The Lingering Death of Pennsylvania German: Will English Claim Another Language?

Erica M. Shafran

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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THE LINGERING DEATH OF PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN: WILL ENGLISH CLAIM ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

2001

ERICA SHAFRAN
The Lingering Death of Pennsylvania German:
Will English Claim Another Language?

Erica M. Shafran

An Undergraduate Thesis
Under the direction of Dr. Michael M. Williamson

Spring 2001
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The Lingering Death of Pennsylvania German:  
Will English Claim Another Language?

I. Purpose of this Study

As part of a smaller culture living within a larger one, the Amish, or Pennsylvania German, are constantly barraged with written and spoken English. Although the Amish have cloistered themselves away from mainstream culture for almost 300 years, they are no longer able to remain as autonomous as when they first immigrated to the United States. With the growing need for more land, space, and technological goods necessary to compete with other farmers, permitting them to remain financially independent, the Amish appear to be losing the language that enabled their independence from the rest of North America for so long. The language of the Amish, Pennsylvania German, has an established and lengthy history in the United States, but, even with the efforts taken to strengthen this language, it is not likely to persevere in the face of pressures from written and spoken English.

The language of Pennsylvania Germans itself is not the focus of my interest. Instead, I am interested in the function and meaning of the language in Pennsylvania German culture. English has edged out hundreds of other languages, all over the globe, but English is not the only language to ever have wiped out smaller ones. The natural trend seems to be that larger, dominant languages and cultures absorb or exterminate other smaller cultures, simply by the sheer force of their size (Diamond, 1999). In the past, the death of minority or colonized cultures was not questioned. However, I have come to expect more from the cultures and people around me. It is our duty to respect the differences among people, and not attempt to change them. The death of a language is one aspect of the death of a culture, because it is language that holds a culture together.
Therefore, until American culture is able to move away from the chauvinistic stance of ‘English only,’ linguists can only study endangered languages and attempt to preserve through an understanding of their role in the life of the people and through raising the awareness of the importance of language in maintaining that culture.
II. The Significance of Language Extinction

The Fates of Language

Scattered across rural areas of North America are settlements of Amish and other sectarian groups, known for their unusual lifestyle. They are immediately recognizable by the buggies they drive and the clothes they wear, as well as by the Pennsylvania German they speak. The sectarians have remained as independent groups since their arrival in the 1700s, largely due to their conscious isolation from the mainstream. However, as the English speaking world is exerting more and more pressure on the people, their ways and, most importantly, their language, their language is beginning to show the changes wrought by these pressures.

Before delving into the endangerment and possible extinction of Pennsylvania German, will first analyze the significance of language extinction. According to Michael Krauss (1992), language extinction occurs when languages are “no longer being learned as mother-tongue by children” (4). Language endangerment, the term that applies to Pennsylvania German, is a less dire situation, but is still crucial, nonetheless. Endangerment means the same in linguistic terms as it does in biological terms. When bald eagles became endangered, a concentrated effort to preserve them allowed them additional years of survival; when languages are endangered, the same possibility of rescue remains. Even though the will and the opportunity are there to save them, languages often pass into extinction anyway, even with care being taken to ensure their survival.

Since human beings have first used language, many languages have been created and then died away. One form of extinction is detailed by Diamond (1999). He recounts a number of incidents about groups of people who were exterminated by invading groups.
Indigenous people were wiped out, in many instances because they did not have a sufficient level of technology to defend themselves from colonizers. Diamond (1999) uses animal and crop domestication and advances in tools as examples of technology, a kind of cultural tool. The more advanced society, using its superior technology, dominated the other, and either assimilated its peoples or pushed them into extinction. However, languages, because they are cultural tools, can also be seen as a form of technology, particularly literacy. Thus, mandating the use of a language in schools, such as English, will tend to make minority languages and dialects disappear as readily as genocide will make whole cultures disappear.

Edwards (1985) writes that “The fortunes of language are bound up with those of its users, and if languages decline or ‘die’ it is simply because the circumstances of their speakers have altered” (49). In developing worlds, “alternations,” or ecological changes in the life of a culture, cause people to choose between two competing languages. One example of this phenomenon would be the growth of English in colonial India. The earliest possibility of language extinction might have occurred when Neanderthals were pushed to extinction by early humans. We have no record of any language that the Neanderthals may have used, but there is the distinct possibility that they did have one (Ruhlen, 1994, 191). If they did, then this is the earliest case of language extinction.

The Implications of Language Extinction

In order to view language extinction in all its severity, simply think about the dominance of the English language. The language the Anglo-Saxon invaders brought to the small island of England in the 1600s quickly spread to the continents of Africa, Australia, North America, and South America. Now, English covers the entire globe, often wiping out the language of whole countries, such as Scotland and Wales. Workers
The Death of Pennsylvania German 7

in India do not communicate with each other in any of the official languages of India (due to the influence of the English colonization as well as to the many languages that exist in India); they communicate in English. English has destroyed countless languages, and, globally, all ‘modern’ societies are jumping on the bandwagon to learn this ‘indispensable’ language. The dominance of English becomes a depressing thought when one contemplates the cultures that were destroyed along with their languages, since culture and language can never be separated. As M. M. Williamson states, “Culture creates language; language creates culture” (personal communication, April 3, 2001). Therefore, one might say that English is a murderer of other languages and cultures.

Hale (1992) provides another perspective on language extinction when he writes of language loss in the modern period as a “loss of cultural and intellectual diversity in which politically dominant languages and cultures simply overwhelm” minority languages and culture (1). Diversity is a key issue in language loss. “If everyone were the same, the world would be a boring place,” my parents used to always chide me. This adage can easily be viewed from a linguistic point of view, too. Too often I hear English speakers remark about the proliferation of English in the world with pride in their voices. “Everyone needs to learn English.” Yet it is this very language that is threatening to bore the rest of the world. Hale (1992) predicts that this century “will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind’s language” (7). That is an astronomical amount of languages to lose, especially in view of the number of languages that used to thrive in the world.

The Richness of Diversity

Losing languages robs our planet of much-needed diversity. We have gone from a very diverse world in languages, plants, and animals to a generic world. Language
extinction in the cultural ecology is akin to the ecological issues involved with the extinction of the rainforests. We have depleted our rainforests, killing thousands of varieties of animals, insects, and plants, only to discover, several years later, that a cure to an illness could have been generated from a particular plant or insect that is now virtually extinct. Equally, many traditional cultures with well-developed folk medicines may have cures for some of the illnesses that plague contemporary urban cultures. Cultural diversity itself is valuable because it produces a variety of perspectives on the problems faced by all cultures. The variety of solutions reached by different cultures might suggest solutions that dominant cultures could take from minority or subordinate cultures.

Language death, just like any other type of extinction, is detrimental, due to the loss of diversity and culture. Hale (1992) points out another reason to lament the language extermination. He remarks, “... any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism” (8). What he means is that every language ever spoken by man originated through the need for communication, yet all languages developed uniquely, and, as is often the case, independently. A language, therefore, is the pinnacle and badge of a people’s view of the world and the ideals that they hold. According to Mukarofsky (1964), language is a cultural treasure for the people of the language, with their literature, oral or written, as the crown jewels. Languages shape the world of the speaker and are testaments to those who speak them. Without many languages, we could never hope to unravel the mystery of the brain’s ability to create and use language (Hale, 1992, 35-36).

We are on the verge of a technological breakthrough: Using neurology, we can now trace language pathways in the brain. If English becomes one of only a few languages at this point of technological advancement, then we have cheated ourselves
once again, threatening to lose the opportunity to further our knowledge of the ties between language and the brain. Steven Pinker’s (1995) theories of language acquisition and the relationship between language and the brain could no longer be proven or disproven if we lose the multiplicity of languages spoken by native speakers. Just as with the rainforests, we are only finding out too late how much information we could have garnered from a healthy, diverse language ecology. Examining only English tells us little about ourselves as humans. Further, it is Americans’ dependence on English and their belief about the superiority of English that prevents us from learning other languages, or even respecting diversity itself.

As mentioned previously, some languages are doomed to extinction, especially those spoken by relatively small populations. Dorian (1998) states that “languages are seldom admired to death but are frequently despised to death,” meaning that languages are often let go because they are not held in as high of an esteem as the language of the dominant or invading culture (3). She further indicates that, if given the opportunity to acquire the language of the dominant group, most people will readily do so. Only with the rise of industrialization have countries begun viewing multilingualism as a negative aspect of human existence. Perhaps this is because that along with industrialization comes the unification of all peoples of that nation. The country must pull together to process goods nationally, and this cannot be accomplished if communication within a land is hindered. Languages used by groups not associated with wealth or power tend to give way to languages held by the affluent (Dorian, 1998, 12). This situation is changing to some degree, due to the demand of people to have their own languages. “[I]f all nations, no matter how small, have a right to the use of their own language, then by extension other small-language populations, with or without a nation-state of their own.
can with some justice claim the right to the use of their own languages as well” (Dorian, 1998, 19).

In contrast to Dorian’s view, the language that a person most often speaks will become his or her primary language. As Watahomigie and Yamamoto (1992) report, the language that many Native Americans were schooled in from kindergarten to high school became the then primary language they used after graduation, relinquishing their native tongues (10). The American government forced the children of Native Americans to go to school in the west, separating the children from the parents, knowing that the children would adopt the English tongue. To this day, the ethnic identity of many Native Americans has been erased from the land they originally inhabited, in large part because they have lost touch with the folkways of their culture contained in their native language.

To date, the situation faced by Native Americans has not been forced on the Amish. The sectarians managed to maintain their own language, making concessions to learn English only for necessary communicative instances with the outside world. Although the threat is not as extreme as Native Americans faced, the Amish still have a perilous situation, in being schooled in the English tongue and in facing the pressures of a dominant, foreign language around them.

Sectarians across North America

The Amish stretch across North America, and, even though they divided across a large area, they remain connected through their language. Pennsylvania German embodies the very essence of their lives: Their language is preserved for religious purposes, and religion centers itself as the core of the sectarians’ existence. Through their religion and language, the Amish have created their own identity, one that keeps them together. The Amish display an inverse of nationality—instead of uniting with the
whole, as other small ethnic groups have done, the Amish seem to be unaffected by American nationalism. They look at the values held by the rest of the nation and repudiate those ideals, drawing in among themselves. They have no desire to become part of the larger culture; they rejected school textbooks that were too patriotic for their children, indicating that they do not align themselves in any way with the rest of North America (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, 71).

Language and Nationalism: A Deeper Meaning

In keeping with the standardization of languages across a country, language and nationalism also play a large role in language extinction. Just as language cannot be separated from culture, language cannot be separated from the deeper, more profound feelings of nationalism that accompany it. Language holds the mindset of the people who speak it; therefore, the loyalty of language speakers will be inadvertently tied to the larger group from which the language stems. Language defines us and defines our nationality. Gellner argued in 1983, “literacy is essential to nationalism” (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 32). The sectarians, needless to say, remain loyal unto themselves. They have collaborated with the government in order to generate a law about education for their people only, allowing their children to attend Amish schools until the 8th grade. They generally do not connect with the larger America. The sectarians are not nationally tied to anything, but, rather, are religiously tied to their lives, therefore, tied to their language. Their language has been unique unto themselves, separating them from the mainstream world, just as they’ve remained ‘nationally’ attached only to themselves.

Nationalism (or in the case of the sectarians, religiosity), according to J. A. Fishman (1972), “represents an expansion of affiliative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors so as to include far more distant . . . kin, far more distant authorities, and far more
inclusive commitments than those that are immediately available to or directly impinge on their daily experiences" (6). Those who share a common language have typically banded together in formation of states, countries, or smaller subsections within a country. Early migration to the US resulted in small cultural regions: Germantown, Irish Hill, the Italian section, The French Quarter, among many others. These smaller political locales generally gave their loyalty to something larger than themselves, and, thus, nationality encompasses many different cultures and languages. Nationality creates a continuum that extends beyond languages. J. A. Fishman (1972) writes:

Modern mass nationalism goes beyond the objective, instrumental identification of community with language (i.e., with communication) to the identification of authenticity with a particular language which is experientially unique and, therefore, functional in a way that other languages cannot match, namely, in safeguarding the sentimental and behavioral links between the speech community of today and its ... counterparts yesterday and in antiquity (p. 43-44).

As this quote indicates, nationality generally begins at a local level and extends itself outward. A small community that embraces a certain language links itself to its neighboring community that also holds similar beliefs, albeit a different language or form of communication. Groups continue to link, and soon an entire section is tied together nationally. However, until recently, the sectarians willingly sequestered themselves from the rest of America, refusing to believe in many of the ideals most American hold. Their language kept the sectarians apart, 'untainted,' and unlinked.
III. Who Are the Sectarians?

A Short History

The sectarians are a group of Anabaptists who have consciously removed themselves from the world and have created their own communities established solely upon their religious beliefs. The roots of the Anabaptist community can be traced to January 21, 1525, when a group of young people of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds came together in Zurich, Switzerland, and re-baptized themselves (hence the name “anabaptists,” or, literally, re-baptized), pledging to live a life more similar to Jesus than was currently practiced by other Christians (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 6). One of the Anabaptists’ main points of contention rested, and continues to rest, on the practice of baptism in the Catholic and Protestant churches—the Anabaptists believe that members should be baptized as adults who willingly come to the church with foreknowledge of what their commitment to their religion, as opposed to both Protestants and Catholics, who practice child baptisms. As a result of this disagreement, Anabaptists spent years traveling across Europe, facing persecution in the form of hangings, burnings, and beheadings, until they emigrated in waves and settled in northern North America, drawn to Pennsylvania by William Penn’s promise of religious freedom. The first large emigration began in the 1730s through the 1770s, and the second ranged from the 1810s to the 1860s.

The sectarians have branched out into several different religious groups throughout their history. The Amish split from the Mennonites early on while these groups still inhabited Europe. The separations occurred in 1697, the Amish separated themselves from the Mennonites because of Jacob Ammann’s (the founder of the Amish) belief in stronger discipline, namely, the belief in Meidung, or shunning of those
members who disobey the unspoken Ordnung (the set of rules all Amish live their lives by). In order to better understand some of the rules the Amish live by, Kraybill (1989) outlines some practices prescribed and prohibited by the Ordnung:

**Examples of Practices Prescribed by the Ordnung:**
- color and style of clothing
- hat styles for men
- the color and style of buggies
- use of horses for field work
- steel wheels on machinery
- use of the German dialect
- the order of the worship service
- kneeling for prayer in worship
- the menu of the congregational meal
- marriage within the church

**Examples of Practices Prohibited by the Ordnung:**
- using tractors for field work
- owning and operating an automobile
- electricity from public power lines
- central heating in homes
- wall-to-wall carpeting
- pipeline milking equipment
- filing a lawsuit
- joining worldly (public) organizations
- entering military service
- owning computers, televisions, radios
- high school education
- air transportation
- jewelry, including wedding rings and wrist watches
- divorce

The Ordnung originated from the Anabaptists' beliefs: "Like evangelical Protestants, the Amish believe in the supremacy of the Bible. But unlike most Protestants, the Amish believe they must be separate from the world in order to attain eternal life" (Hostetler, 1982, 5). Within these restrictions and rules, there is some breathing room. For example, some communities have built phone shanties to be used for commercial and emergency use only (Kopp, 1999, 30). Some Amish farmers also keep a radio in their barns, to be
listened to only if it is necessary for the farm (weather predictions, etc.). But, by-and-large, the *Ordnung* stands fast in the lives of the Amish.

After the original separation of the Mennonites and Amish, the Amish continued to created sub-divisions here in the United States. Among the Amish, there are different degrees of strictness, resulting from separations due to the disagreements about lifestyles among the Amish. The Old Order Amish are the original branch and also the strictest. They worship in their members’ houses, holding service every two weeks in a different member’s house. The Old Order Amish use Bibles written in High German and preach in Pennsylvania German.

The first split from the Old Order Amish happened in 1877, when two factions of Amish separated themselves, building a meetinghouse for their church services, thus calling themselves the Meetinghouse Amish.

Another split occurred in 1910, when cars, electricity, telephones, and other new technology were becoming popular. The Peachey Group broke off from the rest of the Amish community because they were tolerant of these technological advancements, allowing the use of telephones, electricity, tractors, and, later, cars in their everyday lives. The Peachey Group also adopted “evangelical religious expressions (such as Sunday school)” (Kraybill, 1989, 21). The Peachey Group still remained just as conservative in dress and appearance as the Old Order Amish, but they allowed more technology than was prescribed by the *Ordnung*. The Peachey Group later became affiliated with the Beachy Amish.

The third split from the Old Order Amish happened in 1966. The New Order Amish broke away over differences in opinion about the use of modern farming equipment. They New Order Amish also differ in terms of dress and “in the use of cars.
tractors, electricity, and church buildings” (Kraybill, 1989, 22). However, all of the following groups are considered to be sectarians (sometimes also called Plain People) as they all believe in creating a separation between themselves and the English world, or what the sectarians call mainstream North America, living a life akin to that of Jesus: Old Order Amish, Amish-Mennonite (Meetinghouse Amish), Peachey Group, and New Order Amish (arranged by their level of strictness, the Old Order being the most strict) (Kopp, 1999, 25).

Submission to a Higher Law

The Amish adhere to the idea of Gelassenheit, or submission to the power of God/higher authority (Kraybill, 1989). In keeping with this belief, the Old Order Amish dress within a strict dress code followed by all. They meet bimonthly in a congregational member’s house to worship. Everyone older than six weeks is expected to attend church. At the age of sixteen, the Old Order Amish boys and girls are allowed to make the crucial decision of joining the church through baptism. Once baptized, the boys will no longer shave and the girls will begin wearing clothing indicative of an adult.

Amish, Sectarians, and Nonsectarians

Regardless of these splits, and the differences between the Amish and the Mennonites, all groups who hold strictly to the Ordnung and the old way of life are termed “sectarian.” Throughout this study, I will refer to the ‘Amish,’ at times, and to the ‘sectarians’ at others. Please note that the Old Order Amish belong to the larger community of the sectarians. Not all studies cited in this paper talk strictly about this group of Amish; many focus on all sectarians, while some look only at the Old Order Amish. As a result, I use the word “Amish” when I am referring only to this particular group, the Old Order Amish, and the word “sectarian” when I am referring to all speakers
of Pennsylvania German who live strict, religious lives. I’ve tried to be as sensitive as possible to the differences in terminology.

Complete Separation

The Amish are a relatively autonomous group. They came to North America intending to settle their own communities, communities that allow relative self-sufficiency so that they could interact within the sectarians circles, not wanted to be tempted by the outside world nor condoning the activities occurring there. Since the sectarians claim an agrarian lifestyle, dependency on the English world is not much of an issue.

The Amish, for example, have even established their own benefit plans, thus allowing them to remain relatively independent of the English world. The Amish Aid Society takes care of some medical benefits, as well as funding for those who are retired (Bender, 1989, 72). In addition to these two entities, the Amish have also established the Amish Book Committee (book publishing), Old Order Book Society (coordination of schools), Amish Liability Aid (liability assistance), National Steering Committee (government liaison), Amish Church Aid (medical assistance), and the Pequea Bruderschaft Library (historical resources) (Kraybill, 1989, 90). Besides these monetary aids which keep the Old Order Amish sequestered from the rest of the world, the Old Order Amish have each other to rely on, as witnessed by their barn raisings and quilting bees. Miriam, an Amish woman, states, “We take care of our own” (Bender, 1989, 72). As Bender (1989) states, “Brotherly love [is their] insurance” (73). The Amish have had almost no need for the outside world, at least, not until they ran out of land, as discussed in section VIII.
The Amish are most populous in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This county, according to Kraybill (1989), is the “fastest-growing of Pennsylvania’s thirteen metropolitan areas” (9). The Old Order Amish, for example, have been growing rapidly, retaining four out of five children in the community when they become old enough to decide to leave or join the church, an attrition rate of 10-20% (Bender, 1989, 69). It is estimated that in 1990 there were 16,400 Old Order Amish compared to the original 750 in 1880 (Kraybill, 1989, Appendix B, 263). As a matter of fact, 86% of all Amish in Lancaster County are Old Order Amish, a feat that is hardly surprising, considering that an Amish family generally has 5-10 children. Out of 175 Old Order Amish settlements that range across North America, 70 of them were founded after 1960 (Kraybill, 1989, 12). With these increasing numbers, land has become a scarcity in Lancaster County. The lack of land actually helps account for the attrition rate: It is a polite way out for those who disagree with the rules of the Old Order Amish (Bender, 1989, 115).

**Old Order Amish Population Estimates, 1880-1990, Lancaster County Settlement**

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<td>5650</td>
<td>4950</td>
<td>10,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7150</td>
<td>6250</td>
<td>13,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>8700</td>
<td>7700</td>
<td>16,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*numbers rounded off to nearest 50*  

Kraybill’s Appendix B (1989, 263)
The Amish hold a large percentage of land in Lancaster. Kraybill (1989) reports that in one settlement (settlement being defined as a cluster of Amish families in one geographic area), the Old Order Amish hold 90% of the farmland. Many times the families have to relocate in Ohio or Indiana into other Old Order Amish communities, just as the family in Andrea Fishman’s *Amish Literacy* was forced to do. However, 80% of the sectarians live in Pennsylvania, Ohio, or Indiana (Hostetler, 1982). Those Amish who cannot afford to live only off land sometimes have to resort to outside jobs in the factories, working alongside English in order to keep their land, sometimes living in tiny houses with no land at all (Bender, 1989).
IV. **Education and Reading**

The Fight for Their Own Schools

In the 1930s, schooling for the Amish became a long-fought battle with the government, due to a legislation that increased the mandatory amount of school attendance past an age that the Amish believed was advisable. Until 1937, Old Order Amish children attended public schools alongside non-Amish children until the age of 14, which was a permissible age for a child to stop attending school. The Amish needed their children to work at home after the age of 14, and they also believed that any further schooling would be unnecessary, that it is “education [they] don’t need,” according to one Amishman (Kraybill, 1989, 120). The Amish believed that if their children attended public school past the age of 14, they would be less likely to want to join the Old Order Amish church, that they would establish contacts in the English world and be led astray. Private Amish schools became a necessity to the Old Order Amish for these very reasons, yet the Amish had to fight the government to get their way.

The Old Order Amish schools are potential guardians for the preservation of Pennsylvania German. Although the schools cannot be considered bilingual, because the children learn solely through English, they produce bilingual children, helping the Amish to safeguard their own language, Pennsylvania German. Oral discussion takes place in Pennsylvania German (Hostetler, 1971, 48). Hostetler (1971) writes that, “Though [the children] do not know how to converse in High German, most graduates of Amish elementary schools are expected to be able to read the Bible aloud in High German and to love its cadence even though they may not fully understand the exact meaning of each word” (48).
The nature of Amish schools permits a safe learning environment. No immediate outside temptations lead the children astray because they are surrounded by other sectarian children, and sectarian values are reinforced in the schools, albeit through English. By creating their own Amish schools, the Amish are assured of a higher retention rate within the church—they, therefore, will be more likely to remain Amish, thus securing the future of their people and possibly their language (Kraybill, 1989, 133).

Amish Schools

Old Order Amish children speak Pennsylvania German as their mother tongue. It is not until they reach school age that they begin to learn the English they will need to communicate with the English world. In the Schwartztruber community, the children learn words from worlds that no longer exist through the *McGuffey Readers*, a now outdated series of English textbooks stressing religion, family values, and patriotism in a package of obsolete English (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, 73). They also learn English in association with the Amish way of life in the *Pathway* series, a set of texts created by an Amishman about the Amish way of life, but in English. *The Pathway* series was created in response to parents’ complaints that the *McGuffey* readers for older children were too patriotic and difficult. This poses a problem for the Amish: By learning a language through something with which they are already familiar, will the children not be tempted to think of their world through the English language? Johnson-Weiner (1997) suggests that this method of English instruction may, in fact, “[hasten] a shift away from Pennsylvania German” (75). Johnson-Weiner (1997) puts a reasonable fear into words, because it is likely that the children will begin to intermingle English and Pennsylvania German in their lives, as there are no clear-cut borders when both languages are parts of their lives. Johnson-Weiner (1997) has no solution to this dilemma, but she quotes A. N.
Keim’s theory that Pennsylvania German is “the single most significant element in the continuity of the Amish community” (75). Even so, the students learn how to express their thoughts in English for the entire school day: Six to eight hours mark the span of English in the every day lives of the students.

Counterpoint to Johnson-Weimer’s worry, Edwards (1985) claims that “instruction [in the mother-tongue] would at once foster family cohesion and promote assimilation [into the dominant culture]” (121). Therefore, according to Edwards, the Amish are helping to maintain their language by not offering Pennsylvania German instruction.
V. Bilingual Lives

Some Examples from around the World

Grenoble and Whaley (1998) separate aspects of language into micro- and macro-variables. Micro-variables apply to dialects and everything outside the mainstream culture; therefore, one can deduce that macro-variables apply to language at large (28).

On the macro-variable level, Bradley’s study of the Ugong language notes that it disappeared in areas where Thai-based education became accessible, beginning in the 1930s. Areas that were geographically isolated in Thailand maintained their language, probably because a Thai-based education was not available. These communities were forced to become economically self-sufficient to a certain degree because of the language barrier they put up against the world around them by not speaking Thai, the mainstream language, just as the Amish refuse to switch their language solely to English (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 28).

Another example that can attest to the severity of the language situation is the language condition in the former Soviet Union, where they’ve had much experience with language diversity. Grenoble and Whaley (1998) note that there are over 200 languages spoken over this land, although most of the people speak the 4 or 5 majority languages.

The large array of spoken languages in the Former Soviet Union became stifled due to a change in literacy in the 1930s, when the Former Soviet Union switched from a Latin-based alphabet to the Russian-based Cyrillic alphabet in order to accommodate those learning Russian. With the Russian-based Cyrillic alphabet, people learning the Russian language would not have to master two alphabets, as they previously were forced to (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 47). This may seem advantageous to literacy, but languages (especially minority languages) suffered because of this move. Russian as a
unified language was pushed, and the majority of those who spoke a minority language were either bi- or multilingual because they were forced to be so. In a 1972 census, it was reported that of 137.2 million Russians, only 0.2% knew a second language. However, 42% of the total population were bi- or multilingual (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 48). The 41.8% came from the minority languages. It is no wonder that there are 63 endangered languages in the Former Soviet Union (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 45).

Once the shift of alphabets came about, the bulk of language maintenance was put on those who spoke one of the minority languages. They had to do 'double-duty' in order to keep up with the main languages of the Former Soviet Union. After time, it was no longer advantageous to know one of the smaller languages once Russian, as a unified language, became the trend. Because of relative ease of learning Russian instead of two or three languages, many languages became extinct. This case exemplifies the problems with bilingualism. It is easier to assimilate than to fight the dominant culture. In some Amish communities, they've moved to bilingual Bibles, hastening the arrival of English.

Also, many researchers have noted that, for many sectarians, the yearly Versammlung is one of the few chances they have to hear and speak Pennsylvania German, when in the past, this was not so. Pennsylvania German was spoken constantly.

Bilingualism usually emerges in minority groups because they must speak the dominant language. As a result, over time, the smaller languages diminish if there is no reason to keep them. This was such the case with Gaelic in Ireland. Edwards (1985) reports that, even though English invaded the island. “For about 400 years Irish remained strong in the face of linguistic competition . . . and forced the passage of laws intended to bolster English. This changed with new political and social conditions, but it took more than 200 years for English to gain a firm hold” (63). Once the communicative
purposefulness of the language eroded. English encroached on the former Gaelic
territory, due to a political change. Gaelic survived for 200 years, and Pennsylvania
German has survived for over 300. The sectarians are already forced to respond to
government surveys, taxes, and other such paperwork in English, and eventually their
language will follow the path of Gaelic, unless some remarkable change occurs.

Does bilingual education ever work? Studies have been done on the survival of
German in Australian Sprachinseln (language island). In the Sprachinseln in Barossa
Valley in Australia, both the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) and the
United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (UELCA) both used German in their
everyday lives, churches, and schools since the German immigrants established
themselves in 1839. The Germans established over 100 bilingual schools. English was
the “language of administration and was the medium of communication with the ‘outside
world,’” just as with the Pennsylvania German (Clyne, 1994, 107).

The Barossa Sprachinseln remained homogenous until World War I, when there
was a ban on all publications printed in German (1917) and when schools switched to all-
English texts (1916) (Clyne, 1994, 108). German survived until World War II because
curch services were offered in German and Saturday schools taught German language.
UELCA offered bilingual church services, Sunday schools, and confirmation in the
German language as they tried for “language and cultural maintenance” (Clyne, 1994,
108). ELCA moved all of their worship services to English while offering day schools
for religious reasons that only spoke German. UELCA shut their schools down, while
ELCA retained theirs. Unbelievably, ELCA retained German better than UELCA
because of the day schools that they kept open, contrary to Edwards’ previous statement
about assimilation. In this case, bilingualism strove to keep both languages alive, instead of obliterating one language and preserving another, as was the case with Russian.

Isolated Communities

From the original Lancaster settlement dozens and dozens of smaller sectarian communities have sprung up from those sectarians who have been forced to move because of a lack of land. As these pioneer communities branch off, they move into areas that are predominantly English and are forced to communicate even more with the English than they previously had in the Lancaster settlements, at least until they become settled. These small, isolated communities (as will be discussed later in Section VII) are in more danger of language extinction than any other. The reason for this danger is that these communities no longer have the larger language group to fall back on. As the older generations die off, there are fewer ‘experts’ on Pennsylvania German. The younger generations hear English around them. It is these young people who are making the switch to bilingual Bibles (Van Ness 1992). These isolated communities represent, in a sense, their own language destruction.

Van Ness comments specifically on these isolated groups, focusing on two West Virginia communities:

Sociolinguistic studies have documented the interdependence between a tight-knit community and the enforcement of linguistic behavior (Gumperz 1964, Milroy 1987). On the one hand, group membership serves to maintain linguistic norms, while, on the other hand, a linguistic change will be pushed through quickly because of the norm-enforcing mechanism of a close network (Trudgill 1989). The PG of West Virginia, then, as a vernacular spoken in a geographically and economically isolated region, with its social parameters limited to a small, close, and cohesive family unit, would be receptive to profound innovations. The ge- to de- shift [discussed in her article] was triggered when the “outside” (English-speaking) world invaded these family networks at an accelerated rate via
television, compulsory education, and employment away from home. Such external factors were ultimately responsible for imposing English phonotactics on the dialect, thereby causing confluence of the normalized PG PP prefix ge- with a congruent English participle pattern.

Thus, those communities who separate themselves are endangering their language more than the original settlement. Once Pennsylvania German in these groups disappears, they will be forced to communicate with other settlements solely through English.

Bilingualism: Pennsylvania German and Religion

The Pennsylvania Germans, on the other hand, have their religion to possibly ensure the survival of Pennsylvania German. Pennsylvania German is spoken in the homes and in liturgical life. Standard German is used for reading and writing any religious material, while Pennsylvania German is used to discuss the material (Kraybill, 1989, 48). To pray or to practice their religion in English would be considered sacrilegious, as the original founders of the Amish religion spoke German; German and Pennsylvania German “engenders sacred communication with God” (Kraybill, 1989, 48). As a matter of fact, an editor of an Amish publication states their “policy forbids the publishing of Amish church revered matter in English” (Kraybill, 1989, 48).

The Amish use Pennsylvania German among themselves, mixing in a few English words in their dialect because Pennsylvania German is actually mandated by the Ordnung, or the Amish code of conduct (Kraybill, 1989, 47, 98). Although sectarians use Pennsylvania German because of the Ordnung, English terms are becoming more and more frequent in their language. If they do not know the German for an abstract idea or concrete item, they substitute the English. In another 300 years, they will not have any German to fall back on.
Such is the case with the Pennsylvania Germans. Language tends to survive if the role of the language is directly linked to religion. Hostetler (1971) believes, "Since Pennsylvania German is the only language the Old Order Amish may use to pray, they have a higher chance of retaining their language. High German is more than just another language to the Amish. It is the basis of their sermons and ceremonies, their religious oral tradition, and their collective memory and wisdom." (48)

Unbelievably, some Amish have abandoned Pennsylvania German even in the realm of religion. Van Ness writes of the changes Pennsylvania German is undergoing in an Amish community in Ohio. The Amish there have switched to bilingual Bibles, and “passive knowledge of ‘Bible’ German is promoted through weekly school lessons, parental instruction, and Sunday-school classes” (Van Ness 1995, 71). The younger generations in this Ohioan community are losing their grasp on German, and language change has taken its toll on their Pennsylvania German as well—the female marker used in the possessive NP as well as the feminine pronoun is quickly disappearing (Van Ness 1995, 75). Once a community becomes bilingual in the area of religion, English creeps in a little closer than before. In the Barossa community, bilingualism kept two languages alive and working simultaneously; however, this is not the case with the community in Ohio, because the trend seems to be to embrace English tighter and tighter.
VI. Literacy

What They Read

Most of the Amish are literate in English and High German, and, of the two, have better skills in reading and writing English. The Amish learn English in the schools, including grammar, writing sentences, vocabulary, and reading. In contrast to this structured way of learning English, the Amish have no uniform way of documenting Pennsylvania German; if they want to write in this language, they have to improvise spelling and structure. Hostetler (1971) comments on the neat divisions in the lives of the sectarian:

The relationship between English (the language of the world), German (the language of the Bible), and Pennsylvania Dutch (the language of the home) is a subject of concern in many Amish communities. Pennsylvania Dutch is the preferred spoken language and is used exclusively within the household and community; it is the family's responsibility to give its children a firm foundation in the mother tongue. In addition, the children must learn to speak, read, and write English to live successfully on the margin of the twentieth century; it is the responsibility of the school to teach the children English.

Almost all of the texts in the lives of the Amish are in English. The Amish publishers produce some of the English textbooks used in the Amish schools, but old textbooks from public schools also serve the purpose of learning (Kraybill, 1989, 134-35). The parents of the children have control over what they want their children to learn, and the Old Order Book Society "provides guidelines for the curriculum and administration to encourage uniformity" (Kraybill, 1989, 136). The official magazine of the Amish teachers, *Blackboard Bulletin*, is in English (Kraybill, 1989).

Amish schools are a relatively safe place for the Amish, being an environment where all aspects meet the approval of the Amish community. Even though all oral and written communication is strictly in English, the Amish have enough control over the
content that there is never a division between English school life and the home life.

Amish schools have stabilized both worlds as Pennsylvania German worlds.

One group of Amish, the Swartzentruber Amish, use the *McGuffey*’s textbooks series in their classrooms, and often the parents and grandparents used these very same books. The Swartzentruber Amish use these antiquated books because the “tone of the texts is decidedly moralistic and God-fearing” (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, 69). However, the community believed that the *McGuffey Readers* for the sixth-eighth graders were too difficult as well as being too “‘patriotic’” and “‘worldly,’” as described by one Amish parent (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, 71). These Old Order Amish decided to produce their own textbooks for the older students, called the *Pathway Readers*. The Amish publishers have selected stories that they deemed suitable from other readers, and, when they found that these stories were not plentiful or interesting enough, they created their own. The stories these Amish generated are about imaginary Amish children living and working on Amish farms. The community felt that these stories would be more interesting and would teach their children the vocabulary they would need to know to communicate to outsiders, things that relate to farming. This approach solved a problem with the *McGuffey Readers*. Many of the stories included antiquated words, or words that would be useless in communicating with the English world.

English plays an even larger role in the written language of the Amish. Letters written between the Amish are generally written in English, with occasional words written in their mother tongue. The Amish write almost solely in English because this is the language in which they are taught to write in their schools. Pennsylvania German is an oral language, and “English serves as the primary medium for all written communication within the Amish community and with Amish elsewhere. Thus, an
Amish person who knew only Pennsylvania German would be hindered in all but face-to-face interaction with other Amish, and, thus, could play only a limited role in the community (Johnson-Weiner, 1997, 67). This poses further problems for the future of Pennsylvania German. Dorian argues, "The majority of endangered languages come from oral cultures, where converting the language to a written form poses certain consequences for the continued use of the languages" (34). The sectarians generally do not write in their mother tongue, another possible reason for the erosion of their language.

Andrea Fishman documents the reading materials of one Old Order Amish family in her Amish Literacy. Surprisingly, the Amish, although they read much, read the bulk of everything in English. The weekly Amish newspaper Die Botschaft (The Message) is written in English, with many Amish persons writing (in English) as scribes for the paper. The family in Fishman’s book reads fiction written in English, bought at the local Christian store, and subscribes to multiple magazines and newspapers written in English. Most Amish families have many of the same staples. Bender (1989) reports that many of the Amish families receive Budget, the weekly Amish newspaper (29). Fishman notes that most sectarian farmers also have Diary World, published by The Independent Buyer’s Association (21). All of these texts are written in English. Almost all sectarians own a copy of Martyrs Mirror, a book documenting individual persecutions of early Anabaptists, complete with pictures. The Amish are also forced to read "task-related texts" such as manuals, suppliers’ contracts and literature, coupons, tax forms, government surveys, information from the feed and equipment salesmen, literature from the bank, among many others (Fishman, 1988, 24, 41). Between private and public reading, the Amish immerse themselves in the language of the “English.”
The Amish are not ignorant of the fact that their language faces possible extinction. Even in the 1980s, the scribes in *Die Botschaft* wrote articles discussing ways to protect and preserve their language (Fishman email). Ironically, the Amish write about this pressing language issue in the very language that they fear will overtake their own, because *The Botschaft* is an English publication.

**How They Read**

There are two opposing views to literacy: 1) language loss is aided by literacy; and 2) language loss is hindered by literacy. One reason why literacy in a language might hinder use of that language is because a change from the oral to the written is a threat to the language (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, 34). Written and spoken forms are two distinctly different forms of language (Ong, 1982).

As a matter of fact, there have been multiple problems for linguists creating a written form of Pennsylvania German. Even now, in the year 2001, there appears to be no uniform way of writing Pennsylvania German. Some record Pennsylvania German using German phonology and spelling, and those without the German background record the language using American English phonology and spelling. Haag (1982) wrote *Pennsylvania German Reader and Grammar*, designed to teach Pennsylvania German as a foreign language. In it, he strictly used the German sound system to record the Pennsylvania German language. This is, by far, the best system for capturing the sounds of Pennsylvania German, a German derivative language, as opposed to basing the transcription on English, a language that does not even have all of the sounds necessary to reproduce Pennsylvania German words. Haag argues that the German system is "purer," and that English has too many optional pronunciations for the same set of vowels, depending on the English word.
As one can well imagine, this is a hindrance to the written language. How can a Pennsylvania German read and use a system that is not based on the language system she or he is speaking? In Kopp’s study, he cites one example of a nonsectarian woman (in the nonsectarian communities, Pennsylvania German is facing language death) who can read and write Pennsylvania German with ease. She is the youngest one who can do so (she’s 60 years old). For the most part, nonsectarians cannot read or write the language, but only because they are never taught to do so. The only written communication stressed in the lives of the sectarians is in English. Virtually, Pennsylvania German literacy does not exist.
VII.  Pennsylvania German in Lancaster and Beyond:
The Demise of the Language

Sectarian Vs Nonsectarian

Kopp (1999) writes of Pennsylvania German, "Although the sectarian Pennsylvania Germans' lifestyle may be fascinating, they are of relatively lesser interest in sociolinguistic terms. Their stable diglossia prevents extraordinary linguistic changes" (13). Huffines (1997) pronounces, "The Amish, in spite of the communal cohesiveness of their religious discipline, fare no better in maintaining their minority languages in the American context than do other immigrant groups" (53). How can these two researchers have such diametrically opposed views of Pennsylvania German?

These two agree that the language of the nonsectarians, while it may be in danger of extinction, is showing little to no influence from the pressures of English. Kopp's study (1999) proves that the nonsectarian's phonology is still the most heavily marked (with a "German" accent), yet he acknowledges the possible loss of this language in the future, "Among the nonsectarians, Pennsylvania German does not serve any unique function. The bilinguisism still present among the older speakers is unstable" (276-77). Many of the nonsectarians in his study did not have a good grasp of Pennsylvania German. Of his 27 nonsectarian informants, 16 have a "good command" or are native speakers of Pennsylvania German, 11 do not or only have a "fair command" of this language (47-53). Kopp explains, "The nonsectarian group is currently undergoing dramatic change, which will eventually culminate in language death," although the phonology is relatively unchanged (13). Pennsylvania German is rapidly dying among those under the age of 50, even though the English of the nonsectarians bears the heaviest accent. Huffines (1986) supports Kopp's statement that, through nonsectarian
Pennsylvania German is dying, it shows little influence from the English language. She mentions, “As Pennsylvania German dies in the nonsectarian community, the language shows little evidence of a structural encroachment of English” (15).

Even though the nonsectarian Pennsylvania German is dying, it remains closer to the original Pennsylvania German than does the sectarians’ language. One example of the difference in usage is the *am* plus verb construction. The nonsectarians continue to pronounce the *am* as “the full vowel [a] and the bilabial nasal consonant [m]” (Huffines, 1986, 12). The sectarians, however, have become lax in their pronunciation, and have changed the [a] to a schwa sound 50% of the time as well as producing “an alveolar nasal [n] for the final consonant” (Huffines, 1986, 13). This is, physically, an easier pronunciation that the sectarians use as well as a pronunciation closer to English.

Focusing on Pennsylvania German of the sectarians who were forced to migrate to other parts of North America, it can be said with some certainty that these groups are facing language death. Already, there have been multiple changes, ranging from the loss of the subjunctive mood to the loss of the dative case, in sectarian groups scattered across the continent. Burridge (1997) focuses on an Amish group in Ontario, Canada, whose ultimate “shift to English is a certainty” (8). This group has split their modal verbs a number of different ways, forming a “new fully-fledged lexical form,” and the subjunctive mood is in a state of rapid demise (Burridge, 1997, 7, 10). Dorian (1997) quotes Van Ness’ study of Ohio Amish who are suffering the loss of their dative case (39). Van Ness (1992) documents phonology changes in a West Virginia community as well as “Assimilatory processes [that] have created changes, although indirectly, in the PP [past participle] for the so-called Plain PG speech communities, the Old Order Amish and the Old Order Mennonites” (77).
Bilingualism Revisited

It is only logical that sectarians who have moved away from the main group of Amish will somehow alter the language they use, exemplified by Burridge’s aforementioned study of some Amish in Ontario. American and British English are also excellent examples of this phenomenon, transforming into two separate languages beginning in the late 1500s. However, sectarian groups who have migrated to other areas in search of farmland display a trend of speaking a language that is becoming increasingly more similar to English. Burridge documents this trend, and Van Ness reports use of bilingual Bibles among some Amish in West Virginia.

Even the sectarians who have stayed in Lancaster County in the original settlements are undergoing language change. Kraybill (1989) observes, “When talking among themselves, the Amish sometimes mix English words with the dialect, especially when discussing technical issues” (47). English appears more often in their speech as the years go by, more so since the 1900s; in 100 years those knowledgeable on the subject of Pennsylvania German went from saying that Pennsylvania German will never disappear to some linguists predicting its demise. Such a rapid decline in the purity of Pennsylvania German in the last 100 years leads me to surmise that another 100 years will see the death of this language.

The Battle among the Linguists

Enninger and Wandt (1982) believe that Pennsylvania German has the distinct possibility of continuing its existence. They argue, "Structural change is a characteristic of all living languages. In those cases in which two languages form the varieties of the speech repertoire of a sizeable group of bilingual speakers, diffusion and convergence appear to be more important for the explanation of language change than the continuous
divergence of the ancestral structure of the varieties" (140). However, if the sectarians are already using a sizeable English vocabulary in their Pennsylvania German, and if the structure of their language is changing to parallel English (as noted below), and if no new immigrants are available to infuse the language with the vitality of a native-speaker, then Pennsylvania German is doomed to die.

Huffines (1986), unlike most other linguists, firmly believes that the sectarians will eventually lose their language, just as almost all other immigrant groups who immigrated to the United States have lost their native languages. She makes the general statement:

Language death is the almost inevitable outcome for immigrant and minority languages in the United States. Without the support of the continued immigration from a linguistic homeland, the number of speakers gradually declines; eventually no social context remains in which it is appropriate to speak the immigrant language. Pennsylvania German, which has enjoyed a long history in the United States, is also rapidly declining as are other varieties of American German.

Especially noteworthy is Huffines' statement about the lack of immigrants to bolster the language. The Amish settled themselves by the mid-1800s, and since then, they've created their own communities from those who already live in the United States. The language that they have is theirs to own in any way they want because they have no "new language blood" being infused with Pennsylvania German. When they are at a loss for a German term that may or may not exist in the original German, they borrow English words. There are no longer any "master" speakers of the German language, and, as a result, Pennsylvania German has been free to grow closer to English, its language cousin.

Huffines (1986) uses as her evidence the fact that Pennsylvania German among the sectarians parallels the English language more and more as time goes on; language erosion among the sectarians has been attributed to language contact with English. Some
examples Huffines (1986) gives of the alterations of Pennsylvania German to mimic the English language have been documented as: “increased formation of plurals in -s; case merger,” the merger of dative and accusative cases, the loss of “inflectional complexity,” the use of haben instead of sein (for verbs which normally need the sein), “the extension of main clause word order to subordinate clauses, the increased use of tun as an auxiliary, and the increased use of a progressive construction formed by sein and am plus an infinitive” (2). Van Ness (1992) also cites Huffines 1989 article, which states that, at the morphological and syntactic levels, there are simplifications that are routinely being made. Besides these simplifications, Van Ness (1992) mentions her 1990 that documents a switch to a “universal -e ending” for adjectives as well as the common usage of es (/ə s/) for the word “it” in noun and pronoun agreement. All of these examples of grammar changes bring Pennsylvania German closer to English than it had previously been.

A Religious Identity

But does loss of language point to the loss of identity? Edwards (1985) states, “since language identity essentially rests upon the continuation of boundaries which, in turn, depend upon a maintained sense of groupness, the erosion of an original language—at least in its ordinary, communicative aspects—does not inevitably mean the erosion of identity itself” (48). Pennsylvania German displays signs of converging closer and closer to English, but, according to Edwards’ statement, as long as the sectarians feel themselves to be a group and can remain separated from mainstream American society, then they will retain their identity. However, the resolution of their religion and language will be an interesting one to watch, since the Amish believe that their religion and English do not mix. If Pennsylvania German reaches this point in the future, which I
believe it will, with Pennsylvania German only being used for liturgical purposes, then this language may serve the same purpose as Hebrew does for the Jews or Latin did for the Catholics. Clinging to a language for religious reasons allows it to survive longer, but not indefinitely. Latin has already vanished from the Catholic Mass, although the synagogues are doing a good job of retaining Hebrew. If, in fact, the sectarians retain their language because of religious reasons, then there are some researchers who believe that they would not be preserving Pennsylvania German, but, rather, Amish High German (Enninger and Wandt, 1982, 128). Enninger and Wandt (1982) classify the languages in the Old Order Amish’ lives as American English, Pennsylvania German, and Amish High German, a remarkable list because they went a step further to subdivide Pennsylvania German into two distinctive languages Therefore, if Enninger and Wandt categorized correctly, this leads me to believe that Amish High German would persevere, just like Hebrew and Latin did for liturgical purposes.

Languages invariably die. Some linguists believe in the death of languages, while others believe in the murder of languages (Edwards, 1985, 51). When Pennsylvania German disappears, the question will be: Did Pennsylvania German die, or did English murder it? Edwards (1985) cites an example from Corkery’s 1968 examination of Irish: Corkery believed that Irish was “killed by those wishing to destroy the nation” (51). I do not believe that anyone wants to destroy the Amish culture, but I do believe that the Amish culture will suffer irreparably if the language disappears.
Economics plays a huge factor in both nationalism and language. Many scholars have believed that “large-scale economic transitions” have led to the “increased integrative capacities” of nations, while some argue that economic advances have divided larger nations into multination states (J. Fishman, 1972, 13). I, however, believe that economics tend to energize the entire country with its ‘make it or break it’ attitude. America is bound by posterity, as Russia is bound by economic disparity.

Economics has a heavy hand in the lifestyle of the sectarians. The sectarians became their own entity in North America through their prosperous farming enterprises; their independence allowed both them and their languages to stay intact. Now, however, with the need to explore new enterprises due to the lack of land, the Amish are becoming less autonomous. It is not a pure coincidence that, when the Amish began to have more economic contact with the English world, their language began to fall apart.

The Pennsylvania Germans were relatively self-sufficient from the time of their arrival. As they practice a more technologically primitive existence, they can afford to be self-sufficient. They have windmills to produce a source of power, wells; they do not rely on electricity, sewage, water, heat, or any modern conveniences. As a result, they could keep to themselves as much as they wanted.

But ... when did all of this change? When did the Amish begin trading with their neighbors? When did it become permissible to sell their quilts, furniture, milk, cheeses, and shoofly pies? At this point the Pennsylvania German became less economically independent and began to look outward. In the early 1980s, the Pennsylvania Germans
began to use their craftsmanship to open a new world designed to aid in the support of their culture.

Greene and Whaley (1998) write that two variables that strongly contribute to one's language life are "the historical relationship between the speakers and larger culture or cultures which engulf them," and "most directly the attitudes of the majority culture toward the speakers" (37). This is a common-sense view, but the situation can be summed up by looking at Dorian's wording: She writes of another culture "engulfing" the smaller. It certainly cannot be easy for a language to sustain life among something not of its own.

The Need for Farmland

The Amish have always farmed the land. One Amish leader once stated, "Agriculture is a religious tenet, a branch of Christian duty" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 25). God ordered Adam to till the land, and the Amish, who live according to the Bible, believe that God has mandated them to this life as well (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 25). With a growing population, cropland has become scarce in Lancaster County. Land that previously sold for $300-400 per acre in the 1940s sold for $4,500 in the 1980s (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995). The Amish, in earlier years, bought most of the farmland in Lancaster County. Between 1920 and 1940, the Amish bought every farm that was put on auction with the exception of one, "which was sold on a Sunday" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995). The burgeoning Amish population coupled with the need farmland, the stress climaxed in the 1960s when 80 Amish couples needed farms, but only 10 were put on the open market (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 29). The race for land began with more land being used for modern housing developments and the declining attrition and mortality rate of
the Amish. The Amish only had seven solutions to their economic crisis, according to Kraybill and Nolt (1995):

1. Migration
2. Subdivision of farms
3. Purchase of new farmland
4. Non-Amish employment
5. Use of artificial birth control
6. Higher education
7. Microenterprises

The Old Order Amish have typically given their farms to the youngest son in the family, while the father helped his older sons procure their own farmland. When land became a scarcity, there were several solutions to the problem. The first was the purchase of land, and the second was to split the family farms into smaller farms, but, for all intents and purposes, the farms could only be split once to still be a viable farm (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 26). Even if one could purchase/inherit a farm, the cost of equipment needed to compete with commercial farmers was astronomical.

Migration

Migration was another option that many families took, but not enough to seriously help the land problem. Kentucky and Indiana were prime choices for land in the late 1980s to early 1990s, but few Amish were willing to move their families so far away. One Amish mother explained, "If all of our friends moved away, I would want to move, too, but not enough leave to make me want to pack up" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 32). Migration seemed to be an ineffectual in combating the necessity for land. Still, because of this migration, there are weighty settlements of Amish in Ohio, West Virginia, Ontario, and in many more states/providences, and several of these groups will be discussed later in this study.
Non-Amish Employment

Many farmers decided to work off the land as their fourth option, taking positions in factories. This "lunch pail threat" proved to be one of the greatest scares for the Amish community. One Amish bishop warned, "Past experiences have proven that it is not best for the Amish people to leave the farm. If they get away from the farm they soon get away from the church, at least after the first generation" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 30). Not only were the factories a temptation for the Amish men, they were also depriving the families of the father figures. Amish mothers were forced to become a single-parent figure, raising the children alone. "The factory made the father into an isolated breadwinner and the mother into a solitary housewife and demeaned the economic contribution of children and grandparents" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 30). No more were the Amish operating as a family, but, rather, as individual units. This serious threat to the Amish was quickly righted in the mid-seventies, when many of the factories in which the Amish worked closed down. The Amish were out of their jobs, and some even "resorted to collecting unemployment" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 31). The church helped support those laid off, and the factories were never a serious lore for the Amish again.

The Process of Setting Up Shop

Because higher education (past 8th grade) and birth control are frowned upon by the Amish church, these were not popular avenues of reprieve for the Amish. Instead, in the late 1970s, many Amish began setting up their own shops, and their micro-enterprises skyrocketed. Micro-enterprises were not new to the Amish. After the Depression, when cars became widespread, the Amish established their own shops aimed at the horse and buggy trade and maintenance, because they still had a need for these vehicles and
animals, even though the rest of the world did not. They shoed their own horses and built their own carriages and buggies.

The second phase, as Kraybill and Nolt (1995) report, began when the Amish created shops to repair the already-existing carriages and buggies of the Amish as well as repairing, modifying, and creating equipment to be used on the Amish farms (35).

The third phase of the Amish micro-enterprises moved the Amish outside the realm of segregated enterprises ("those that are tightly entwined in the ethnic community") and into the realm of integrated enterprises (ones where Amish serve the broader community) (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 36). The Amish finally began dealing with the English public in the early 1980s (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995). In Lancaster County, the Amish are responsible for over 300 enterprises, 60% of which were established in the 1980s and 31% of which were founded after 1995 (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 43). Kraybill and Nolt (1995) quote one Amish entrepreneur as explaining, “You would flip out if you knew how much product is being pumped out of all these little shops” (43). Indeed, the Amishman did not lie. Note the dollar amounts in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Sales</th>
<th>Percentage of Enterprises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $10,000</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $499,999</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000 - $1,000,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $1,000,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Enterprise Profile (N = 118)

Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 51

The Amish church leaders grew wary of “the lunch pail” threat because it took their men away from the homes and exposed them to the English world. The Amish men
lost their places on the farms and could not pass on that lifestyle to their children. One bishop said, "If they [Amish factory workers] get away from the farm they soon get away from the church, at least after the first generation" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 30).

Another bishop continued along these lines, saying that if the first generation grows away from the land, "their sons won't want to farm" (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995, 30). Kraybill and Nolt (1995) conclude Chapter 1, "The Cultural Context," with: "Signs of modernity—growing individualism, control, efficiency, rationality, mobility, and occupational specialization—are all clearly more and more in evidence [in the lives of the Amish]. The rise of microenterprises is, in short, transforming the traditional culture of Amish society in new and more modern directions" (19). Micro-enterprises are quickly taking the Amish in the direction of more modern and English ways.

Amish Micro-Enterprises

Beginning micro-enterprises poses the exact threats of shifting away from the farming lives the Amish have always lived. Besides this threat, micro-enterprises put the Amish in constant contact with the English. For so long, the Amish have been on their own, independent of the modern world around them. They kept their language to themselves for over 300 years because they interact with only themselves, essentially. Now, without the means to stay totally autonomous, they are being forced out into the English world. For example, in the past, Amish farmers would trade with the mainstream farmers in order to sell their merchandise; although, on their own farms, the majority of their time would/should be spent with their Amish family, speaking Pennsylvania German. However, since the 1980s, the Amish have found it necessary to put up stores for those families who cannot obtain farms. Although the Amish shopkeepers still speak Amish among themselves, they come into contact more often with the English than if
they worked on an Amish farm. (Fishman, email). Their world becomes a little more
dependent on the English than before. Granted, in the home they would still speak
Pennsylvania German, but the Amish are exposing themselves to the newest, trendiest,
most modern English by communicating with their English customers.

The Amish have more English contact, and that makes them better speakers of the
English language, as well as more susceptible to change in theirs. I believe that, with the
culture becoming more dependent on the English, their Pennsylvania German would kind
of follow what their lifestyle is doing. Enninger and Wandt (1982) confirm this belief
with his categorization of languages. All cultures use certain languages in certain
instances, the sectarianists being no different.

As long as a society stipulates that certain roles need to be played in certain
varieties, these varieties remain functional in certain domains, and they remain a
component of the linguistic repertoire. However, this does not imply that such a
variety remains of necessity structurally stable. On the contrary, functional
stability of a variety may be bought at the price of structural change of the old
instrument as it is flexibly adjusted to novel communicative needs. Pennsylvania
German among the Old Order Amish . . . appears to be a case in point.

Economics have always been a direct link to language extinction, or, as Enninger and
Wandt (1982) term it, “novel communicative needs,” and it is no different in the case of
the Amish. Micro-enterprises will contribute greatly to the erosion of their language.

Hostetler (1971) quotes Joseph Stoll, an Amishman, on his view of language and
its ties to the world:

As Old Order Amish, we associate German with church services and our
home life—the religious and deeply moral part of our lives. German in a sense
represents all that we have for centuries been trying to hold—our heritage as a
nonconformed people, pilgrims in an alien land. It represents the old, the tried,
and proven, the sacred way.

The English language, by contrast, we associate with the business world,
society, and worldliness. English in a sense represents everything outside our
church and community, the forces that have become dangerous because they
make inroads into our churches and lure people from the faith. Therefore, the
English language, though acknowledged all right in its place, becomes suspect when associated with the lure of the world (Blackboard Bulletin, May 1969: 208).

Even the Amish realize the dangers that they’ve been placed in: They’ve had to make the choice to survive economically, in order to allow themselves to remain independent from the English world or to survive in the realm of language. Given the incongruity of these two choices, one part of their lives was doomed to suffer, and language is what the sectarians chose.
IX. Conclusion

Language extinction looms over us as a major threat in the 21st century. With the move toward globalization, the natural tendency seems to be to move to a common communicative tool, and, for the time being, that language is English. As English takes over more and more languages, we need to become evermore aware of the smaller languages that are being stepped on as English traverses across the globe. From the beginning of time, languages, cultures, and even people have become extinct because they simply did not have the technology to survive. Such is the case that we are facing today; however, it is our moral obligation to attempt to preserve these languages and cultures for the very diversity they provide.

As such, we must help the neighbors in our own backyard: The sectarians scattered across North America are in peril of losing their language, a language that intertwines their culture, religion, and way of life, and keeps their nationality tied to Amish-ness instead of American-ness. For the first 200 years after the sectarians' migration, they were able to maintain their language by remaining an autonomous group, one that did not mix with the larger culture. Because the sectarians understood the need to have mastery of the language of the dominant culture, they gave their children this language in the schools. Even though English was the sectarians' second language, Pennsylvania German remained their mother tongue, and thus ensuring the survival of this language so far.

However, since the early 1900s, the sectarians have found that their large numbers, while good for their religion, were not so good for their survival. Low attrition and mortality rates, combined with the need for many children, necessary for the operation of their large farms, resulted in a lack of farmland for their growing population.
As their numbers grow, the need for an increase in economic stability grows along with
it. The Amish need more land, an impossibility with the increased price of land and
equipment, as well as the scarcity of the land, these sectarians must look for alternate
sources of income.

Micro-enterprises are an easily solution, as the Amish are natural craftsmen.

Selling their crafts put the sectarians in the direct line of the English world. English is
being forced upon the sectarians they spend more time speaking English than in
previous centuries. Pennsylvania German is showing the wear-and-tear it has suffered in
the 20th and 21st century, paralleling English more and more. English words crop into
their language where German words would have been 100 years ago.

Not only is oral Pennsylvania German being invaded by English, but the written
language of Pennsylvania Germans reflects this change as well. Whereas 200 years ago,
the sectarians would have had the majority of their reading material in German, live d in
North America disallowed this luxury. Printing was done mostly in English, although a
few printers tried to duplicate Bibles in Pennsylvania German in the early 1900s, this
never caught on. For the most part, the sectarians read and write solely in English.

Official government forms are in English, as well as the books and newspapers the
Amish read for their professional and personal lives. The sectarians are definitely
bilingual, but this bilingualism is slowly giving way to monolingualism in English, in
some instances, as proven by Van Ness, Kopp, and Huffines. The sectarians’ only hope
of saving Pennsylvania German is to retain it for liturgical purposes, although some
smaller communities are even neglecting to do this.

The future of the sectarians in North America is a bleak one. Because the
sectarians are not an evangelical people, they have no new blood entering their
The Death of Pennsylvania German

community, either from North Americans or from immigrants from Germany. The only way to save this language is for more Germans to come into the communities, and thus force the language's grammar and vocabulary back to what it once was. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania German is quickly becoming extinct. English, the powerful opponent, has claimed yet one more language.
X. References


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