

# Amish Shwitzer as a mixed language with closely related parents

Guido Seiler

LMU München

Mixed languages inherit linguistic subsystems from two different parental languages, viz. e.g. Media Lengua with Quechua grammatical structure and Spanish lexicon. Such systematic splits seem to be possible only in mixed languages whose parental languages are genetically and typologically distant from each other. However, Amish Shwitzer (Indiana, USA) is a mixed language derived from two closely related parental languages, namely Bernese Swiss German and Pennsylvania Dutch, whereby grammatical structure is largely Pennsylvania Dutch and Bernese linguistic features are concentrated in the lexicon. It is thus a so far unreported type of mixed language.

In my presentation I will first give a short overview of the history and the present situation of the language, based on fieldwork from 2016 and 2017. Amish Shwitzer is spoken by 10'000 speakers in Adams County, Indiana (USA). They are the descendants of Swiss (Bernese) Anabaptists who immigrated in the mid-19th century. I will then show that the language inherits many features from Bernese Swiss German but at the same time it is pennsylvanized to a large degree. I will close with remarks and observations concerning the sociolinguistic embedding under which this kind of mixed variety has had a chance to emerge and stabilize.