

13 *Pennsylvania German*

Silke Van Ness

13.1 Introduction

Pennsylvania German is the language spoken today by the modern descendants of German colonists who arrived in Pennsylvania before the Revolutionary War of 1776. Estimates put the number of native speakers between two- and three-hundred thousand distributed over at least twenty American states, parts of Central and South America, and southern Ontario, Canada.

Although the first Germans began to arrive in Pennsylvania in 1683, mass immigration did not take place until the 1720s. From the first settlement at Germantown, east of Philadelphia, the colonists spread into southeastern Pennsylvania, that is, the counties of Lancaster, Lehigh, Bucks, Berks and others. From the middle of the eighteenth century on, a southward expansion into parts of Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia took place, along with continuing migration into western Pennsylvania, the Mohawk Valley of New York, and southern Ontario, Canada. Finally, the nineteenth century carried German colonists westward into Ohio, Indiana, and beyond into many regions of the Americas. At the turn of this century, some 750,000 persons used Pennsylvania German in their daily life: 600,000 of them lived in the state of Pennsylvania.

The early German immigrants belonged to the religious sects of the Anabaptists, i.e., Mennonites, Amish, Dunkards, Schwenkfelders and Moravians. The years between 1727 and the American Revolution brought non-sectarian Germans, the Lutherans and Reformed, to Pennsylvania. These 'non-sectarians' surpassed the sectarians numerically and, until recently, constituted the largest segment of the Pennsylvania German speaking population. However, the non-sectarians will have completed the shift to English monolingualism by the early twenty-first century, and it is the ultra-conservative Anabaptist religious sects, the Old Order Amish and the Old Order Mennonites, who will maintain the Pennsylvania German language. With an above-average birth rate, the sectarian groups now greatly outnumber the non-sectarians (e.g.

the Old Order Amish population increased from 3,700 individuals in 1890 to 85,783 in 1979). The stable bilingualism in these communities is linked to the rigid enforcement of separate domains for language use – Pennsylvania German for in-group social interactions, most importantly in all religious functions; English with the outside world. Sermons are conducted in Pennsylvania German, with an archaic variety of Standard German, sometimes referred to as ‘Amish High German’, reserved for the reading of Bible passages and the singing of hymns. Although it has been claimed that ultra-conservative sectarians are trilingual, this is an overstatement; the ‘Amish High German’ is clearly restricted to orally recited passages from the Bible or prayerbook and is never used as a means of communication.

In spite of a large body of literary works ranging from comedy to prose, Pennsylvania German, as a written medium, never enjoyed wide currency. The problems created by the lack of uniform spelling conventions in combination with the fact that the language never functioned as the medium of instruction in the schools, restricted its use to a primarily oral tradition. A quasi writing system has been established for teaching grammars, where a Standard German orthography was merged with a Pennsylvania German sound system. Even though there are few native speakers who actually can read any form of Pennsylvania German, whether written in an English- or Standard German based orthography, some regional newspaper columns do attempt to keep a written form of the dialect alive. For the bilingual Anabaptist groups, Pennsylvania German is exclusively a spoken idiom. Some rudimentary instruction in Standard German is provided to aid in the studies of the Scriptures, but for many younger persons the English page of their bilingual Bible is what is really read. While some parts of the Bible have been available in the dialect, the translation of the entire New Testament into Pennsylvania German was completed by the Wycliffe Institute in 1993.

Pennsylvania German derives essentially from Middle High German and Early New High German dialects of the Palatinate, though there were also significant numbers of settlers from Switzerland, Württemberg, Alsace, Westphalia and Hesse. Due to a temporary halt in immigration in 1775, the processes of dialect mixture and accommodation allowed a relatively homogeneous dialect to crystallize, one that is distinct from other German dialects.

A synchronic analysis of Pennsylvania German must take into account the diverging developments of two primary groups of speakers: the orthodox Anabaptist sects (Old Order Amish, Old Order Mennonites, also referred to as ‘plain’ speakers because of their conservative dress and lifestyle), who keep themselves socially segregated from their surrounding American society, and the worldly non-sectarians, who are socially well integrated. This dichotomous situation reflects the present status of the language. On the one hand, the linguistically conservative language of the historically more numerous group, the non-sectarians, is facing extinction. There are no native

Pennsylvania German speakers under the age of fifty, yet, their language variety has traditionally formed the basis for the description of Pennsylvania German. On the other hand, the language of the sectarians, now the dynamic and numerically superior variety, with native speakers of all ages, is in the process of undergoing several linguistic changes. For these groups, the Pennsylvania German language provides the crucial barrier to assimilation and thus forms the nucleus of their unique communities, with religious conservatism as a watershed for language maintenance. An accurate description of the language must take this (socio-)linguistic reality into account. It is the language of the sectarian speakers that will define the linguistic parameters of Pennsylvania German in the future.

The subsequent sections describe a Generalized Pennsylvania German, in part following the descriptive tradition established by earlier scholars and based on the language of the non-sectarians. However, recent observations on dialect variations attributable to the rapidly changing Pennsylvania German of the sectarians will be added, in order to provide a balanced linguistic overview of Pennsylvania German.

13.2 Phonology

Vowels

Historically, Pennsylvania German (PG) has been considered to have an opposition between long and short vowels; however, this contrast appears to be more accurately described as one of quality rather than quantity. Therefore, the distinction will be symbolized phonemically as a tense-lax contrast. The phonology follows primarily the phonemic description that has become traditional in Pennsylvania German studies, but incorporates minor aspects of generative phonology in cases where the traditional approach fails to account successfully for details of Pennsylvania German phonology.

With the exception of /ə/, the reduced lax central vowel, all vowels can receive primary or secondary stress. A chart of vowels is displayed in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1 Basic vowel system of Pennsylvania German

i		u	
ɪ		ʊ	
e		o	
ɛ	(ə)	ɔ	
(æ)	a	(ɑ)	

Diphthongs: ai, au, oi

Note: /æ/ is a borrowed phoneme from English; /ɑ/ frequently is indistinguishable from /a/ and even /ɔ/; schwa is detailed in the text.

The Middle High German high and mid vowels are regularly lowered to /a/ in the environment of a following /r/, as in, e.g. /marɪçə/ 'morning' < MHG *morgen*, /barɪç 'mountain' < MHG *berc*. Pennsylvania German has no rounded front vowels; thus PG /i/ < MHG /y/ in an open syllable, e.g. /dir/ 'door' and PG /ɪ/ < MHG /y/ in a closed syllable, e.g. /ftɪç/ 'piece'. The same process affected the Middle High German rounded mid front vowel /ø/ in open and closed syllables where Pennsylvania German has /e/ and /ɛ/ respectively (e.g. /el/ 'oil' and /kɛnd/ 'could').

The low front vowel /æ/ is theoretically a phoneme adopted from English and occurs only in English loans: e.g. /kæʃ/ 'cash', /hæwət/ 'dress/habit'; however, [æ] may also function as an allophone of /ɛ/ or /a/ before /r/, giving, e.g. /barɪç/ ~ /bærɪç/ ~ /berɪç/ 'mountain'. Another phonetic variant of /a/ is the low back, rounded vowel [ɔ] in the environment before nasals, velars and /l/; e.g. /ʃaŋç/ ~ /ʃɔŋç/ 'closet', /man/ ~ /mɔn/ 'man', /ʃtal/ ~ /ʃtɔl/ 'stall/stable'. For many speakers [a] (/kats/ 'cat') and [ɔ] (/kɔbɔxə/ 'cup') may even occur. Heavy nasalization of vowels before nasals, which are then lost, a common feature of continental Palatine and Swabian dialects, is becoming a relic feature associated with older speakers of Pennsylvania German, e.g. /tso/ ~ /tsõ/ 'tooth', /hɪhɔgə/ ~ /hĩhɔgə/ 'sit down'.

The phonemic status of schwa /ə/ is left unanswered. Schwa has derived from three different sources: (1) as an allophone of any Middle High German vowel in an unstressed position, e.g. PG /ʃanʃtə/ 'chimney' /besəm/ 'broom'; (2) in English loans, as in, e.g. PG /tʃægət/ 'vest' (from English 'jacket') /əbaut/ 'about'; (3) as an epenthetic vowel inserted between liquids and following labials or velars, giving, e.g. PG /darəm/ 'intestine' /marəçə/ 'morning' /ʃeləm/ 'rogue'. In modern Pennsylvania German it may occur as an unstressed positional variant of /e/ and at times /ə/ is introduced in particular environments mentioned above.

Pennsylvania German is surprisingly uniform across geographical regions, in spite of the fact that it developed out of a blend of different German dialects. This, however, does not imply homogeneous speech communities; in fact, much variation exists. At one level, there is variation in terms of region and sectarian vs non-sectarian features within Pennsylvania; at another level, there is regional variation outside of Pennsylvania. In the latter case, viable regional variants are of only one social variety, namely sectarian. The following examples illustrate the regional variations present in the vowel system. For example: /dir/ – /dɛr/ 'door', /fɔgəl/ – /fɔçgəl/ 'bird', /karɪx/ – /kɛrɪx/ 'church'; some Canadian Mennonite groups say /wɔnə/ 'to live' versus the more common /wunə/ for other regions; a nearly extinct non-sectarian West Virginia community features the diphthong /ai/ in such words as, e.g. /flaɪf/ 'meat', /hais/ 'hot' versus /fleɪf/ and /hes/ for most other non-sectarian and sectarian areas.

Table 13.2 Consonant phonemes of Pennsylvania German

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental-alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p b		t d			k g	
Fricatives		f	s	ʃ		x	h
Affricates			ts	tʃ			
Nasals	m		n			ŋ	
Laterals			l r				
Semivowels	w				j		

Consonants

While Table 13.2 represents all of the consonant phonemes of Pennsylvania German, only those sounds that deviate from Standard German will be discussed.

The stop consonants have traditionally been treated as two sets, a series of voiceless lenis, represented as /p̥, t̥, k̥/, and another series of voiceless stops /p, t, k/, restricted in their occurrence to initial position preceding stressed vowels. Furthermore, /t/ in this environment is considered essentially a borrowed phoneme from English, since a Standard German /t/ corresponds to /d/ in Pennsylvania German (e.g. PG /dir/, StGer. *Tür* 'door'). There are exceptions of course, and the lenis/fortis opposition is obscured in those contexts where lenis sounds undergo voice assimilation in consonant clusters or occur finally in stressed contexts (cf. /ʃtori/ 'story' versus the traditional phonetic representation [ʃdori]).

In Standard German the voiceless fricative /ʃ/ may precede /t/ and /p/ only in morpheme-initial position, while Pennsylvania German extends the environment to include medial- and word-final positions, as in, e.g. /barʃt/ 'brush', /senʃt/ 'do you see', /fɛnʃtər/ 'window'.

Intervocalic lenition of /b/ and /g/ to [w] and [ɣ] respectively is a regular feature of Pennsylvania German, e.g. /wagə/ [wɑɣə] 'wagon', /habə/ [hawə] 'to have'. For younger sectarian speakers, underlying medial /g/ has two variants – [ɣ] before front vowels and [w] before back vowels, as in /weɣə/ 'roads', /ɑwə/ 'eyes'. Phonemic overlap occurs where the [w] medial allophone of /g/ coincides with the variant of /b/, giving, e.g. /glɑgə/ [glawə] 'to complain' versus /glabə/ [glawə] 'to believe', thus causing homophony.

The phoneme /w/ is a voiced bilabial sound which for some speakers exhibits friction, [β], and for others, especially before rounded back vowels, is an approximant with the glide quality of the English labiovelar [w]. The voiceless fricatives /f/, /s/, and /ʃ/ occur in all environments and lack contrastive voiced counterparts.

Theoretically there are two principal affricates, i.e., /ts/ /tswə/ 'two' and

/tʃ/, the latter one of rare occurrence, e.g. /rɛtʃə/ 'to gossip', with the voiced /dʒ/ occurring in loans from English, e.g. /dʒɛnərəʃən/ 'generation'. In fact, phonetically only the voiceless variant exists, since English /dʒ/ is normally realized as [tʃ].

Influence from English, where it does occur, is limited to changes in phonetic quality. The liquids /l/ and /r/ show most strikingly English contact-induced variants. Velarized allophones of /l/ and retroflexed /r/ exist in variation with the traditional alveolar segments. As in Standard German, the /r/ phoneme of PG has an elaborate set of allophones, which may vary among speakers, from region to region, and from community to community. Generally, a pre-vocalic /r/ is pronounced as an alveolar trill, while in pre-consonantal position, /r/ may be weakly articulated or lost, e.g. /warʃt/ or /waʃt/ 'sausage'. Since Pennsylvania German has historically developed an epenthetic vowel between /r/ and a following labial or velar, this pre-consonantal /r/ is limited to occurrence before coronal sounds. In unstressed final position, the /r/ completely disappears and is realized as a central lax vowel [ɐ] PG /kɪnɐ/ 'children', represented traditionally in Pennsylvania German as schwa /ə/ plus /r/, i.e. /kɪnər/. Furthermore, when /r/ occurs after a short /a/ and before a dental it is realized as zero, e.g. /dat/ 'there' from MHG 'dort', /haf/ 'buck' from MHG *Hirsch* (see above for lowering of high and mid vowels to /a/).

13.3 Morphology

Pennsylvania German is a language without a standardized orthography. Written forms have been approximated by recourse to both English, and, more commonly, Standard German spelling systems. Neither approach is very satisfactory. To facilitate interpretation of the data, examples in the following sections will be cited in a broad phonetic transcription representing surface manifestations. The reader is encouraged to check the Phonology section for details.

Nominal Morphology

While Pennsylvania German basically maintains a two-case system (common and dative) for nouns among non-sectarian speakers and sectarians over the age of 60, convergence with English has resulted in the shift to a single, common case system of nominal inflection in sectarian Pennsylvania German. Three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter), and two numbers (singular and plural) have been retained by both groups. Nominal morphology is discussed in conjunction with the definite and indefinite article. Table 13.3 illustrates the traditional paradigm of noun declension.

Masculine, feminine and neuter genders are overtly realized in the three determiners, *dər*, *di* and *əs*. As in Standard German, animate objects are mostly assigned a natural gender, but gender is semantically unpredictable for

Table 13.3 Determiners and nouns

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	m.	f.	n.	All genders
Common def.	dər man 'the man'	di frə 'the woman'	əs kɪnd 'the child'	di kɪnər 'the children'
indef.	ən man 'a man'	ən frə 'a woman'	ən kɪnd 'a child'	
Dative def.	əm man	dər frə	əm kɪnd	də kɪnər
indef.	mə man	rə frə	mə kɪnd	

inanimate nouns. Barring a few exceptions, for example *dər butər* 'the butter' (StGer. *die Butter*), *di dan* 'the thorn' (StGer. *der Dorn*), gender conforms in most instances to the grammatical gender of Standard German. When nouns are borrowed from English, they need to be assigned gender in order to fit the morphological structure of Pennsylvania German. When this occurs, gender assignments may be based on: (a) natural gender, e.g. *dər dadi* 'the father', *dər trəmp* 'the tramp', *di mæm* 'the mother'; (b) the gender of the displaced German noun, e.g. *dər hændəl*, PG *dər ftıl* 'the handle'; *di gwıld*, PG *di bed deg* 'the quilt'; *əs pıgdər*, PG *əs bild* 'the picture'; (c) a suffix associated with a specific gender, e.g. StGer. *-ung* (Eng. *-ing*) and *-ie* (Eng. *-y*) for feminine: *di silıŋ* 'the ceiling', *di midıŋ* 'the meeting' *di pərđi* 'the party', *di ftori* 'the story'; and StGer. *-er* suffix for masculine nouns, e.g. *dər kaundər* 'the counter', *dər parlər* 'the parlour'. It should be noted, however, that the assignment of gender to loanwords is by no means a predictable, consistent process, but rather, a general trend which still allows for many variations, e.g. what is *di bugi* 'the buggy' in one county will be *dər bugi* in another county.

Plural formation in Pennsylvania German is less profuse than in Standard German with only four main patterns discernible:

- 1 Zero allomorph: *karəb/karəb* 'basket/baskets' and with occasional stem vowel umlaut *abəl/ebəl* 'apple/apples';
- 2 Suffix *-er*: *həm/həmər* 'shirt/shirts' and with stem vowel umlaut when applicable *haus/haisər* 'house/houses';
- 3 Suffix *-ə*: *kix/kixə* 'kitchen/kitchens';
- 4 Suffix *-s* for some English loans: *ftor/ftors* 'store/stores'.

Although borrowings from English do have the choice of retaining their *-s* allomorph, as, for example in *sıŋk/sıŋks* 'sink/sinks', this option is not always the preferred one. Plurals are frequently forced into one of the above patterns, so that a general trend has emerged:

- 1 Plural morphology for masculine nouns with agentive suffix *-er* have identical singular and plural forms *dər storkipər – di storkipər* ‘the storekeeper/storekeepers’;
- 2 A variety of borrowed nouns alternate between an *-e* or zero plural morph: *di bəl* ‘the bell’, *di bələ – di bəl* ‘the bells’; *di gaund* ‘the (woman’s) dress’, *di gaund* ‘the dresses’ or *dər frag* ‘the woman’s dress’ *di fragə* ‘the dresses’; *di egspens* ‘the expense’, *di egspensə* ‘the expenses’.

At times, plurality is marked by vowel mutation *dər fɔp – di fɛp* ‘the shop – the shops’.

A large number of diminutive forms, attributable to the varied linguistic background of the German colonists have been retained in Pennsylvania German speech communities. They are indicative of early settlement patterns along dialect/family lines. Regional Pennsylvania examples are: singular *-xə*, plural *-xər* and the compound suffixes *-əlxə*, *-lixə*, plural *-əlxər*, *-lixər* are prevalent in more northern and eastern parts, with singular *-li*, plural *-lm* in more southern and western sections of the state. Lancaster county shows greatest uniformity with singular *-(ə)li*, plural *(ə)lm* diminutives indicative of Alemannic remnants, e.g. *bəbli – bəblm* ‘baby – babies’; *saili/würsli – sailm/würs(ə)lm* ‘young pig – young pigs’.

The definite and indefinite article are unaccented forms which frequently cliticize and appear as contractions, e.g. *ʊnəm dax* ‘under the roof’, *dəmarıyə* ‘in the morning’. The accented counterparts of the definite articles are the demonstratives *dər, di, des* ‘this’ and *sələr* ‘that’. Constructions using a demonstrative are often supported by the adverb *do* ‘here’ as an emphatic, e.g. *dəs do medəl* ‘this (here) girl’, or, as in the case of *sələr* by *dat* ‘there’, e.g. *səl haus dat is alt* ‘that house (there) is old’. *sələr* declines as shown in Table 13.4.

The case distinctions are carried by the preceding determiners (and/or adjectives). The form of the nominative serves for both the subject and the direct object, e.g. *ar lend mir dər wayə* ‘he lent me the wagon’. For the linguistically conservative non-sectarians, the dative remains the case for the indirect object, e.g. *ix geb əm bu dər wayə* ‘I give the wagon to the boy’. Furthermore, the functional load of the dative includes the formation of the possessive, as in *əm man sai bixər* ‘the man’s books’. In the Pennsylvania

Table 13.4 Demonstrative pronoun *sələr*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural All genders
Common	<i>sələr</i>	<i>səli</i>	<i>səl</i>	<i>səli</i>
Dative	<i>sələm, səm</i>	<i>səlrə</i>	<i>sələm, səm</i>	<i>sələ</i>

German construction, the possessor, in the dative case with a possessive adjective, precedes the (possessed) noun. In fact, this construction has undergone simplification in the speech of the sectarians, where a common case noun is now replacing the dative, e.g. *dər man sai bixər* 'the man's books'. A few relic forms of the old genitive remain in certain compounds and fixed idioms: *kmdskmd* 'grandchild', *owets* 'in the evening'.

In summary, the dative case is becoming a relic associated with non-sectarians or older sectarian speakers. The nominal morphology for the younger speakers continues to syncretize in its convergence toward English so that the common case will function not only as the subjective and objective case, but also as the indirect object, giving, e.g. *ix geb dər bu dər wayə* 'I give the wagon to the boy'.

Adjectives

Adjectives are inflected in one of three ways, depending upon the preceding determiner, the gender and the case of the noun: (a) weak endings are used with adjectives that are preceded by a definite (*dər*, *di*, *əs* 'the') or demonstrative (*dər*, *di*, *dɛs* 'this', *sɛlər* 'that') article; (b) strong declensions are used with adjectives that are not preceded by a determiner; (c) mixed endings occur with adjectives that are preceded by an indefinite article (*ən* 'a') or a possessive adjective (*mai* 'my', *dai* 'your', etc.).

Table 13.5 reflects a traditional inflectional paradigm; however, the preference for unstressed syllables is encouraging a trend to reduce inflections of all adjectives in all genders to a zero or *-ə* morph. The dative case forms are no longer viable in the speech of sectarian speakers. In addition, Pennsylvania German has a morphophonemic *n*-deletion rule which truncates a word-final underlying *-n* in the base form and restores the *-n* before the addition of inflections. We get the following citations: (a) uninflected PG *brau* 'brown' *də hʊnd is brau* 'the dog is brown'; (b) inflected *ən braunər hʊnd* (common case) 'a brown dog' or *ən braunə hʊnd* (dat.). For denominals derived from a source with an underlying *-n*, the same pattern prevails, giving, e.g. *stenix* 'stony' from *ste* 'stone' StGer. *Stein*. The adjectives *negft* 'next' and *letft* 'last' frequently occur without inflectional endings, e.g. *negft mʊndag* 'next Monday', *letft wɔx* 'last week'. Adjectival inflections for loans remain congruent with native Pennsylvania German patterns, for example: common case m. *ən smartər man* 'a smart man' and f. *di madixə stros* 'the muddy street'; dat. pl. *uf plenə stil* 'on plain chairs'.

The comparative of adjectives is regularly formed with an *-ər* suffix, e.g. *dif* 'deep', *difər* 'deeper' and the superlative with an *-ft* suffix, e.g. *difft* 'deepest'. As in Standard German, some adjectives have suppletive forms, e.g. *fil* 'much', *me* (*menər*) 'more', *menft* 'most'. The comparative particles are *wi* 'as', *as* 'than', or *as wi*. A cumulative comparative may be formed by using either *as* or *as wi*, e.g. *si hat menər kukis as (as wi) irə fweftər* 'she has more cookies than her sister'. To indicate a progressive change where

Table 13.5 Adjective inflections

	<i>Singular</i> Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	<i>Plural</i> All genders
Weak inflections				
Common	ald 'old'	ald 'old'	ald 'old'	aldə 'old'
Dative	aldə	aldə	aldə	aldə
Strong inflections				
Common	aldər	aldi	ald	aldə
Dative	aldəm	aldər	aldəm	aldə
Mixed inflections				
Common	aldər	aldi	ald(əs)	aldə
Dative	aldə	aldə	aldə	aldə

Standard German uses *immer* 'always', Pennsylvania German employs an *als* + comparative construction, e.g. *əs wat als kəldər* 'it is getting colder'.

Personal Pronouns

The personal pronoun system is set out in Table 13.6. In the pronominal paradigm, only the non-sectarian Pennsylvania German has fully retained a distinct three-case system, i.e. nominative, accusative, and dative, while the Pennsylvania German language of the sectarians has reduced the pronominal cases to two, i.e. subject and object. There is only one pronoun of address, the informal singular *du* 'you' and the plural *dir* 'you (pl.)', although the latter form manifests regional variants.

Many pronouns are traditionally used as pro- or enclitics, thus unstressed and reduced forms are preferred: *mər*, *dər*, *nər*, *əm*, *ən*, *rə*, *nə* (see Verb morphology, p. 432). The second person singular pronoun is usually omitted in interrogatives, e.g. *wi bift?* 'how are you?', *was həft dat?* 'what do you have there?' In the first- and second-person plural, a variety of pronominal forms attest to linguistic remnants traceable to the original German dialect regions of the colonists, e.g. [miə] 'we' indicative of Palatine dialects, [diə] and [iə] 'your (pl.)' are of Alemannic origin.

By analogy to the English pronoun 'it', Pennsylvania German occasionally uses *əs*, 's 'it' when referring to inanimate objects, e.g. *wu is dər brif?* 'where is the letter?' *si hat 's (əs) m irə bux* 'she has it in her book' in contrast with *si hat in m irə bux*. In the latter example, the pronoun *in* 'his' still reflects the masculine gender of *brif* 'letter'. The reflexive form is *six* '-self', corresponding to Standard German *sich*.

Indefinite pronouns and adjectives are: *al* 'all' *alə* 'every, each', *aləs* 'everything', *del* 'some', *ebər* 'someone, somebody', *ebəs* 'something', *bisəl* 'a little bit', *enix* 'any', *wenix* 'a little, a bit', *niks* 'nothing', *fil* 'much, many'.

Table 13.6 Personal pronouns

	Singular			Plural		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Nom.	ix	du	ar, si, əs	mir/mər	dir/ix/dər/ər nər/nir	si
	'I'	'you'	'he, she, it'	'we'	'you'	'they'
Acc.	mıx	dix	in, si, əs	ʊns	aix	si
Dat.	mir	dir	im, irə, im	ʊns	aix	inə

None of these words is declined; *del*, *ebər*, *ebəs*, and *nıks* are used with third-person singular verbs only. There is a third-person singular indefinite pronoun *mər* 'one, people, they, you' equivalent to Standard German *man* 'one', e.g. *mər kumt gəwenlıx ʊm səks ur* 'one usually arrives at six o'clock'. Besides the nominative form *mər*, there is also *em* used in accusative and dative functions, e.g. *səl ıs nət gut far em* 'that is not good for one/people, etc.'.

The two interrogative pronouns *wər* 'who', *was* 'what' are similar to Standard German patterns. While *wər* has a common (*wər*) and a dative (*wəm*) form, *was* remains invariant in both cases, e.g. *wər titst ın airər ful?* 'who teaches in your (pl.) school', *was ɛst ar mariyəs?* 'what does he eat in the morning?', *wəm hat ar sai bugi gəwə* 'to whom did he give his buggy?' Possession is expressed with *wəm* (common case *wər* for most sectarians) plus the invariant possessive adjective *sai*, as in *wəm/wər sai brif ıs səl?* 'whose letter is that'. The phrase *fər was* renders the English meaning 'why', e.g. *fər was heft nət?* 'why don't you listen?' The interrogative pronominal *wələr* 'which' follows the declensional paradigm of the demonstrative *sələr* 'that'.

The Verb System

Verbs fall into two broad categories: weak and strong. The strong class, which features an alternation of the stem vowel, still reflects the old Germanic ablaut series. Table 13.7 provides a basic paradigm for Pennsylvania German verb conjugations in the present tense. The pattern is the same for both weak and strong verbs. The prefix *ge-* is added to the stem of the majority of verbs to form the past participle, e.g. *gəbunə* 'bound'. The reduced vowel of the participle prefix has been lost historically in certain environments, i.e. before the voiceless fricatives /f/ *gfunə* 'found', /s/ *gsenə* 'seen', /ʃ/ *gfrıwə* 'written', and before the voiceless glide /h/ *ghesə* [k^hesə] 'known'. Voice assimilation, i.e. /g/ > [k], tends to accompany the reduced prefix, while a verb stem-initial /h/ generates a heavily aspirated [k^h] as in [k^hadə] 'have had'. Assimilation processes have created further phonological changes in the past participle prefix; *ge* + morpheme initial /s/ or /f/ assimilates in point of articulation, e.g.

Table 13.7 Verb morphology

	Weak	Strong
Infinitive	maxə 'to make'	nɛmə 'to take'
Present		
1 sg.	ix max	
2 sg.	du maxʃt	
3 sg. m.	ar maxt	
f.	si maxt	
n.	əs maxt	
1 pl.	mir maxə	
2 pl.	dir maxt (-ə, ət)	
3 pl.	si maxə	
Past participle	gəmaxt	gənumə
Imperative		
2 sg.	max	nɛm
2 pl.	maxt	nɛmt

gsenə > [tsenə] 'seen', *gfpild* > [tʃpild] 'played'. Participles of strong verbs end in /-e/ (phonetically schwa [ə]), e.g. *gnumə* 'taken', those of the weak verbs in /-t/, e.g. *gəkent* 'known'.

Both weak and strong verbs are inflected for person and number. Pennsylvania German verbs have only two principal parts – the infinitive and the past participle. The majority of verbs take *hawə* 'to have' as their auxiliary, with only a few verbs – albeit common ones – combining with *sai* 'to be'. Traditionally, the auxiliary *hawə* is used with all transitive verbs and with most intransitive ones, while *sai* is reserved for intransitive verbs expressing motion or change of condition. In some speech communities, the contrast between *hawə* and *sai* is being levelled and regularized so that *hawə* + past participle is becoming the preferred indicator of past action. Remnants of a former imperfect tense appear in some dialect poetry, but otherwise is limited to the subjunctive of a few isolated auxiliaries (*wər* 'would'). Besides the present and what is commonly referred to as the perfect tense, the spoken language has a pluperfect (past perfect), future, and future perfect tense formed periphrastically with *hawə*, *sai*, or *warə* 'to become' as auxiliary. To indicate the occurrence of two events in the past, Pennsylvania German employs the pluperfect to signal the one further removed in time. The pluperfect is expressed with the present perfect tense + the past participle of *hawə* or *sai* e.g. *ar hat gfrwə ghat* (*ghadə*), StGer. *er hatte geschrieben* 'he had written'; *ix bm ganə gəwɛst* 'I had gone'. A variant which replaces the auxiliary *sai* with its preterite *war* has been observed as the new auxiliary in past perfect constructions among sectarian speakers, e.g. *ar war ganə gəwɛst* 'he had gone'.

Although Pennsylvania German theoretically can indicate future tense

periphrastically with *warə* 'to become' + infinitive of the main verb, this formal construction is rarely used and then only to express probability, e.g. *ar wat fun kumə* 'he (probably) will come'. Most commonly reference to the future is expressed either (a) with adverbials such as *glai*, *fun* 'soon' *marryə* 'tomorrow' and the present tense of the verb: *si hairə glai* 'they are soon getting married', *marryə genə mər nax əm dɔgdər* 'tomorrow we will go to the doctor'; (b) with the use of the present progressive + adverb: *ar is wasəm am bluɣə dənɔwəd* 'he is ploughing sod tonight'; or (c) with a construction using the auxiliaries *tselə* 'to count on (doing something)' or *figərə* 'to figure on (doing something)' e.g. *tselət dir hairə?* 'are you (pl.) going to get married?' Evidence for *tselə* as an expression of future time rather than simply intention is found in the fact that *tselə* can occur in structures without a human subject, e.g. *səl tselət nət kaundə* 'that won't count'. Future time constructions with the progressive as in (b) are more numerous in the speech of sectarians, while constructions with the auxiliary *tselə* as in (c) do exist only in the sectarian communities. In fact, the latter form is so common among the Old Order Amish that *tselə* is in the process of being grammaticalized.

The morphophonemic rule in Pennsylvania German which deletes underlying *-n* in word-final position (see adjectives), also operates in the verbal paradigm, that is, the Pennsylvania German infinitive, first- and third-person plural of verbs end in *-ə* not *-en*, as is the norm for Standard German.

Depending on regional usage, the pronominal and inflectional patterns for the second-person plural may show alternate forms, e.g., *dir/dər fragt* 'you (pl.) ask' in Berks, Center, Lancaster, Dauphin counties etc., or *ər/ir frayə* in East Lehigh, Northampton, and East Montgomery counties, or *nər/nir frayə* in Northwest Lehigh county, Pennsylvania (see Table 13.7). For sectarians, a second-person plural with *-ər* is the more common ending. When the word order is inverted, as in the fronting of verbs for yes/no questions, the pronoun following the verb cliticizes, or, as in the case of unaccented *du*, may be omitted, e.g. *ix hab* 'I have' but *hawəx?* 'do I have?', *du hɔft* 'you have' but *hɔft (ə)?* 'do you have?', *mər hən* 'we have' but *həmər* 'do we have', *dir hən* 'you (pl.) have' but *hənər?* 'do you (pl.) have?' Moreover, verbs with stems ending in a voiced velar stop undergo lenition when personal inflections render an intervocalic environment, e.g. *ix grig* > *mar griɣə* 'I get' vs 'we get' (see Phonology).

Pennsylvania German has six modals: some of them manifest regional variants which are indicated parenthetically:

- 1 *misə* 'must, to have to';
- 2 *kənə* 'to be able to';
- 3 *sɔlə* (*sələ*) 'should, to be supposed to';
- 4 *darəfə* (*daufə*, *dərɸə*);
- 5 *megə* 'may, to care to';
- 6 *wɔlə* (*wələ*) 'to want to'.

The verb *brauxə* (*braixə*) 'to need' can function as a modal, that is, either independently (with the meaning of 'to need') or in combination with a dependent infinitive preceded by *nɛt* 'not' (with the meaning of 'not to be required to'), e.g. *ar brauxt dər wəyə* 'he needs the wagon' but *ar brauxt dər wəyə nət kəfə* 'he does not need to buy the wagon'.

Negation particles are *ke* (*kɛn*) and *nɛt* 'no, none', with *ke* negating preceding nouns and *nɛt* negating all other parts of speech. The common and dative case forms of *ke* are: *ke* (*kɛn*) for singular and plural of all genders in the common case; *kɛm* for masculine and neuter dative; *kɛnrə*, feminine dative singular; and *kɛn* plural dative, e.g. *mər gɛwə kɛm kɛnd kɛn kuki*, which translates literally 'we give no child no cookie'. The particles *ke* and *kɛn* are used interchangeably, although *ke* is the older form. Emphasis is expressed with an additional negator *ni* 'never' or an emphatic *du* 'to do' (StGer. *tun*), e.g. *ix du nɛt fʁigə* 'I do not knit', *ix max ni kɛn panhas* 'I never make scrapple (US dish)'.

Loan Morphology

The inflectional morphology for borrowed verbs follows the native pattern, i.e. infinitives are created by adding the suffix *-ə* to the English loan, e.g. *tɪfə* 'to teach': 1 sg. *ix tɪf*, 2 sg. *du tɪft*, 3 sg. *ar tɪft*, 1 pl. *mir tɪfə*, 2 pl. *dir tɪft*, 3 pl. *si tɪfə*. Past participles are based on the infinitive with a prefixed *ge-* morph, e.g. *gəɪft* 'taught'. Other examples are: *gəfɪlt* 'felt', *gəftɔpt* 'stopped', *gəkɔkst* 'coaxed'. Only one occurrence of a loan participle being adapted to the pattern of a Pennsylvania German strong verb has been noted, i.e. *ausgəwɔrə* 'worn out' and *gəwɔrə* 'worn'.

When an English verb is borrowed with a verb particle, Pennsylvania German will convert the particle into a verb prefix, e.g. *ufgsoberəd* 'sobered up', *ausfigerə* 'to figure out'. In the case of a compound consisting of a preposition + verb, the preposition will be either translated or phonetically adapted, e.g. *ɪwərtfardʒd* 'overcharged'. Verbal compounds are also created with the inseparable German prefix *fər-*, e.g. *fərbɔft* 'all botched up', *fərmuksə* 'completely mixed up'.

Other loan derivations involve the combination of English reflexive verbs with German reflexive pronouns, e.g. *ix əntfoi mɪx* 'I enjoy myself'. The durative affixes (*-ai*, *ge-*) readily compound to borrowed lexemes, e.g. *smokərəi* 'business of smoking', *bɔdərai* 'continual bother', *ən gəpʊf* 'a constant pushing'.

13.4 Syntax

The syntax, more than any other area of Pennsylvania German, closely resembles the structure of Modern Standard German (see chapter 11).

The discussion of syntax is limited to the following features:

- 1 Word order in main and subordinate clauses; word order with modals;
- 2 Progressive and iterative aspect;
- 3 Common subordinators and complementation in infinitival and relative clauses;
- 4 Passive voice;
- 5 Subjunctive mood.

Word Order

More recent analyses of Pennsylvania German syntax suggest SOV rather than SVO as the underlying word order for Pennsylvania German, in spite of the fact that the addition of elements to the right of the finite verb tends to be more numerous than in Standard German, e.g. *ix hab gəwist as dər hut si net fidə det an seləm end* StGer. *ich hab gewußt, daß ihr der Hut an dem Ende nicht passen würde* 'I knew that the hat would not fit her at that end'.

Despite this greater flexibility, word order has remained relatively consistent and outside the realm of English influence. As in Standard German, the position of the verb plays a pivotal role in the arrangement of clausal constituents. The major patterns are: the finite verb in first or second position in main clauses – e.g. *kaffst du selər gaul?* 'are you buying that horse?' *ar med əs gras* 'he mows the grass' and in final position in subordinate clauses, e.g. *ɪfan hat net gəwist as si əs bux hat* 'John did not know that she has the book'. In some constructions, Pennsylvania German word order differs from Standard German. For example, if a dependent clause contains a double infinitive, Standard German precedes the multiple predicate with the finite form of *hawə* 'to have', e.g. StGer. *wenn ich so schön hätte singen können*, whereas Pennsylvania German places the finite verb medially between the double infinitive, e.g. *wan ix so se siŋə hət kənə* 'if I could have sung that well'.

Word order in modal constructions generally follows the Standard German pattern. In main clauses, a modal functioning in an auxiliary capacity takes the position and function of the finite verb, while the infinitive of the main verb is placed sentence-final, e.g. *ar kan sel net kafə* 'he cannot buy that'. In subordinate clauses, the modal appears in final and the infinitive, in the penultimate position, e.g. *ar wes, as ar sel net kafə kan* 'he knows that he cannot buy that'. More prevalent, however, are constructions with a modal as the main verb, particularly when the notion of destination is implied, e.g. *ar mus nax əm dɔgdər* 'he has (to go) to the doctor'. Constructions with inversion of the modal and main verb infinitive, e.g. *ar hat misə safə* 'he had to work' rather than the traditional sentence-final placement of the modal *ar hat safə misə* have been observed in speech communities of younger Midwestern sectarian speakers.

Aspect

Pennsylvania German has constructions which mark aspectual information in conjunction with tense and/or adverbs. One construction – use of the auxiliary

sai + *am* + infinitive – corresponds to the English progressive in that it signals continuation or duration of an activity, e.g. *ar is/war am brif fraiwə* ‘he is/was writing a letter’. Although Standard German has no corresponding progressive construction, a form with *am* has been attested in some dialects of German. The past progressive combines the preterite of *sai* ‘to be’, i.e. *war* ‘was’ + *am* + infinitive of main verb + past participle – *gəwəst* ‘have been’, e.g. *si wat am kəxə gəwəst* ‘she had been cooking’. The aspectual marker *am* denoting a dative ending, is being replaced in the conservative religious groups with either [a] or [ə] + alveolar nasal /n/, e.g. *ix war mai bux an/ən lesə* ‘I was reading my book’. More striking is the fact that for this group placement of constituent modifiers between *am* [an/ən] and the infinitive can occur, e.g. articles, possessive adjectives, as in *ar is am/n sai bugi fiksə* ‘he is fixing his buggy’. This form is in contrast with the more customary word order (i.e. in the speech of the non-sectarians) which does not permit modifiers to come between the object noun and *am*. Iterative aspect may be expressed in two ways: (a) with a present-tense form of the auxiliary *du* + infinitive *si dut strigə* ‘she knits (habitually, for a living)’; and (b) the adverb *als* + past participle: *ar hat si als gəkent* ‘he used to know her’, *ar hat əs gras als gəmet* ‘he (repeatedly) mowed the grass’. Traditionally, *du* occurred with constructions in the present tense, while *als* was used with past time. This division no longer exists in the sectarian community, where recent studies have indicated the use of adverbial *als* as iterative aspect marker in past and present tense constructions: e.g. *marjəts dun mir als safə* ‘mornings we (usually) work’. While Standard German rarely employs the *tun* ‘do’ formation, evidence from spoken and written German indicates that it is in productive use.

Subordination

Pennsylvania German has the following subordinators and complementizers: *as* ‘that’, *as wan*, *as wi wan* ‘as if’, *bis* ‘until, by the time (that)’, *ep* ‘before, whether’, *nəxdəm* ‘after’, *so as* ‘so that, in order that’, *wan* ‘when, if’, *wail* ‘because, while’, *wi* ‘when (past occurrences), how, as’, *tsidər* ‘since’. Moreover, interrogatives like *wu* ‘where’, *wər* ‘who’ can function as subordinators as well. A common introducer of concessive clauses is the conjunction *ep* ‘if, whether’, e.g. *ix wes nət ep ar kumə kan* ‘I don’t know whether he is able to come’. Barring some exceptions, word order in dependent clauses generally agrees with Standard German; that is, the finite verb is placed in sentence-final position, e.g. *wan du tswe kukis haft* ‘if you have two cookies’ (see Word order).

Complementizers in Infinitival Clauses

Complementation in Pennsylvania German infinitival clauses differs in some instances from those in Standard German. Theoretically, four different strategies are at the disposal of Pennsylvania German speakers:

- 1 A *fər* ... *tsu* construction which most closely resembles StGer. *um* ... *zu*;
- 2 The use of only *tsu*;
- 3 The use of only *fər* as a complementizer;
- 4 A zero option with the infinitive alone.

Today the two options *fər* ... *tsu* or simply *tsu* are relic forms associated with older speakers, while *fər* or zero represent the viable construction. A clause of purpose, e.g. ... *fər grumberə (tsu) esə* ... '(in order) to eat potatoes' will in modern Pennsylvania German omit *tsu* and maintain *fər* at the head of the clause. Inasmuch as English is influencing changes in Pennsylvania German, it has been suggested that in those cases where it is grammatical for English to use an infinitive or -ing form, Pennsylvania German opts for a zero construction, e.g. *si hat gstart lanə* 'she started/began to study/studying'. It appears that this trend towards simplification in complementation is a result of convergence with English.

Relativization

Mention has already been made of *as* 'that' as the introducer of subordinate clauses; it is in fact the invariant relativizing particle for relative clauses. Unlike Standard German, there are no true relative pronouns in Pennsylvania German. Historically, two complementizers *as* 'that' and *wu* 'which, who' were used to relativize elements in embedded clauses, e.g. *di med as/wu mər gsenə hən* 'the girls whom we saw'. Except for remnants of *wu* in dialect poetry and by older speakers, the usage of *as* 'that' is now the standard. The above notwithstanding, one genuine relative pronoun in possessive clauses has been substantiated by Pennsylvania German grammarians, e.g. *dəs is dər man dəm sai hund graŋg is* 'that is the man whose dog is sick'. This construction requires a dative noun phrase + possessive pronoun. However, the single viable complementizer used today by sectarian speakers is *as*, e.g. *dəs is dər man, as sai hund graŋg is*, which in (non-standard) English is 'that is the man that his dog is sick'.

Passive Voice

Another periphrasis to be considered is the passive, a grammatical contrast which Pennsylvania German and Standard German traditionally have shared. The marking occurs with the passive auxiliary *sai* 'to be' + past participle for perfective functions (statal passive), e.g. *dər pai is gəbakə* 'the pie is baked' versus the auxiliary *warə* 'to become' + past participle to signal not yet completed activity (agentive passive), e.g. *dər pai wat gəbakə* 'the pie is being baked'. Events in the past are expressed with the present or preterite of *sai* + past participle + *warə* – here representing the participial form of the auxiliary *warə*, StGer. (*ge*)worden – as in, e.g. *dər pai is/wat gəbakə warə* 'the pie was/had been baked'. An optional agent introduced by *fun* 'by' +

dative noun phrase may be added, e.g. *dər pai wat fun dər mæm gəbakə* 'the pie is being baked by (the) mother'. Influence from English has been suggested to account for an observed trend in some communities to (a) replace the auxiliary *warə* with *sai* in passive constructions; (b) replace the preposition *fun* 'by' with *bai* 'by'; (c) substitute the dative with a common case noun phrase; (d) postpose the prepositional phrase, e.g. *dər pai is gəbakə bai di mæm* 'the pie is being baked by (the) mother'; (e) permit non-logical objects to passivize, e.g. *ix bm gsagt warə* 'I have been told'.

Subjunctive Mood

Changes in the subjunctive attest to the trend toward analysis, where the formerly synthetic form is being replaced with more isolating morphemes. Historically, the auxiliary *det* (subjunctive form of *du* 'to do') StGer. *täte* 'would/should' + infinitive of the main verb expresses the present subjunctive, e.g. *ix det sel fərste* 'I would/should understand that'. There are a limited number of verbs which have retained distinct subjunctive forms, e.g. *kumə* (inf.) – *kemt* (subj.) 'come'; *me yə* (inf.) – *mext* (subj.) 'to care for'. However, these purely synthetic variants are exceptional for most speakers today and known only to older and linguistically conservative persons. In fact, a sentence like *ix wət si kemdə hem* 'I wish she would come home' is now formed as *ix wət si det hem kumə*. Only in the auxiliaries *hawə* 'to have' and *sai* 'to be' has Pennsylvania German preserved the historically synthetic forms, i.e. *het* (subj.) StGer. *hätte* 'would/should have' and *wər* (subj.) StGer. *wäre* 'would/should have' respectively. These forms in combination with the past participle are essential in formation of the past subjunctive, e.g. *ix het sel gədu* 'I would have done that'. Subjunctive forms of modal verbs have been maintained, e.g. *brauxə* 'to need' – *braixt* (subj.); *kenə* 'to be able' – *kent* (subj.); *sələ* 'to be expected to' – *set* (subj.).

Conditional clauses, usually introduced by *wan*, StGer. *wenn* 'if', are similar to Standard German, e.g. *wan ix raix wər det ix ir helfə* StGer. *wenn ich reich wäre, würde (täte) ich ihr helfen* 'if I were rich, I would help her'.

13.5 Lexis

The lexical inventory is composed almost completely of words current in southwest German dialects during the latter part of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth century with some borrowings from Standard German and from English.

While borrowings from English are difficult to date, fossilized pronunciation of some of these lexemes testifies to their early incorporation into Pennsylvania German, e.g. *bailər* for 'boiler', *mfiŋ* for 'Indian', *bərxə* for 'bargain', *smərt* for 'smart', *pərđi* for 'party', *kər* for 'car'. Reflexes of Middle English [ǣ] before /t/ which become [æ] in the seventeenth century are preserved in the latter examples. The dialect word *piktə* 'picture' can be traced

not only to early American speech, but also to the dialects of northern England. As a result, the qualitatively different pronunciation of these loans has aided in their acceptance now as part of the native lexicon.

English influence is conspicuously manifested in the numerous calques, e.g. *grundsau* for 'groundhog', *rigelweg* 'railroad', *katsəfɪʃ* 'catfish', (*al*) *rɛxt* '(all) right, correct'. One of the more intriguing collocations occurred with the verb *glaixə* 'to like, to be fond of' as in *ix glaix ebəl boi* 'I like apple pie'. The semantic shift of *glaixə* from StGer. *gleichen* with the meaning of 'to be similar, to be like', a meaning not at all conveyed in the Pennsylvania German verb, may have been caused by interference from the English expressions *to like*, and *to be like*. Eventually, the meaning of *glaixə* came to denote 'to like' only and never 'to resemble'.

Further Reading

- Buffington, A. F. and Barba, P. A. (1954) *A Pennsylvania German Grammar*, Allentown: Schlechter's.
- Huffines, M. L. (1986) 'The function of aspect in Pennsylvania German and the impact of English', *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 21: 137-54.
- Kelz, H. (1971) *Phonologische Analyse des Pennsylvaniadeutschen*, Hamburg: Buske.
- Learned, M. D. (1988/9) 'The Pennsylvania German dialect', repr. in *American Journal of Philology* 9 (1988): 64-83, 178-97, 326-39, 425-45; 10 (1889): 288-315.
- Louden, M. L. (1988) 'Bilingualism and syntactic change in Pennsylvania German', unpublished doctoral thesis, Cornell University.
- Moellenken, W. W. (1983) 'Language maintenance and language shift in Pennsylvania German: a comparative investigation', *Monatshefte* 75: 172-85.
- Penzl, H. (1938) 'Lehnwörter mit Mittelenglisch ä vor r im Pennsylvanisch-Deutschen Dialekt', *Journal of English and German Philology* 37: 396-402.
- Reed, C. E. (1979) 'The syntax of Pennsylvania German', *Orbis* 28: 245-56.
- Reed, C. E. and Seifert, L. W. (1954) *A Linguistic Atlas of Pennsylvania German*, Marburg/Lahn: Elwert.
- Schach, P. (1951) 'Semantic borrowing in Pennsylvania German', *American Speech*, 26, 257-67.
- Seifert, L. W. (1947) 'The diminutives of Pennsylvania German', *Monatshefte* 39: 285-93.
- Van Ness, S. (1990) *Changes in an Obsolescing Language: Pennsylvania German in West Virginia*, Tübingen: Narr.