earlier forms of Plautdietsch spoken in Poland, rather than innovations from settlement in the Russian Empire.

[3] Some analyses omit schwa from phonemic inventory, arguing instead that it should be treated as an unstressed allophone of /ɛ/ (cf. Kanakin & Wall 1994).

[4] This variability is attested in varieties of Plautdietsch spoken outside of Canada, as well. Three-case systems are also reported by Quiring (1928) and Jedig (1966) in Ukraine and western Siberia, respectively, and two-case systems are noted by Klassen (1969) and Nieuweboer (1999) for western Siberia and Buchheit (1978) for Nebraska.

[5] See Goerzen (1950:114–115) and Jedig (1966:67) for further examples of such constructions, and Siemens (2012:153) for discussion of naming practices in Plautdietsch-speaking communities.

[6] In particular, Jedig (1966), in a discussion of the merger of nominative and accusative-dative case marking on adjectives in western Siberian Plautdietsch, noted that the sentence "I gave the little girl a ripe apple" (Standard German: *ich gab dem kleinen Mädchen einen reifen Apfel*, featuring both dative and accusative case marking) was rendered into Plautdietsch by most speakers as *ekj gauf daut kjleene Mäatje een riepa Aupel*, with no dative and accusative marking on articles and adjectives. In constrast, representatives of the older generation, and

particularly "avid readers" (i.e. of Standard German works), Jedig reports, tended to construct this same sentence as *ekj gauf dem kjleenen Mäatjen eenen riepen Aupel*, with full dative and accusative marking. When it was commented that most other speakers did not make these distinctions, the morphologically more conservative group, Jedig states, typically responded that others simply "speak wrong" (73–74). No similar response is noted from the morphologically less conservative group. An association between these case distinctions and 'proper' speech would thus seem likely, though Jedig's analysis admittedly does not present sufficient evidence to conclude that these older speakers have not simply retained case distinctions from earlier forms of Plautdietsch which other speakers have since lost, or that such all dative-accusative distinctions made by the morphologically-conservative group were as clear-cut as this example suggests (cf. Nieuweboer 1999:157–158).

[7] See Cox (2013:62–67) 2013: 62–67 for related discussion of adaptation of English nouns into Canadian and Mexican-descended Plautdietsch varieties spoken in Bolivia.

[8] As Baerg (1960:209–211) points out, there are a number of allomorphs of 2SG preterite forms, generally depending on the final consonant or vowel of the stem. These are not discussed further here.

[9] This allomorph is shared with weak verbs ending in *–re(n)* and *–le(n)*, which also form distinct subclasses of weak verbs.

[10] While Siemens (2012:177) has *schliepd* 'ground' as the preterite form of *schliepe(n)* 'to grind, polish, whet, sharpen', some Canadian Plautdietsch speakers also have the form *schleep*; cf. Thiessen (2003:213, s.v. "schliepe").

[11] While almost all imperatives are regular, a few strong and irregular verbs have unexpected imperative forms, e.g., *nähme(n)* 'to take', imper.sg *nemm*, imper.pl *nemmt*.

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