

# Toward a Phonemic Alphabet of Plautdietsch<sup>1</sup>

Jacob A. Loewen, *Abbotsford, BC*

## Which Plautdietsch?

The language, which I am trying to describe in this essay and for which I would like to develop a linguistically accurate description of phonemes, is my first language. It is the language which my mother spoke to me when I was born. It is the first language in which I learned to express myself. This is the language that I am using as the basis for establishing a phonemic alphabet for Plautdietsch. I am aware that some readers will find my version (idiolect) of that language to be strange, at least in some places.

There are differences between my way of speaking Plautdietsch and the way my wife speaks it. I have noted all the differences between our two personal ways of speaking as precisely as I could. I have also asked other people to give me examples of their speech and have noted the differences between their speech and my own. However, I have reached the conclusion that when one analyzes the whole language my patterns also holds for the whole, except possibly for some of the minor dialect differences.

Herman Rempel, in his book *Kjenn jie noch Plautdietsch?*, asserts that he has tried to follow the High German writing pattern. The writing system which I am developing begins with Rempel's foundational work and follows it wherever possible. I, too, have tried to take High German into account, realize that for many of the Mennonites for whom Plautdietsch is now fast becoming their only language. High German no longer plays the significant role it used to. Since so many of the Mennonites are now resident in Spanish-speaking countries, I feel it

is important that one also pay attention to the model which that language provides. In North America, of course, English is the language model that exerts great influence on the small number of Plautdietsch speakers that still uses this vernacular. To make this description of phonemes accessible to all three environments where the language is spoken, I will render the meaning of Plautdietsch words in all three languages.

Because of the diverse environments where the language is now spoken, the orthography which I am proposing will follow the English pattern in some cases and the Spanish pattern in others; e.g., both English and Spanish make a distinction between the letters [s] and [z] and they use two different symbols to signify these letters in writing. High German also makes that same distinction in pronunciation, but it uses only the [s] as a letter to transcribe the two phonemic sounds. The [z] that High German does recognize has a completely different sound, namely, [ts]. Thus, for a Plautdietsch speaker who speaks only that language is the only language, a writing system which distinguishes [s] and [z] would be of great help.

On the other hand, Plautdietsch is like Spanish which in pronunciation it distinguishes three types of [n] sounds. The three are: [n], [ñ] and [ŋ]. Since Plautdietsch makes these same distinctions phonemic, I propose three separate kinds of [n] in that language. More about this later.

In this analysis of Plautdietsch, where words from other languages have been used as examples or have been used to express the meaning of Plautdietsch words, they have been put between double symbols. Every language has been given a separate set of symbols. Here is the model that we are following:

**English:** between two left-leaning slant lines \;

**High German:** between two upright standing lines ;

**Spanish:** between two right-leaning slant lines //;

**Plautdietsch:** between the { } brackets;

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** between straight lines with the tops curved inward ( ).

The meanings of foreign words in Plautdietsch are indicated by means of single quotation marks. Occasionally it has been necessary to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (hereafter abbreviated IPA); this is especially true of letters that are not written in English, German or Spanish but which are phonemic in Plautdietsch. An example would be letters (ɛ, ɪ, ʊ) which are phonemic in Plautdietsch, however, in the practical orthography we are suggesting they are written as just {e,i,u} but are then always followed by double consonants to indicate that they are short and open vowels.

## Establishing a Phonemic Alphabet for a Language?

When a linguist wants to establish the validity of a given sound as a phoneme in a language, he tries to find two words with different meanings, but in which the sound in question being the only difference between them. Such a word pair is called a “minimal word pair”. In the Plautdietsch this situation could be illustrated

by the words: {Hak} \hoe\ 'Goadêjreetshof' and {Hakj} \hedge\ 'Tün fonn Besha,' which are distinguished as being separate words on the basis of the {k~kj} distinction. Thus the minimal difference between these two words establishes {k} and {kj} as two separate phonemes in the language. Occasionally, however one does not find two words that are minimally different only in the case of one sound. In such cases one has to use a weaker kind of proof which is called "a pair in an analogous position". In this case there are at least two sound differences between the words, but the linguist believes that the second difference does not condition the first one. An example of that in Plautdietsch would be: {lag?} \did you lie?\ 'lag jie?' and {Agj} \selvage edge of cloth\ 'onnjêshnádne Tseichkaunt,' These two words are thus distinguished first by the use of {g} and {gj}, but in one word there also is an /l/ at the beginning of the word. Now linguists do not believe that in this case the presence or the absence of the /l/ determines the distinction between {g} and {gj}. Therefore this analogous pair proves that {g} and {gj} are distinct phonemes in Plautdietsch.

With these two kinds of proof linguists claim they can distinguish the phonemes of any language. Of course, a language often has many more sounds than those which are considered phonemic. Such additional sounds usually are allophones of other phonemes; in other words, certain sounds have different variants under different conditions. But even though certain sounds are allophones under certain conditions, if there are other conditions under which they make the difference between the meaning of words, they must be considered phonemes. An example in Plautdietsch would be {ch~chj} distinction. Following [o] and [oo] one always finds /ch/. But following [i] and [e] one always finds /chj/. However, following an [a] these two sounds make a distinction between the meaning of words; e.g., {acht} \eight\ 'the number 8' and {achtj} \genuine\. I will now try and establish the phonemes of Plautdietsch using these two types of proof.

Of course, once one has established all the phonemes of the language, one still has to decide how one is going to write them in a practical orthography. Sometimes for political reasons it is necessary to write something that is not quite phonemic, like writing one phoneme with more than one symbol, or writing a single symbol for two separate phonemes. But, as a rule of thumb, the closer one remains to the phonemes of that language, the easier the language is to read and to write for the native speaker

## Help From Other Writers and Students of Plautdietsch

I have already mentioned my indebtedness to Herman Rempel (1984). Besides that work there have been numerous theses and dissertations on Plautdietsch (See endnote #2). Some of them have been very helpful in my effort to develop a phonemic alphabet for that language. On the whole, however, most of these works were written with highly specialized applications not useful to our task of developing a practical phonemic alphabet for Plautdietsch. Two trends can be identified in the orthographies used so far. The first is to treat past writing attempts as sacred and to try to follow what older writers like Arnold Dyck did. An example of this would be the use of [tj] in writing the first person singular pronoun /I/ as {etj}. On the other hand, Ruben Epp (1993, 1996) tries to harmonize Mennonite Plautdietsch with all the other so-called *Niederdeutsch* 'Low German' speech forms

in present day Holland, Germany and Poland. Such an effort, of course, makes a simple orthography for any one of these speech forms, or in this case, Plautdietsch, more or less impossible. There is help to be had, however, in some of the studies.

Jacob (Walter) Quiring (1928) (my maternal uncle), probably wrote the earliest known dissertation on the subject. His purposes—to line up with the massive German dialect study of his time based on the 40 Wenker sentences and to trace the sounds shifts that Plautdietsch has undergone since its separation from the Germanic mainstream—are both extraneous to our purpose. However, his sound groupings often give us excellent phonemic clues. Probably his most important contribution for our purposes, however, is the recognition of the “shwa”, usually written as (ə) in IPA. He has recognized it both when it occurs alone as an independent vowel, as well as when it occurs as the second member of a vowel cluster.

J. W. Goerzen (1952, published 1970) in his dissertation has made an admirable effort to transcribe Plautdietsch accurately phonetically, but, while recognizing the phonemic principle (Pike 1949), on the basis of which phonemic alphabets are developed, he seemingly does not give it full credence. As a result his transcription remains phonetic in many places. This means that his writing system is plagued by phonetic details that often obscure, rather than elucidate, a practical Plautdietsch alphabet. We are indebted to him, however, because he recognized that Plautdietsch utilizes the glottal stop (ʔ), which we have indicated as {'} to mark the open transition it creates in certain vowel clusters; e.g., (Frü'ês) \women\, {bū'e} \to build\. Like Quiring, he gives full recognition to the shwa.

Peter Fast (1987), of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, has developed a small primer to teach the reading of Plautdietsch. In addition he helped produce a Plautdietsch New Testament. The orthography in Fast's primer points out that Plautdietsch speech contains unreleased consonants; e.g., in words like {Dreppkje} \a small drop\, {bätkje} \a little bit\ and {Büakkje} \small book\ the consonants (p, t, k) are started, but released only with the release of the (kj) of the diminutive suffix (-kje).

As I have already noted, once the phonemes of any language have been established, the second step involves developing a practical orthography. This step usually involves all kinds of political considerations, like the usage of the dominant language of the region, any existing literature in the language, the accessibility of the symbols on the typewriter, etc. To achieve such a practical orthography for Plautdietsch one would need a consultation between the knowledgeable scholars of that language, so that various sensibilities involved can all be given due consideration. While this study does make suggestions on a practical orthography, it purposely focuses on establishing the phonemes of Plautdietsch.

### Phonemes of Plautdietsch: Examples:

a pronounced just like the English \a\ in: \car\ 'Autou,' the German: \Rad\ \wheel\ 'Raut,' or the Spanish: \hablar\ \speak\ 'räde.' Plautdietsch examples: {Ama} \pail\ |Eimer| /balde/ 'Wootabêhellta,' {Zache} \things\ |Dingel /cosas/ 'Dinja.'

Word medially as second member of a vowel cluster (a) is reduced to a shwa phonetically and as rendered as (ê); e.g., pronounced (ütjêshpröêkê), written: {ütjêshpröake}.

**ä** written as (e) in IPA, pronounced as the English: \cake\ 'zeete Nookost,' the German: leben! \just now\ 'nü rood,' or the Spanish: /bebe/\baby\ 'kjljenêt Kjind.' Plautdietsch examples: {äwa} \over\ lüber! /encima/ 'nichj unja,' {zäwên} \seven\ lsieben/ /siete/ '7.'

**äa** pronounced similar to the English \mare\ 'Kobbêl,' \hair\ 'Hoa.' Plautdietsch examples: {äa} \their\ lihres! /de ellos/ 'waut jane ieajne,' {fäare} \in front\ /vorne/ /en frente/ 'daut Jäajêndeel fonn hinje,' {Däa} \door\ /Tür/ /puerta/ 'Hüsenganksfêschluss.' This combination is heard most distinctly in speech word finally. Word medially one usually hears (äê) which is pronounced similar to the way certain native speakers of English pronounce words ending in (r), e.g.: \fair\ (fäê) 'wan ên jiedra daut Zienje\kjrichjt,' \bear\ (bäê) 'Boa.' Plautdietsch examples are: pronounced (Wäêkj), written {Wäakj} \week\ /Woche! /semana/ 'zäwên Döag,' pronounced (läêchj), written {läachj} \low\ /bajo/ /niedrich\ 'nichj hüagch,' pronounced (Wäêj), written {Wäaj} \ways\ /Wegel/ /caminos/ 'meea aus een Wach,' pronounced (däêj), written (däaj) \considerably\ /ziemlich\ /bastante/ 'tsimmlichj.'

**au** pronounced as English \cow\ 'Kou,' German laus! \out\ 'üt,' or the Spanish /causa/ \cause\ 'Üazöak.' Plautdietsch examples: {Aust} \Branch\ /Ast/ /rama/ 'Deel fonn Boum,' {Kauste} \box\ /Kasten/ /caja/ 'ên Bêhellta,' {blau} \blue\ /blaul/ /azul/ 'ne Kêllea.'

One can distinguish the various varieties of (a) and (a) combination through the following listing of similar words: {wad} \to bet\ 'waut wade,' {wäm} \whom\ 'woone Perrzoun?' {Wäd} \willow branch\ 'ên shniedja Aust,' {wäad} \resisted\ 'zichj fêteidje,' {Wäak} \week\ 'säwên Döag,' {waut?} \what?\ 'nê Fröag,' {weed!} \weed!\ 'Bêfälsform fonn "weede",' {Wiead} \words\ 'meea aus een Wuat.'

**b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, t** are used more or less as in German and in English, but there are some differences: **k~kj** following an (i) or an (e) the (k) is always fronted (palatalized) and pronounced as {kj}. Plautdietsch examples: {dikj} \thick\ /dick! /grueso/ 'nichj denn,' {bekje} \to bend over\ /stoopt/ /agacharse/, 'zichj ferrwoats êrauf bicaje.' But following an (a) there is a distinction between {k} and {kj}. Plautdietsch examples: {Dak} \roof\ /Dach! /techo/ 'Hüsdakbêdakjunk,' and {Dakj} \blanket\ /Deckel/ /cobija/ 'Badbêdakjunk.' Since the two sounds must be distinguished following an (a), they must be considered distinct phonemes and thus letters of the Plautdietsch alphabet.

**n~ñ~ŋ** following (i) or (e) the (n) is also fronted (palatalized) and pronounced as Spanish /ñ/ which we transcribe in Plautdietsch as {nj}. Plautdietsch examples:

{binje} \to bind\ |binden| /amarrar/ 'mettên Shtrank faust mōake,' zenje \to singe\ |versengen| /quemar/ 'waut driaçjêt aunbrenne,' {zinj!} \sing! \ |sing!| /cante! / 'zou's ên Leet zinje.' In Spanish as in Plautdietsch (ñ) must be treated as a separate phoneme. Spanish examples: /fiapa/ \something added as a bonus\ 'daut Toojäwsêl,' /nifia/ \small girl\ 'klienêt Määkjskje.' In Plautdietsch (ñ) also appears after {u}: {unja} \under\ |lunter| /debajo/ 'nichj boowa,' For this reason it must be considered phonemic. We write it as {nj}. In summary we can say that following (i,e) the pronunciation of (n) is conditioned by the front vowels. Similarly following (o,u) we usually find it pronounce farther back in the mouth as (ŋ). But under certain conditions we also find the {nj} also appearing following a {u}; we must thus treat all three as full-fledged phonemes. Plautdietsch examples which distinguish the three types are: (n) in {Zinda} \sinner\ 'jêmaundt dee doa zindijt,' (ñ) in {zinje} \to singe\ 'dee zinj,' and (ŋ) in {zunge} \sang\ 'haft jêzunge.' We can demonstrate the phonemic distinction between (ñ, n and ŋ) in the word contrast: {unja} 'nichj boowa,' {bunt} \multi-colored\ 'meea aus eene Kêllea and {Unga} \a surname\ 'Fêmieljênoome: "Unger".' We write the velar pronunciation as {ng}. **r** in Scottish English (r) can occur slightly rolled as (rr) or flapped once as (ɾ). However Plautdietsch does not make the distinction between (r) (flapped once) and (rr) (trilled) like the Spanish does in /pero/ \but\ 'ooba' and /perro/ \dog\ 'Hunt'. By the same token Plautdietsch does not make use of the retroflexed, flapped {ɾ} which English uses. Plautdietsch examples: {rou} \red\ |rot| /rojo/ 'nê Kêllea,' {ar} \her\ |lir| /de ella/ 'daut äaje,' {ferr} \in front of\ |vor| /en frente de/ 'nichj hinja.' (We should add here that the written {rr} in Plautdietsch does not represent a trilled vowel, but doubled consonants used after short open vowels.) **p** and **t** are pronounced with a slight puff of air as in English and German. However, in English when \p\ and \t\ follow an \s\ they become conditioned and lose the puff of . English examples are: with a puff of air (aspirated): \pill\ 'Pell,' \till\ 'bott,' without the puff of air (unaspirated): \spill\ 'fêjeete,' \still\ 'noch.' In Spanish these stops always are unaspirated. Plautdietsch examples for (p): {Paun} \pan\ |Pfannel| /sartén/ 'tou'm broode,' {Aupêl} \apple\ |Apfel| /manzana/ 'dee Frucht,' {Shaup} \cabinet\ |Schrank| /armario/ 'wua maun waut oppbêwoat.' For the (t): {Tung} \tongue\ |Zungel| /lengua/ 'dee Tung emm Mül,' {Woota} \water\ |Wasser| /agua/ 'tou'm drinkje,' {at} \eats\ |isst| /come/ 'Jääjênwuat fonn "äte",' **c** is not a phoneme in its own right. It is used to write the digraph {ch}. In the IPA the latter is usually written as (ç). We are also using it as a convenience when (k) should be doubled following a short vowel.

**ch~chj** The (ch) is pronounced as in the Scottish-English word \loch\ \a lake\ 'See,' or as in the German lich, ach, auch| |, alas, also\ {ekj, ach, uck}. Plautdietsch examples: {Loch} \hole\ |Loch| /hueco/ 'waut ütjêholkjädêt.' Following {a} the fronted and the backed variety function as full phonemes written as: {ch} and {chj}. Plautdietsch examples: {zacht} /slowly\ |langsoml| /despacio/ 'nichj shwind,' and {zajchjt~zajt} \says\ |sagt| /dice/ 'dee Jäägênwuat fonn "zaje",' {acht} 'Numma ferr nääjên' and {achjt} \genuine\ 'daut werkjlichje.' Following (i) or (e) one finds only {chj}. Plautdietsch examples: {Lichjt} \light\ |Licht| /luz/ 'nichj dunkêl,' ên {Zechjt} \sight\ |Sicht| /vista/ 'kaun

zeene.’ Following (o) or (u) one finds only {ch}. Plautdietsch examples: {Koch} \cook\ |Koch| /cocinero/ ‘jêmaundt dee köakt.’ {Bucht} \bay\ |Bucht| /bahia/ ‘doa wua daut Eewa deep ennlaundt bichjt.’ Word initially (ch) is only used in loanwords and then only rarely. Plautdietsch examples: {choua~koua} \choir\ ‘ne Grupp Zenja.’ When following (i,e) or (o,u) the {chj} and {ch} respectively are conditioned by the vowels they follow; nevertheless they have to be treated as separate phonemes, because following (a) they distinguish different meanings.

e is pronounced short and open as (ɛ) as in English \bet\ ‘wade,’ the German |Welt| \world\ ‘dee gauntse Welt,’ and in Spanish /ven!/\ ‘come ‘komm!’ In our orthography the short vowel is always followed by two consonants in writing. It is written as (e). Plautdietsch examples: {Ent} \duck\ |Ente| /pato/ ‘Wootafōagêl,’ {Benjêl} /rascal/ |Bengell| /picaro/ ‘ên goashtaja Jung,’ {ferr} \in front of\ |vor| /en frente de/ ‘daut Jäajêndeel fonn “hinja”.’

ê occurs unaccented. It is an indistinct and undifferentiated vowel. It should be written as a shwa (ə). In word final position we have written it as (e) without a diacritic even though it is pronounced as (ə). However word medially, and especially word finally in one syllable words it is transcribed as (ê) to indicate that it is an unaccented neutral vowel, e.g.: {dê, nê, ên tê} \the, a (f.), a (m., n.), to\ . Plautdietsch exhibits many word initial and word final affixes which all feature the unaccented (ê): {bê-}, {jê}, {fê-}, {-ên}, {-êt}, and {-êns}, etc. Plautdietsch examples: {bêhoule} \remember\ |behalten| /recordar/ ‘emm Zenn houle,’ {jêzeene} \seen\ |gesehen| /visto/ ‘waut maun jêzeene haft,’ {fêkoft} \sold\ |verkauft| /vendido/ ‘fêshachat,’ {eenên} \one\ |einer| /uno/ ‘een Maun,’ {kjleenê} \a little one\ |ein kleines| /un pequeño/ ‘nichj grout,’ {tweedêns} \secondly\ |zweitens| /en segundo lugar/ ‘enn tweede Rieaj.’ We can thus affirm that when (ê) occurs word finally, it is conditioned by that position, but individually in other positions of the word the (ê) functions as a full-fledged vowel in the Plautdietsch. Because it is conditioned in word final position we are writing it as (e) without any diacritic. Plautdietsch examples: {een}, {enn}, {ên} \one\, \in\, \a\ ‘eent,’ ‘benne,’ and ‘dee onnbêsthemde Artikjêl.’ Phonetically the (ê) also occurs as the conditioned second member of a vowel cluster. See {a}.

ee is pronounced as in German: |Seele| \soul\ ‘dee jeistlichje Deel fomm Mensch.’ Plautdietsch examples: {eena} \one\ |einer| /uno/ ‘ên Mensch,’ {breet} \broad\ |breit| /ancho/ ‘nichj shmaul,’ {hee} \he\ |er| /él/ ‘een Maunsmensch.’

ei is pronounced short and fronted with a minimal glide. It can be distinguished both from English \ai\ and from the German leil, which are both pronounced as (ai) less fronted and with a much bigger glide. Plautdietsch examples: {Ei} \egg\ |Eil| /huevo/ ‘waut nê Han lajt,’ {Freid} \joy\ |Freudel| /alegria/ ‘frou senne,’ {Hei} \hay\ |Heul| /heno/ ‘Feefouda.’ The vowel combinations {ee} and {ei} can be distinguished in the following word pair: {mee’st} \do you think?\ ‘gleewst dū?’ and {meist} \almost\ ‘nichj gaunts.’

**eea** pronounced similar to the way certain speakers of English pronounce words ending in (er) as (a); e.g., \layer\ (lä-a) 'Shichjt,' \weigher\ (wä-a) 'dee Wäaja.' Plautdietsch examples: {eea} \sooner\ |früher| /más temprano/ 'daut Jääjéndeel fonn "loota"; {Beea} /beer| |Bier| /cerveza/ 'Drinkjtichj,' {waneea} /when| |wann| /cuándo/ 'woune Tiet?' The following word listing distinguishes various vowel clusters: {äa} \theirs\ 'daut äaje,' {eea} \earlier\ 'tiedja,' {Eia} \eggs\ 'waut Heena laje,' {Ieajistre} \ the day before yesterday\ |Teëjistrê| 'Dach ferr Jistre,' {hiea} \here\ 'opp disse Shtäd.'

**g** exhibits several allophonic variations. Word initially it is pronounced like (g) in English or German: e.g., \God\, |Gott| 'Gott,' \grass\, |Grass| 'Graum.' In other positions in a word it is usually affricated as (ɣ). In this it is similar to the Spanish word medial /g/ (ɣ) in /haga/ (haya) 'do!' /'dou!, /pagar/ (paɣar) 'pay' \bêtoole.' Plautdietsch examples: {gaunts} \completely\ |ganz| /completamente/ 'nichj haulf,' {dröage} (dröëyê) \carry\ |tragen| /cargar/ 'zou's opp'm Puckël dröage,' {Flag} (Flaɣ) |flag| |Flagge~Fahnel| /bandera/ 'dee Kanaudische Flag.' Following fronted vowels like (i) it becomes palatalized as {gj}. Plautdietsch examples: {Migj} \mosquito\ |Müchel| /mosquito/ 'Onnjêsseffa,' {Pligj} \shoe tack\ |kleiner Nagel| /clavito/ 'kjliênê Noagêldinjs,' {wrigjêlt} \wiggling\ |hin und her bewegen| /menearse/ 'zichj han ên hää bêwäaje.' Even though in this position, it is a conditioned variant, it has to be recognized as a full phoneme because after (a) it does distinguish words. Plautdietsch examples: {lag?} \did you lie down?\ 'lag jie?' and {Agj} \selvage edge of cloth\ 'dee onnjêshnädne Kaunt fomm Tseichj.' Note the following comparative list: {Akj} \corner\ 'Winkjêl,' {Zakj} \sacks\ 'Biedêls,' {Zak} \sack\ 'Biedêl,' {zag?} \did you see?\ 'zag jie?,' {zaj!} \say!\ 'zaj waut!' {zagch} \saw\ 'hee zagch waut.'

**i** pronounced as short (ɪ) as in English: \bit\ 'ên Besskje,' and the German: |Kind| \child\ 'Kjint.' As a short vowel it is always written with two following consonants.. Plautdietsch examples: {Dinja} \things\ |Dingel| /cosas/ 'kjliene Sache,' {zinge} \sing\ |singen| /cantar/ 'ên Leet zinge.'

**ie** is written as (i) in IPA and pronounced as in German: |sieben| '7,' |wieder| 'wada,' the English: \heat\ 'Hett,' and the Spanish /diga!| \say!\ 'zaj!'. Plautdietsch examples: {Ies} \ice\ |Eis| /hielo/ 'jêfroanêl Woota,' {hie} \cry\ |weinen| /llorar/ 'zou's mett Troone,' {wie} \we\ |wir| /nosotros/ 'dee ieashte Perrzoun Meeatsool.'

**iea** resembles the pronunciation of English \hee haw\ 'joakle' without the (h). Plautdietsch examples: {Fiea} \fire\ |Feuer| /fuego/ 'daut brennt,' {hiea} \here\ |hier| /aquí/ 'opp disse Shtäd,' {Biea} \pillow case\ |Kissenüberzug| /funda de almoadá/ 'Kjessêbêdakjungk.' The vowel combination (iea) is pronounced clearly word finally. Word medially it is pronounced similar to the way certain speakers of English articulate words ending in (r) as (a); e.g., \beer\ (biea) 'Beca,' \here\ (hiea) 'hiea.' Plautdietsch examples: pronounced (ieêsht), written {ieasht} \first\ |erst| /primero/ 'daut ieashte,' pronounced (flieëjê),



written {flieaje} \fly\ |fliegen| /volar/ 'enn'ne Lofft flieaje,' The following word series illustrates these phonemic distinctions: {denn} \thin\ 'nichj dikj,' {deen} \serve\ 'oabeide,' {dien} \yours\ 'daut dienje,' {deit} \does\ 'waut doune,' {diea} \expensive\ 'kost fäl,' {dieare} \lasts\ 'daut nemmt Tiet,' {Deiw} \dew\ 'wan Graus naut woat,' {Däa} \door\ 'emm HüS,' {denkj!} \think!\ 'bêdenkje,' {Dinkj} \thing\ 'ên Jäjenshtaunt,' {dankt} \thanks\ 'ess dankboa.'

**j** in the IPA is written as /y/ and pronounced as English /y/ in : /you\ 'dü,' and the German /j/ in /Jahr\ 'year\ 'Joa,' and the Spanish /y/ in /yo/ \l\ 'ekj.' Plautdietsch examples: {joo} \yes\ /jal/ /sí/ 'Bieshtemmungsütdruck,' {fäaje} \sweep\ /fegen/ /barrer/ 'mett'm Basëm fäaje,' {zaj!} \speak!\ /sag!! /diga! /'Béfälsform fonn "zaje".'

**o** pronounced short and open as English /u/ in /cup\ 'Kuffël,' and German /o/ in /kommst?! \are you coming?\ 'kjemmt?' Plautdietsch examples: {Oss} \ox\ /Ochsl /buey/ 'en jeshnädna Boll,' {Zolt} \salt\ /Salz\ /sal/ 'tou'm äte zolte.' This phoneme is found only word initially and word medially. In our writing it is always followed by two consonants.

**ou** pronounced as in German: /Ton\ 'tune\ 'dee kaun nichj Toun houle,' /Sohn\ /son\ 'zien Zän.' In pronunciation the {o} has a slight /u/ off-glide. Plautdietsch examples: {ouda} \or\ /aber/ /pero/ 'entwäda ouda,' {houle} \hold\ /halten/ /tener/ 'nichj lous loote,' {Kou} \cow\ /Kuhl/ /vaca/ 'ên Rindt.'

**oo** pronounced long similar to English: /old\ /alt\ 'oult,' /cold\ /kalt\ 'kolt,' the German: /wohnt\ /dwells\ 'läwt' and the Spanish: /todo\ /everything\ /alles\ 'aulês.' Plautdietsch examples: {Oos} \carrion\ /Verfaultes/ /carne podrida/ 'fêfuldê Fleesh,' {Koot} \shack\ /Hüttel/ /choza/ 'jemmalichjê Hüskje,' {shtoo!} \stand!\ /steh!! /paraté! /'Béfälsform fonn "shtoone".' The three {o,ou,oo} can be shown to be minimally different in the following word series: {Mott} \moth\ 'waut Flieajëndê,' {Mout} \courage\ 'broow zenne,' and {Moot} \measurement\ 'tê'm mäte.'

**oa** pronounced as in English: /Noah\ 'Noome üt'e Biebêl.' Plautdietsch examples: {Oa} \ear of corn\ /Ährel/ /mazorca/ 'nê Oa mett Kjieana,' {Boa} \bear\ /Bärl /oso/ 'willê't Tia,' {Koat} \card\ /Kartel/ /naipe/ 'tê'm shpäle.' This vowel combination is heard clearest word finally. Word medially it sounds more like /oê/, but it is written as {oa}. Plautdietsch examples: pronounced (/Boêch), written {Boach} \hill\ /Berg/ /monte/ 'ên hüaga Humpêl,' pronounced (shtoêwe), and written {shtoawe} \die\ /sterben/ /morir/ 'ommkooome,' pronounced (/Hoêd), written {Hoad} \herder\ /Hirtel/ /pastor/ 'wäa opp Fee opp paust,' pronounced (/jêfroêrê), written {jêfoare} \frozen\ /gefroren/ /helado/ 'wan Woota Ies woat.'

**oua** pronounced similar to the German: /Noah\ /Noah\ 'Noome üt'e Biebêl.' Plautdietsch examples: {Doua} \gate\ /Tor/ /portón/ 'Däa emm Tün,'

{Oua~Ua} \ear\ |Ohrl /oreja/ 'tou'm hieare,' {Koua} 'nê Zenjagrupp'. This vowel combination is heard clearest word finally. Word medially it sounds like (ouê), but it is written as {oua}. This vowel combination raises some suspicions since it exhibits an incomplete pattern.) The various pronunciations of (o) and (u) give rise to a wide variety of dialect variations especially in the pronunciation of specific words.. Plautdietsch examples: {Oa~Ooa~Oua~Ua} \ear\ |Ohrl /oreja/ 'tou'm hieare,' {moake~mōake~mouake~mooake} \make\ |machen\ /hacer/ 'waut toup baustle'; {muake~mūake} \made\ |machtet\ /hizo/ 'Fêgangênheit fonn "mōake";' {Ua~Ūa} \watch\ |Uhrl /reloj/ 'Klock.'

**ōa** is hard to describe since none of the other languages used in this study can be used to demonstrate it. Furthermore it doesn't appear in all dialects of Plautdietsch. Its onset is partially similar to the German *löl* in *lgönnen* \to wish someone well\ /sin envidia/ 'ekj jenn am daut,' |Löffell \spoon\ /cuchara/ 'Läpêl,' but it is pronounced farther back in the mouth. Plautdietsch examples: pronounced (Dōêg), written {Dōag} \days\ |Tagel /dias/ 'meea aus een Dach;' pronounced (Hōêkê), written {Hōake} \hook\ |Hacken\ /gancho/ 'tou'm waut opphenge;' pronounced (Zōêg), written {Zōag} \saw\ |Sägel /serrucho/ 'tou'm aufzōage.' (Could this be the word medial (ouê)?) Word pairs that distinguish (oa and ōa)—at least in my idiolect of Plautdietsch—are: {jêfroare} \frozen\ 'les jêworde,' {jêfrōagt} \asked\ 'nê Frōag jêshalt;' {kloa} \clear\ 'nichj muzhrichj,' {Klōag} \complaint\ 'āwa waut gromzauje,' {Boach~Boaj} \mountain~mountains\ 'ēen ouda meea groute Humpêls,' {Boakj} \birch tree\ 'ēn Boum,' {Bōage} \sheet of paper\ 'Blaut Papiea;' {Noash} \a person's rear\ 'Hinjarenj,' {nōaktichj} \naked\ 'oone Kjleeda,' {shtoakje~fêshtoakje} \to strengthen\ 'waut shtoakja mōake,' {shtōake} \to pitch hay\ 'Hei opploode;' {moakje} \notice\ 'ennwoare,' {mōake} \to make\ 'waut toupbaustle;' {woake} \to stay awake\ 'waka bliewe,' {Wōakje} \works\ 'daut waut maun jêdoone hawt,' {wōage} \to risk\ 'waut frōaglichjêt doune.' (Is there any possibility that (k~g) could condition the pronunciation of (ōa)?)

**s** pronounced as in English and German: \house\~|Haus\ 'Wouninj,' Plautdietsch examples: {aus} \when\ |als\ 'aus wie jungk weeare,' {Beskje} \bit\ |Bischenl 'Bätskje.' Word initially the (s) occurs only in a few loan words and in certain dialects. Plautdietsch examples: loanwords: {Saskêton} \the city of\ 'Staudt,' {Siatêl} \the city of\ 'Staudt.' Dialect forms: {Soll} \duty or an inch\ 'Tsoll,' {Suk} \bitch\ 'Tsuk,' and in my idiolect: {Sêmorjês} \in the morning\ |Morgens\ /en la mañana/ 'wan dee Dach aunfangt.'

**sh** is transcribed as (ʃ) or (ʃ̥) in the IPA and pronounced as in English \shall\ 'zaul,' and German: |schon\ \already\ {aul}. Plautdietsch examples: {Shūm} \foam\ |Shauml /espuma/ 'Bloozkjês opp Flissichjkeit,' {tushe} \to paint\ |färben\ /pintar/ 'mett Foaw aunpenzle,' {Aush} \ash\ |Aschel /ceniza/ 'Āwabliêfsêl fomm Fiea,' {Shpell} \game\ |Spiell /juego/ 'waut jêshpält waut,' {Bieshpell} \example\ |Beispiell /ejemplo/ 'nê Schilderrungk,' {Bosh} \bush\ |Buschl /arbusto/ 'Shtruck.'

- ts** is written as (ç) in the IPA and pronounced as the German /z/: /Zank\ \quarrel\ 'Tsank.' Plautdietsch examples: {tsettre} \tremble\ /zittern\ /temblar\ 'tekjre,' {Bottsats} \little fellow\ /kleiner Jungel\ /chiquito\ /'kjlina Jung,' {hots!} \jeepers!\ /caramba!\ 'wan maun äwarausht ess, zajt maun "hots",'
- u** pronounced short and open as (ʊ) as in the English: \foot\ /Fuss\ 'Fout,' \could\ /konntel\ 'kunn,' and German: /muss\ /must\ 'mott.' In our orthography it is always written with two following consonants to mark that it is short. Plautdietsch examples: {unja} \under\ /unter\ /debajo\ 'nichj boowe,' {Buck} \belly\ /Bauch\ /barriga\ 'dee Pants,'
- u** pronounced long as English \food\ /Essen\ /comida\ /Äte}, or the German /du\ /you\ /tu\ /{dü}, or the Spanish /uso\ /use\ /Gebrauch\ /Jêbruck}. In my idiolect of Plautdietsch the (u) is rarely used. It occurs most frequently in vowel clusters like {au, ua, ou}. Plautdietsch examples: {fua} \drove\ 'mett'ên Foatichj jêfoare,' {Kou} \cow\ 'ên Rindt,' {Ua} \ear\ 'tê'm hieare,' and {fuare} \have driven\ /fuêrê\ 'mettên Foatichj jêfoare.' This vowel has so far been transcribed as {u}, but when it is followed by two consonants such a transcription makes it impossible to distinguish it from the short (ʊ). One really needs a separate symbol.
- ü** pronounced as German unlauded ü. (In my wife's idiolect of Plautdietsch this sound is exceedingly rare.) German examples: /Mühe\ /effort\ /esfuerzo\ 'Aunshtrênjungk,' /über\ /over\ /encima\ 'äwa.' Plautdietsch examples: {Ü} \owl\ /Eule\ /bujō\ 'Nachtfoagêl,' {Tün} \fence\ /Zaun\ /cerco\ 'zou's ên Goadêtün,' {Bü} \building\ /Gebäude\ /edificio\ 'waut maun jêbüt haft.'
- ua** Plautdietsch examples: {Ua-Ūa} \watch\ /Uhr\ 'Klock,' {Bua~Būa} \farmer\ /Bauer\ /campesino\ 'Laundwirtschofta,' {Fua} \load\ /Ladung\ /carga\ 'waut maun opp jêloodt haft,' {zua~zūa} \sour\ /sauere\ /agrio\ 'nichj zeet,' {wua~woua} \where\ /wo\ /dónde\ 'woun Plauts?' The combination is heard most clearly word finally; word medially it sounds more like (uê). Plautdietsch examples: pronounced (/jêbuêrê), written {jêbuare} \born\ /geboren\ /nació\ 'aus ên Kjjint,' pronounced (/Wuê), written {Wuat} \word\ /Wort\ /palabra\ 'Deel fomm Zauts,' pronounced (/Puê), written {Puat} \port\ /Hafen\ /puerto\ 'wua daut Shepp aunkjemmt,' pronounced (/Buê), written {Buat} \border\ /Rand\ /bordo\ 'dee Bütakaunt,'
- üa** Plautdietsch examples: {Ūa} \watch\ /Uhr\ 'Klock,' {zūa~zua} \sour\ /sauere\ /agrio\ 'nichj zeet,' {Būa~Bua} \farmer\ /Bauer\ /agricultor\ 'Laundwirtschofta,' {Kūa} \cure\ /medizinische Bêhandlungk,' {lūa!} \wait!\ /warte!\ /espere!\ 'wacht êmool!, {būare} (būêrê) 'Laundt Oabeit doune,' {bêdüare} (bêdüêrê) 'Mettleet habe.' (As said under (ü). This sound combination does not appear in my wife's idiolect.) Word pairs which distinguish (ua~üa) in my idiolect: {Ua~Oua} \ear\ 'tê'm hieare,' {Ūa} \watch.clock\ 'nê Klock,' {Buat} \edge\ 'Raundt,' {Būak} \book\ 'tê'm läze,' {Puat} \gate\ 'Doua,' {pūakse} \to poke\ 'aunshôakre,' {fuat} \away from\

'wachj fonn,' {Füag} \a carpenter's joint\ 'Holtoabeida ziene Akjêfêbinjungk,' {Fua} \load\ 'waut maun oppjêloodt haft,' {Hua} \whore\ 'Tselj,' {hüagch} \high\ 'nichj läachj,' {Kuarn} \a grain\ 'zou's Weit,' {küare} \to be ill chronically\ 'lang krank zenne,' {Luabääblaut} \bay leaf\ 'Jêwert's,' {lûa!} \wait!\ 'Wacht!,' {Shtua~Shtoua} \store\ 'Laufkje,' {shtûa} \stern, taciturn\ 'shtiew, iearnst emm Bêname.' The vowel cluster occurs freely, not only following (k~g~ch) .) As already said earlier in connection with (o), there are numerous and changing variations in pronunciation in regard to (o) and (u). In speech of some Plautdietsch speakers one seldom or never hears a distinction. In the speech of others (ua) and (ûa) can be distinguished in the word pair: {Bua} \housebuilder\ 'dee but ên Hüs' and (Bûa) \farmer\ 'dee deit bûare.' In my wife's dialect the distinction is never heard. In speakers who do make the distinction, it can be heard most clearly word finally, word medially it appears as (ûê) .. Plautdietsch examples: pronounced (Bûêk), written {Bûak} \book\ |Buch| /libro/ 'tou'm läze,' pronounced (Ûêkê), written {Ûake} /eaves/ |Traufel| /socarrén/ 'wua Jâwêl ên Bân toupkoomme,' pronounced (jênûêch), written {jênûach} \enough\ |genug| /bastante/ 'daut rieakjt tou,' pronounced (Plûêch), written {Plûach} \plov\ |Pflug| /arado/ 'wuamett eena plieajchjt.' The following word list places many of these vowels and vowel cluster in contrasting positions: {Oat} \a kind, variety\ 'nê Zort,' {Uat} \a place\ 'ên Plauts,' {ût} \out of\ 'êrüt,' {Ûak, Ûake} \eves\ 'wua Bân ên Jâwêl toupkoomme,' {zöage} \to saw\ 'Holt shniede,' {Döag} \days\ 'meeaus een Dach,' {düage} \is worth something\ 'waut wieat zenne.'

**q, v, x, y** do not appear in Plautdietsch, except in certain loanwords.

**w** pronounced (v) as in English: \very\ |sehr| 'zeea,' \have\ |haben| 'habe,' the German: |was| \what?\ 'nê Fröag,' and in the Spanish: /ven!/\ |come!| |komm!| 'komm!,' Plautdietsch examples: {wie} \we\ |wir| /nosotros/ 'ieashte Perrzoun Meeatsool,' {Dûw} \dove\ |Taubel| 'Föagêl,' {boowe} \up above\ |oben| /encima/ 'nichj unje.' Whenever (w) is followed by voiceless consonants if is assimilated and pronounced (f) for example: {lâw + t} becomes (lâwft); however, we suggest that such words be written {lâwt} \he lives\ 'hee ess aum Lâwe' in order to preserve the visibility of the root.

**z** in German is written (s) as in |Salz| \salt\ 'Zolt,' |Dose| |box| 'Dooz.' Plautdietsch examples: {zaje} \say\ |sagen| /decir/ 'waut ütshpräakje,' {Zodda} \drizzle\ |regnerisch| /llovizna/ 'zacht räajne,' {Kozze} \goats\ |Ziegen| /chivos/ 'Meeatsool fonn "Kozz",' {Booz} \hurry\ |sich sputen| /apurrarse/ 'zichj shpoude.'

**zh** written (ž) in IPA and pronounced as English: \azure\ 'himmellblau,' \leisure\ 'nusht tê doune.' One never finds /zh/ word initially. Plautdietsch examples: {buzhrichj} \tousled\ |zerzaustes Haar| /despeinado/ 'dee Hoa gaunts fêtsoddat,' {rûzhd} \buzzing noise\ |rauschen| /zumbar/ 'änlichj aus bromme,' {Moazh} \anus\ |Aftermündung| /ano/ 'Ûtgangk emm Hinjarenj.'

Phonemes that distinguish the meanings of words—two kinds of proof: here is a longer series of words either minimally different or in similar environments that illustrate many of the phonemic distinctions which this study has established: {Boaj} \mountains\ 'meea aus een Boach,' {Döag} \days\ 'meea aus een Dach,' {düage} \worth something\ 'waut wieat zenne,' {Dieachj} \dough\ 'tou'm Broot bake,' {bieaje} \to bend\ 'krumm möake,' {bäaje} \to bathe a wound\ 'emm heeténWoota houle,' {Böage} \a sheet of paper\ 'een Blaut Papiea,' {büage} \bent\ 'krumm jêmöakt,' {bü'ê} \to build\ 'Hüs bü'e,' {Bü'a} \builder\ 'dee bü't,' {Bua} \farmer\ Bauer /campesino/ 'Laundtwirtschafta,' {Biea} \pillow case\ 'Kjessêbedakjungk,' {Beea} \beer\ 'tou'm drinjke,' {Bäa} \fruit\ 'Frucht,' {Däa} \door\ 'emm Hüs,' {doa} \there\ 'dort,' {Doua} \gate\ 'emm Tün,' {Düa} \in the long run\ 'daut hellt fäa,' {düare} \it lasts\ 'fäa houle,' {dieare} \it takes time\ 'wou lang,' {diea} \expensive\ 'daut kost!,' {küare} \to be sickly\ 'lang krank zenne,' {Küa} \ medical treatment\ 'medditsienische Bêhaundlungk,' {Kooa~Chooa} \choir\ 'Zenja,' {Koa} \car\ 'Foatichj têt'm foare,' {foa!} \drive!\ 'loos foare,' {Fua} \load\ 'Oopjêloodnêt,' {fäa} \to do something\ 'fäa habe,' {Fiea} \fire\ 'daut brennt,' {fieare} \to celebrate\ 'ên Fast möake,' {fuare} \drove\ 'zennt jêfoare,' {lüare} \to wait\ 'wachte,' {leeare} \to teach\ 'unjarechte,' {Läajês} \lies\ 'jêlôagnêt,' {looj} \listless\ 'krauffloos,' {Lüag} \bleach solution\ 'têt'm blicakje,' {lüach} \lied\ 'haft jêlôage,' {Lôag} \condition\ 'Toustaundt,' {läajchj} \low\ 'nichj hüagch,' {Läajês} \lies\ 'jêlôagnêt,' {Plüach} \plow\ 'têt'm plieaje,' {Plôag} \plague\ 'Shwierichkjeite,' {Plieaj} \plows\ 'têt'm plieaje,'

### Other Observations on Writing Plautdietsch.

There are important details about writing Plautdietsch even beyond the different letters used in the alphabet.

**Why not use (tj) when writing words like {etj-ekj}?** But before we go into them there is one alphabet matter that warrants analysis: why not use tj when writing words like {etj-ekj}? One of the greatest bones of contention in developing a practical orthography has been the issue of the use of (tj or kj) in writing words like {etj-ekj} \the first person singular pronoun\ . From the phoneticians point of view, the palatal {tj} and the palatal {kj} can over lap in their points of articulation. So phonetics alone cannot resolve this issue for us. In cases such as this, linguists call upon what has been called pattern pressure, i.e., how do similar sounds pattern in the language operate? In Plautdietsch there is excellent help here. We have a velar phoneme {ch} and we have a palatal counterpart {chj}. Again we have another velar phoneme {g} with a palatal counterpart {gj}. On the basis of this pattern, we can say that we should consider that velar {k} and palatal {kj} are also part of the same pattern. But why no {tj}? None of the other non-nasal alveolar phonemes exhibit a palatal counterpart—there is no (sj), no (ly) and no (rj). Thus we conclude the pattern of this language strongly suggests {kj}. Furthermore {kj} preserves the relationship that this sound had with that of older Germanic language forms.

**Dialect differences.** There are dialect differences between people from the Old Colony in Russia, also called Chortitza and those from the Molotchna colony,

also called the New Colony. My Uncle Cornie used to say that one could immediately ascertain from which colony a given person came because the people from the Old Colony always hung and (m) on every word. His example for it was: {Kluckên sheetên eenên groutên Klompên}. The Molotchna people, in contrast, said: {Kluccke shiete eenên groutên Klompe} 'clucks always shit a big pile.'. There are many more differences between these two dialects, for example, {jêwast~jêwäze} \were\ 'dee Fêgângênheit fonn "zenne",' {jênuu~jêneiw, blau~bleiw} \exact~blue\ where (au~eiw) contrast with each other, {ekj zie~ekj zenn} \I am\ and many more.

There are also dialect differences between individual persons, as I have already mentioned for my wife and myself. Now new dialect differences are arising because Plautdietsch is spoken in countries whose national languages are distinct. As loanwords are borrowed from these languages, new differences develop. For example, the influence of Russian, which in the past was very great, is now going to diminish with the almost complete exodus to Germany of Russian Mennonites. However, the influence of Spanish is going to increase greatly because we now have somewhere near 100,000 Mennonites resident in Spanish-speaking countries.

**Long compound words.** High German can produce many long compound words, for example: |Haustürshlüsselochrand| \the edge of key hole in the house-door\ 'dee Raundt fonn däm Shlätêlloch enn'ne Hüsää.' This can also be done in Plautdietsch: {Hüsääshlätêllochraundt}. One can almost make compound words without end.

**Open and closed transitions.** Certain affixes do not make a closed transition between the affixes and the word-root to which they are attached, for example, in words like: {bê + kjeepe, fê + tale} etc., one slides easily from the prefix to the word-root. But certain combinations don't do this, especially when the root-word ends or begins with a vowel: {bê + endje > bê'endje} \to end\, {fê + endre > fê'endre} \to change\ and {Frü+êS} which is pronounced {Frü'êS} \women\. Something similar happens with the suffix (-a) which indicates the profession of a given person, for example: {zû-} \to suck\ 'waut lutshe' + (a) produces {zû'a} \sucker\ 'jêmaundt dee doa züt.' Should one write only {zûa} one would not be able to distinguish between the words {zûa} \sour\ 'nichj zeet,' ên {zû'a} \sucker\ 'jêmaundt dee doa züt'. For this reason we are indicating open transition with (˘). (One could easily use a different symbol and write: zû˘a). Often this open transition is marked by a glottal stop. This fact has already been noted by J. W. Goerzen (1972).

There is a similar opening of the transition in certain vowel clusters, for example: in the clusters {au~oa~ua~üa~üa} etc., one finds a smooth transition between the vowels juxtaposed, however, in clusters like: {ie+a} in {Fiea} \fire\ 'daut brennt,' and {Tiea} \wild animal\ 'ên Willt,' the cluster: {ee+a} in {zeea} \very\ 'zeea shwoa,' and {Beea} \beer\ 'Drinkjtichj,' and the cluster {ou+a} in {Doua} \gate\ 'daut Doua emm Tün,' {Oua} \ear\ 'tê'm hieare' the transition is more open; but in these cases we have never observed the development of a glottal stop. On the basis of this, we write them without marking the transition.

**Voiced consonants become voiceless.** Certain verb stems which end in a voiced consonant (b, d, g, j, z, w) become voiceless when they precede (p, t, k, ch, chj, s, f). Examples: {ekj toub, dü toubst~toubpst, hee toubt~toubpt} \I, you, he rave~s\; {ekj bäd, dü bädst~bädst, hee bädt~bädt} \I, you, he prays\; {ekj zöag, dü zöagst~zöagchst, hee zöagt~zöagcht} \I, you, he saws\; {ekj zaj, dü zajst~zajchst, hee zajt~zajcht} \I, you, he says\; {ekj tozz, dü tozzst~tozzst, hee tozzt~tozzst} \I, you, he drags\; {ekj jleew, dü jleewst~jleewst~jleewst, hee jleewt~jleewt~jleewt} \I, you, he believes\. In all these cases we will continue to write the consonant as voiced even though it usually will be assimilated to voicelessness; or in some cases we actually get both, a voiced and a transitional epenthetic voiceless consonant before the voiceless affix. Examples: {jleew + t} is often pronounced (jleewft) believes\, and {zöag + st} is often pronounced (zöagchst) \you saw\.

Certain words whose roots end in voiced consonants become voiceless word finally: for example: {Aunfangk} \beginning\, and {Rêjierungk} \government\. Here we write both the voiced and the voiceless consonants because we want to preserve the visibility of the root form. This same thing happens when words are compounded: {Bäd + Shtund > Bäd(t)stund} \prayer meeting\ and {Bad + Shtäd > Bad(t)stääd} \bedstead\. However, up to this point, our observation has given us no clear pattern under which conditions this assimilation does or does not happen. For this reason we have not been able to establish a general rule. Can someone help?

**Only partially articulated consonants.** Peter Fast, who was associated with the translation of the Plautdietsch New Testament, has already noted that certain consonants are begun but not fully articulated. His example involves the suffix {-kje} the diminutive, which when it is added to stems that end in stops like: (b, d, g, p, t, k), the last consonant of the word-root is started but not fully articulated or released. Examples: {Pogg + kje > Pogkje} \small frog\. The pronunciation begins with (-g) but is never fully pronounced. One often hears only the release of the (-kj). Other examples would be: {Bätkje, Badkje, Rebbkje, Klockkje} \a little bit, small bed, little rib, tiny clock\ respectively, and many more. I believe this phenomenon is related to word final voiced consonants becoming voiceless, but so far it has not been possible to determine the precise pattern. That this is not a new development we can demonstrate with Mennonite surnames which end in -dt; for example: Niefeldt, Braundt, Maundtla, etc.

A similar phenomenon one notices in verbs whose word-roots end in (b,d,g). When the past-tense suffix {-de} is added, for example: {meed + de > meedde} \to rent\, {bäd + de > bädde} \to pray\, {rad + de > radde} \to talk\ etc. In these examples we do not get two fully articulated consonants, only the final consonant of the word-root seems somewhat lengthened.

**Nasal consonants.** Nasal Consonants often develop a transitional homo-organic epenthetic stop before a following stop consonant. Words ending in (m, n, nj, ng) often develop a transitional homo-organic stop consonant before a following stop; examples: (hee kjemm(p)t) \he comes\, (daut Jung(k)kje) \that small boy\, (finje + t > finj(kj)t) \finds\, etc. We have not written such transjion

consonants as a rule. But in the case of the word {shwame} \to swim\ one does develop a voiceless transitional consonant. Example, word finally: {ekj shwomp, dü shwompst, hee shwomp} \I, you, he swam\. Here it seems necessary to write the consonant.

**Certain words need to have their accent marked.** In certain words the accent should be marked (\accent\, /accento/) by means of ( ˘ ) because it is essential to get the intended meaning. For example, there is a difference between the words {áwazeene} \to look at the whole\ 'daut gauntse bêzeene' with the accent on the first syllable and {áwazeéne} \to supervise\ 'waut nichj moakje,' with the accent on the second part of the verb. Other examples are: {wádahoole} \to fetch again\ 'noch eemool hoole' and {wadahoóle} \to review\ 'daut zelwje noch eemool doune,' {únjashtoone} \to stand underneath\ 'unja waut shtoone' and {unjashtoóne} \to investigate\ 'waut noo forshe,' {únjahoule} \to hold under\ 'unja irrjént waut houle' and {unjahóule} \to converse\ 'mett jeemaundt nobre.'

**Ellipses.** Ellipsis means that certain parts of the speech are left out in a given word. Ellipsis is marked by an ( ˘ ). In this regard Plautdietsch is similar to German which contracts certain words that are contracted when the parts are joined: e.g., {zu + dem} > {zum}, {tu + dem} > {tóm} \to the\, {in + dem} > {ínm} \in the\, {enn} + {dám} > {emm} \in the\. Other similar contractions are: {bie'm} \by the\, {derchj'm} \through the\, {noo'm} \to the\, {mett'm} \with the\, etc. Some ellipses of this kind add an (r~rê) as sort of a transition: e.g., {áw'rê} \over the\, {hínj'rê} \behind the\, {unj'rê} \under the\, {boow'rê} \above the\, etc. {Jäajén + däm} becomes {jääjn'ém} \against the\.

A similar kind of ellipsis occurs with {dee} 'demonstrative'. Plautdietsch examples: {bie + dee} > {bie'de} \by the\, {noo + dee} > {noo'de} \to the\, and {tu + dee} > {tu'de} \for the\. Similar ellipses: {áw're} \over the\, {unj're} \under the\, {hínj're} \behind the\, {bow're} \above the\, {enn'ne} \in the\, {omm'ne} \around the\, {opp'ne} \on the\, {jääj'ne} \against the\, and {aus'e} \when the\, {derchj'e} \through the\, {omm'e} \about the\, {bott'e} \until the\, {mett'e} \with the\ and {fonn'ne or fonn'e} \from the\.

The pattern which is equivalent to German {das} 'neuter article' isn't strongly developed in Plautdietsch: {lin + das} > {ínl}. Similar to: {laufs, fürs, durchs} > {enn'êt} \in it\, {opp'êt} \on it\, {ferr'êt} \before it\, {derchj'êt} \through it\, {jääjn'êt} \against it\, etc.

Something similar happens with the preposition {aus}: e.g., {zou + aus} > {zou's} \just as\; and with {hee}: in {jinkj + hee} > {jinkj'a} \did he go?\.

A different kind of ellipsis can be seen with certain verbs: {kjenne, kunne, meene, welle, habe, wudde} Notice the second person singular: {kau'st, mee'st, we'st, ha'st} \can you, do you think, do you want to, have you\. Or the second person plural: {kje'je, ku'je, ha'je} \can you, could you, have you\. Also the first person plural: {kje'we, ha'we} \can we, have we\.

There is a third kind of ellipses in which (n) is ellided: {eenmool} > {ee'mool-ê'mool} \once\, {Aunfangk} > {Au'fangk} \beginning\, {aunjênám} > {au'jênám} \comfortable\, {aunrechjte} > {au'rechjte} \to precipitate\. Similar are: {au(n)shiere} \touch\, {au(n)zeene} \look at\, {au(n)shriewe} \write down\,



{c(nn)loote} \get involved\, {e(nn)zate} \put in place\, {e(nn)shriewe} \write in, enter\ , {e(nn)wei'ê} \consecrate\, {e(nn)woare} \become aware of\, and many more. Other similar Plautdietsch examples are: {ê'naun} \up against\, {ê'naunda} \one another\, {ê'nenn} \into\.

There also are individual words the exhibit ellipsis or even ellipses: {unja + eenaunda > unj'rênaunda} \among each other\. Similar :constructions occur with: {bowa} \over\, {âwa} \across\ and {jâajên} \against\.

Similar also are elisions of {r, l, t, g} in specific words: {Fêrheea > Fêheea} \legal hearing\ 'zou's emm Jêrecht.' Similar too are: {oa(r)m} poor\ 'dee ess schlachjt auf' or \arm\ 'ên Kjarpdeel,' {au(l)s} \when\ 'Binjwuat,' {eena(t)lei} \all of one kind\ 'eene Zort,' {Drôa(g)benja} \suspenders\ 'tou'm Bekjse opphoule.'

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper has been published in Plautdietsch in the appendix to: *Onze iestasht Missjounsreiz*

<sup>2</sup>For works relating to this study see the following selected bibliography:

## References

Herman Böning, *Plattdeutsches Wörterbuch*. (Dinklage: Verlag Heimatverein Herrlichkeit, 1970);

Robert H. Buchheit, *Mennonite "Plautdietsch": A phonological and morphological description of a settlement dialect in York and Hamilton Counties, Nebraska*. A Dissertation. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1978);

Gerhard Cordes and Dieter Moeyn, *Handbuch zur niederdeutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissen-schaft*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1983);

Henry Dietrich Dyck, *Language Differentiation in two Low German Groups in Canada* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1964);

Reuben Epp, "Plautdietsch: Origins, Development and State of the Low German Language." *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, (1987): 60-72; "Low German: Where it came from; and where it's going." *Mennonite Mirror*, (January 1989): 5-6; *The Story of Low German & Plautdietsch*. (Hillsboro, KS: The Reader's Press, 1993); *The Spelling of Low German & Plautdietsch*. Hillsboro, KS: The Reader's Press, 1996);

Peter Fast, *Wie räden en läsen Plautdietsch* (Hillsboro, KS. & Winnipeg, MB. Kindred Press, 1987);

J. W. Goerzen, *Ute Hellie Schrefte* (Edmonton, AB; Published by author,

1968); *Ute Gewide Schrefte*. (Edmonton, AB. Published by author, n.d.); *Low German in Canada A Study of "Plautdietsch"*. (Edmonton, AB. published by the author, 1970);

Wolfgang Lindow, *Plattdeutsches Wörterbuch* (Bremen: Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache, 1984);

Harry Loewen and Al Reimer, "Origins and Literary Development of Canadian-Mennonite Low German," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 59 (1985): 279-286;

Eric Mierau, *A Descriptive Grammar of Ukrainian Low German* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Indiana, 1964);

Walter Mitzka, *Deutsche Mundarten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitäts-Verlag, 1943); "Die Sprache der deutschen Mennoniten." *Heimatblätter des Deutschen Heimat-bundes*, 8:1 Danzig, (30):10; W. W. Moelleken. "Die Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Kanada und Mexiko: sprachliche Entwicklung und diglossische Situation," *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie*, 54 (1987): 145-183; "Spracherhaltungsfaktoren in den mexikanischen Siedlungen der rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten," *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 24 (1986): 61-81;

Dieter Möhn, "Geschichte der niederdeutschen Mundarten," in Cordes & Moehn, *Handbuch*, 154-181;

Pike, Kenneth, *Phonemics* Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1949);

Jacob (Walter ) Quiring, *Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd=Russland* (München: Druckerei Studentenhaus München, Universität 1928);

Herman Rempel, *Kjenn Jie noch Plautdietsch?* [A Mennonite Low German Dictionary]. (Winnipeg: MB: Mennonite Literary Society, 1979, revised 1984);

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, *De taal der Mennonieten* (Groningen, Netherlands, 1992 [ A report on a symposium on Plautdietsch held 24 October 1992]);

Jack Thiessen, *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*. (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1977); "Dietsche Jäsch," Ein Indianer aus dem Chaco erzählt in plattdeutscher Mundart, *Jahrbuch für ostdeutsche Volkskunde*, Bd. 27, (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1984): 326-332; "Mennoniten Plautdietsch, Woher? Wohin?" *Der Bote*, 1 April, 1992, 4; "A New Look at an old Problem: Origins of the Variations in Mennonite Plautdietsch," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 62 (1988), 285-296;

Ulrich Tolksdorf, "Die Mundarten Danzigs und seines Umlandes." *Danzig in*

*acht Jahrhunderten.* (Münster: Nicolaus-Copernicus-Verlag, 1985), 313-336;

Victor Maksimovich Zhirmunskii, *Dialectical and Ethnographical Studies of German Settlements in the USSR.* , 1933 (n.p., n.d.)