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Mennonite Low German in contact with Spanish and Standard German in Paraguay and Mexico

A corpus-based analysis of morphological, syntactic and lexical features

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Abstract

The present research deals with morphological, syntactic and lexical phenomena found in the Mennonite Low German varieties spoken in the Menno colony in Paraguay and the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies in Mexico. It is explored whether the differing sociolinguistic conditions in the communities, including the speakers' degree of exposure to Spanish and High German, led to distinct developments of the respective Low German varieties. Firstly, it is determined whether the analyzed features are present in other Low German dialects and, more specifically, in the variety of the former colony of Chortitza in southern Russia, from which the speakers of both communities originate, or whether they constitute innovations. Subsequently, a corpus-based study is conducted in order to compare the frequency of occurrence of the phenomena in Menno and the Mexican colonies. All in all, the results indicate that the variety spoken by Menno speakers exhibits fewer deviations from High German than the one spoken by Mexican Mennonites, albeit a higher proportion of Spanish terms have been integrated into the former's mental lexicon.

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1. Introduction

Der is nich hier <u>wegens</u> her <u>sin</u> Voda helpe dät (Men-35)

Ik <u>würd sollen</u> die Kinder den Hund wiesen (Mex-87)

Wann ik würd min Hüs verköpe <u>würd</u> dat sehr trürig <u>sene</u> (Men-6)

*Ik <u>will</u> immer <u>helpen</u> de ganze Welt (*Mex-25)

Wann her diesen <u>contrato firmar</u> wird dann wird her v- verspielen (Mex-7)

The examples provided above illustrate some of the features of the Mennonite Low German (MLG) varieties spoken in the Paraguayan colony, Menno, and the Mexican colonies, Manitoba and Swift Current. Although the speakers of both communities[1] share the same migration history (see section 3), their Low German varieties have further developed under different sociolinguistic conditions in Paraguay and Mexico. The present thesis studies characteristic morphological, syntactic and lexical features of these language varieties based on the analysis of linguistic data collected by Göz Kaufmann between 1999-2002, focusing on the differences resulting from the particular language contact situations present in each community. More precisely, the following five phenomena are explored: 1) the reduction of the declension system in possessive articles, 2) the use of *wegen/s* 'because of' as a subordinating conjunction in causal clauses, 3) the use of analytic subjunctive forms with modal and auxiliary verbs, 4) the extra-position of elements out of the verbal bracket in main clauses with a two-part verbal complex, and 5) the borrowing of Spanish terms.

As discussed in the literature (cf. Matras 2012; Riehl 2004, 2010), sociolinguistic factors such as the status of the participating languages, the intensity of contact with the majority society and the level of institutional support enjoyed by the languages play an essential role in either accelerating or inhibiting the process of linguistic change in contact situations. In the communities studied, the differing degrees of contact with Spanish and High German (HG) may have led to distinct developments of the respective Low German varieties. In view of the fact that speakers in Menno are more exposed to High German than Mennonites in the Mexican colonies (cf. Kaufmann 2007, 2011), it is hypothesized that the first four phenomena under investigation occur more frequently in Mexico than in the Paraguayan colony, i.e. the variety

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[1] As discussed by Madera (1996: 171), establishing the boundaries of a speech community is not an easy task. For the purposes of this research, the Mennonites' groups in Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current, even though sharing the same language and cultural background, are treated as two (sub-)communities not only on geographical grounds, but also in consideration of the different language attitudes and patterns of use of the language varieties involved.

spoken in the former deviates to a greater extent from High German. As for the lexical borrowings from the majority language, given its importance as a language of instruction in Menno –together with High German– and the scarcer contact with it in Mexico, one would expect to find more Spanish loanwords in Paraguay. These assumptions build on previous studies conducted on MLG varieties in North and South America (cf. e.g. Kaufmann 2000, 2003, 2011, 2015b).

The aim of the present research was to provide further insights into the external and internal factors for language maintenance and change in language contact situations. Firstly, it was ascertained whether the phenomena (1), (2), (3) and (4) are characteristic features of *Niederdeutsch* (Low German) as described in the literature (cf. Appel 2007; Stellmacher 2020) and, more specifically, of the MLG dialect of Chortitza (cf. Quiring 1928), or whether they constitute innovations in the *Plautdietsch* (Mennonite Low German) varieties studied. In the latter case, attempts were made to elucidate the reasons for the undergone linguistic developments. In addition, quantitative analyses of the occurrence frequency of the phenomena in Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current were carried out in order to determine whether significant differences, presumably arising as a result of the differing sociolinguistic conditions, exist between the communities.

This thesis is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the concept of 'language island' and briefly outlines possible external and internal factors for language change and maintenance. Next, section 3 gives an overview of the migration history of the Mennonites' groups under investigation and presents studies conducted on the morphological, syntactic and lexical features of the MLG varieties spoken in Menno and the Mexican colonies. Section 4 discusses the sociolinguistic situations present in the communities focusing on the intensity of contact of Mennonite Low German and the surrounding languages, the functional domains in which MLG, HG and Spanish are used and the language competences of the members of both communities in relation to the variables gender and age. Subsequently, section 5.1. presents the data set and the methodology adopted for the analysis of the same. Thereafter, the aforementioned phenomena are described and the frequencies of occurrence in each community are compared (section 5.2.). The analysis of Spanish loanwords is performed on the basis of the borrowing hierarchy proposed by Matras (2007, 2012). Lastly, section 6 summarizes the results of the analyses and presents avenues for future research.

2. Language change and maintenance in language islands

As discussed by Eichinger (1997: 159), the concept of a 'language island' evokes the image of an island surrounded by the sea "als das Äquivalent einer von einem fremden Element umgebenen Identität, welche mit Mühe und gegen alle Wahrscheinlichkeit ihren Bestand wahrt" [as the equivalent of an identity surrounded by an alien element that, with difficulty and against all odds, maintains its existence]. Language islands are characterized by the fact that their inhabitants speak a language that differs from that spoken by the majority society, from which they live in relative isolation. As pointed out by Rosenberg (2004: 221), this allows them to preserve "their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, administrative, and sometimes religious distinctness", as has been the case of Mennonites throughout their history.

Depending on the level of isolation from the majority community, Rosenberg (2014: 223) differentiates between 'introvert' and 'extrovert' language islands, with the former showing a greater resistance to external influence given limited contact with the linguistically different surrounding population. 'Extrovert' language islands, by contrast, are more prone to assimilation of foreign elements and, hence, their language variety is more likely to be influenced by the majority language. In language contact, a distinction is made between matter and pattern borrowing (cf. Matras 2012). While the former involves the replication of concrete linguistic material (e.g. lexemes or lexeme stems) from the 'donor' to the 'recipient' language, the latter refers to the replication of linguistic structures (e.g. case-marking or word-order patterns) (Matras 2012: 148, 235; Haspelmath 2009: 38-39). In addition to the level of interaction between speakers of language islands and speakers of the majority community, the process of replication of foreign elements is conditioned by other extra-linguistic factors such as the degree of institutionalization of the minority variety (as a language of instruction, a cult language or a language used in the media), the presence/absence of contact with the motherland, the importance of learning the majority language in light of better future opportunities, among others (Riehl 2013: 175).

Moreover, language change can be the result of internal typological tendencies in the language variety in question, as well as cognitive principles (Riehl 2013: 172-175; Rosenberg 2014: 229). As highlighted by Riehl (2010: 284), in the relative isolation of language islands, these immanent tendencies of language change can be accelerated especially in cases of "lack of external norms (mainly norms of a written language), that could [conversely] decelerate internal developments of a language system".

Having briefly outlined possible external and internal factors of language change/maintenance, the next sections map the migration history of the Mennonites, describe the current sociolinguistic situations in the studied communities and present an analysis of linguistic features found in the corresponding MLG varieties in light of the above.

3. Origins and history of the Mennonites

The Mennonites are a denomination that emerged from the so-called Anabaptist movement in the course of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Besides the Evangelical Lutheran Church, other religious movements arose during the time. One of them was Anabaptism, which originated around 1525 in Zurich as part of the Swiss Reformation (Mühlan 2014: 31). Given the persecution members of the Anabaptist community were exposed to from the beginning – especially by Catholic authorities–, they were forced to continuously flee. As a result, their ideology spread rapidly, starting in the Upper German-speaking area and subsequently reaching northern Germany and the Netherlands around 1530-31 (Fast 1971: 15-20).

The term 'Mennonite' is derived from the name of the former catholic priest Menno Simons (1496-1561), who after breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church became the leader of the so-called peace-minded Anabaptist movement in what was then Flanders and Frisia (cf. Urry 1983: 241; Bixler-Márquez 1989: 97; Kaufmann 2015a: 189, 2011: 191). Over the last centuries, Mennonites have migrated to different countries not only on religious, but also on politico-economic grounds (Raith 1997: 313).

3.1. The migration history of the Mennonites to Mexico and Paraguay

Due to severe religious persecution, a large number of Mennonites migrated to West Prussia in the 16th century (Urry 1983: 243; Kaufmann 2011: 191). As discussed by Epp (1897: 65), "they settled into an area that already had been inhabited by a resident Low German population since the thirteenth century". The so-called *Plautdietsch* variety –or Mennonite Low German– developed via the assimilation of the dialect spoken by the locals, namely *Niederpreußisch* (cf. Wiesinger 1983: 891), by Mennonite immigrants, who at the same time integrated a significant number of words from their own dialects (Epp 1897: 65; Thiessen 2007: 62). While *Plautdietsch* was employed in normal discourse, until the second half of the 18th century, Dutch was the language used in church services and for written communication. At the beginning of

their stay in Prussia, Mennonites enjoyed certain privileges granted by the Polish king and local authorities that allowed them to maintain their religion and cultural practices (Urry 1983: 243). As pointed out by Krahn (1989 as cited by Ostendorf 2017: 72), *Plautdietsch* did not experience any significant influence from Polish, which is probably due to the relative isolation the Mennonite community lived in.

With the partition of Poland between Austria, Russia and Hohenzollern Prussia in 1772 and the acquisition of West Prussia by the latter, the Mennonites started facing restrictions with land purchases, which, given the growing population, represented a problem for the community (cf. Urry 1984: 244). In view of these difficulties, in 1786 they accepted an invitation by Catherine II of Russia to settle in the south of the country. The first colonies they founded were Chortitza in 1789 and Molotschna in 1804, followed by am Trakt in 1855 and Alt Samara in 1859. Emigration continued over the next decades and several daughter colonies were founded during the 19th century (cf. Moelleken 1987: 147; Mühlan 2014: 37). Initially, the Russian language played a very minor role in the lives of Mennonites, as their colonies were self-governed with very little intervention from the local authorities. In interactions with family, friends and members of the community they kept employing their Low German dialect and used Standard German for school instruction, church services and written communication (Moelleken 1987: 150). Nevertheless, the situation changed drastically with Tsar Alexander II in power, who made Russian the uniform language of instruction and introduced compulsory military service, an institution that went against Mennonites' principles. As Moelleken (1987: 151) notes, these changes represented a threat to their religion and culture, the reason why between 1873 and 1878 many Mennonites –mainly from Chortitza and their daughter colonies Bergthal and Fürstenfeld– decided to leave for North America. Despite the implemented measures, according to Quiring (1928: 108), the influence of Russian on their dialect was minimal and limited to the lexical domain[2], even for those who did not emigrate until the 1930s.

Between 1873 and 1880, a large number of Mennonites migrated to Canada, where they first established the primary settlements, East Reserve and West Reserve in Manitoba. In 1982, having the possibility of acquiring more land, they founded the colonies Hague-Ostler and Swift Current in the province of Saskatchewan (Moelleken 1993: 24). As in Russia, they were at first able to administrate their colonies and run their own schools, where they established German as the language of instruction. The rights granted to them by the Canadian government allowed

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[2] As per the author, most Russian loanwords belong to the following semantic fields: Agriculture, household, clothing, kinship terms, administration, traffic and diseases (cf. Quiring 1928: 109-114).

them to maintain their language and cultural practices during the initial years of their settlement (Moelleken 1987: 151-152). In 1916, however, the government of Manitoba approved a law stipulating that English was to become the language of instruction in all schools of the province. As a result of this, a large number of Mennonites living in Manitoba and Saskatchewan resolved to seek a new home in Mexico and Paraguay (Moelleken 1987: 154). As Dyck (1971: 206) points out, losing the German language by adapting to the requirements of the Canadian government would mean losing their Mennonite denomination and culture. According to Ehlich (1997: 189), it has been a characteristic of Anabaptist communities to reinforce the role of their language as an identity symbol distinguishing themselves from the surrounding environment. For these groups, their (church) language constitutes "an integral part of their religion and tradition", so that "its abandonment is perceived […] to lead to a possible loss of the traditional religion itself" (Moelleken 1997: 395).

A crucial factor in migrating to Mexico, in addition to the relative ease with which it could be reached from Canada, was the fact that the Mexican government had guaranteed Mennonites important privileges such as religious freedom and the right to have their own school system without interventions from the local authorities. Between 1922 and 1926, thousands of Mennonites settled around the city of Cuauhtémoc, located in the state of Chihuahua, where they founded the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies, named after the Canadian province Manitoba and the city Swift Current in Saskatchewan respectively. They were followed by others who settled a little farther south in Patos, Durango, where they established a third primary settlement, Hague, also named after their city of origin in Saskatchewan (Dyck 1971: 207; Bixler-Marquez 1989: 98; Moelleken 1993: 26). Simultaneously, Mennonites who could not emigrate from Russia to Canada in the 1870s, landed in Mexico around 1929-30. A second migration wave from Canada to Mexico did not occur until 1948, when a large group of families from the Kleingemeinde church (see section 4.1.) decided to leave the country (Dyck 1971: 207-208).

Likewise, in the early 1920s, the Paraguayan government assured the Mennonites special rights, including religious freedom, the possibility of having their own schools and the exemption from military service. The first Mennonites arrived in Paraguay around 1926 and founded the Menno colony, located in Loma Plata, Boquerón (Dyck 1971: 208; Ostendorf 2017: 51). After the foundation of the Soviet Union, a large number of Mennonites left Russia and settled in Filadelfia, Boquerón, where they founded the Fernheim colony in 1931 (Mühlan 2014: 39). Nonetheless, in 1937, due to adverse conditions in Filadelfia, which caused the death

of many inhabitants from typhoid fever, about 140 families moved to eastern Paraguay, where they founded the Friesland colony. After World War II, Mennonites from Russia, who had first fled to Germany and then to Paraguay, founded the Neuland colony in the northwest of the country near Fernheim and Vollendam in the east. A second migration wave from Canada took place in the year 1948, when a large group of Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan settled in a primitive forest area in eastern Paraguay. Given the agricultural conditions and climate, however, about one-third of the settlers returned to Canada, while the remaining ones established the Bergthal and Sommerfeld colonies (Dyck 1971: 209-210). Until the year 1983, more primary colonies with migrants from Russia, Canada and the United States as well as daughter colonies were founded (cf. Mühlan 2014: 41; Ostendorf 2017: 51).

The following table illustrates the migration pathways of Mennonites currently living in Loma Plata and Chihuahua, who are the focus of the present research. In addition, the migration history of Fernheim Mennonites is also presented, given the influence they have had on the Menno colony over time.

15th cent.	Flanders, Frisia		
16th cent.	West Prussia		
1790s	Chortitza, Russia		
1800s			Molotschna, Russia
1870s	Manitoba/Saskatchewan, Canada		
1920s	**Chihuahua**, Mexico	**Loma Plata**, Paraguay	
1930s			Filadelfia, Paraguay

Table 1: Mennonite migrations. Adapted from Kaufmann (2007: 150).

3.2. Mennonite Low German around Cuauhtémoc and in Loma Plata: State of research

The present section describes the main findings pertaining to morphological, syntactic and lexical features of the *Plautdietsch* varieties spoken in the colonies under study. An analysis of the declension system of MLG can be found in Kaufmann (2004), where the author studied the use of dative and accusative markers in definite articles and personal pronouns. The results

suggest that the dative form *ihm* is displacing the accusative form *ihn* in both communities. As for definite articles, different patterns can be observed: Whereas Mennonites from Menno use dative and accusative forms correctly in most cases (71% and 82%), Mexican Mennonites tend to overuse accusative forms (100% for direct object marking and 92% for indirect object marking) (cf. Kaufmann 2004: 293).

Till date there are no studies on the use of analytic and synthetic subjunctive forms, as well as on the variation in the use of causal subordinating conjunctions in the MLG varieties under study. Likewise, the order of elements in main clauses with a two-part verb complex has yet not been investigated. There exist, however, studies on the different sequences of verbal elements in embedded clauses. Kaufmann (1997) explored the word order variants in clauses consisting of a modal verb and an infinitive and an auxiliary verb and a participle in Chihuahua and Texas. In light of the focus of this research, only the results of the former are reported. In translations of the stimulus sentences *Ella sabe que tiene que ayudar a su madre* 'She knows that she **must help** her mother' (Standard German: *Sie weiß, dass sie ihre Mama **helfen muss***) and *Ellos no saben que él no hizo nada* 'They do not know that he **has** not **done** anything' (Standard German: *Sie wissen nicht, dass er nichts **gemacht hat***), the following main variants were identified:

(a) Main clause, conjunction – subject – particle/object – infinitive – finite (corresponding to the Standard German syntax)
*Sei weit, daut sei ihra Mama **helpen muat.***
*Die weiten nev, daut her nichts **gedon haft.***

(b) Main clause, conjunction – subject – particle/object – finite – infinitive (corresponding to one of the possible structures in Dutch)
*Sie weit, daut sei ihra Mama **muat helpen.***
*Die weiten nev, daut her nichts **haft gedon.***

(c) Main clause, conjunction – subject – finite – particle/object – infinitive (corresponding to the Flemish syntax)
*Sei weit, daut sei **muat** ihra Mama **helpen.***
*Die weiten nev, dat her **haft** nichts **gedon.***

(d) Main clause, subject – finite – particle/object – infinitive (corresponding to the Standard German syntax of a subordinate clause without introductory conjunction)
*Sei weit, sei **muat** ihra Mama **helpen.***
*Die weiten nev, her **haft** nichts **gedon*** (Kaufmann 1997: 185-186).

The results showed that most Mexican Mennonites use type a) for both sentences (31.91% and 47.73%), followed by type b) for clauses consisting of a modal verb and an infinitive (25.53%) and type c) for those consisting of an auxiliary and a participle (25%) (cf. also Kaufmann 2000). As the author points out, despite the restructurings, the bracketing principle –a distinct feature of Standard German syntax– is still maintained (Kaufmann 1997: 187-188). Sentences in which the principle is not followed (*Sei weit, (daut) sei **muat helpen ihra Mama**) occur only in 2.7% of the cases (Kaufmann 1997: 191). The comparison of Mexican Mennonites and speakers from Menno in a subsequent study (Kaufmann 2007) showed that, even though both use the German-like variant (a) in most cases (Mex: 45%, Menno: 92.1%), the percentage of usage of (b) and (c) in Mexico (b: 32.3%, c: 21.9%) is much higher than in Menno (b: 2.6%, c: 5.3%) (cf. Kaufmann 2007: 175).

As far as the study of lexical borrowings is concerned, the first investigation on the lexicon of Mexican Mennonites was conducted by Brandt (1992), who analyzed a recording of a school lesson in the *Blumenau-Gemeinde*, located in the Manitoba colony, and determined the proportions with which Low German, Standard German, Spanish and English words were used. As expected, the highest percentage corresponds to Low German terms (76.35%). Regarding the borrowings, it was shown that most loanwords come from Standard German (14.79%) and only a small percentage comes from Spanish and English, with the amount of terms borrowed from Spanish being higher with respect to that from English (4.82% vs. 0.74%). Moreover, speakers also use hybrid forms, which always consist of a combination of *Plautdietsch* and Standard German terms (Brandt 1992: 280). In contrast, a study carried out by Kaufmann (1997) on the influence of the majority languages on the lexicon of the Low German varieties spoken in Chihuahua and Texas yielded different results. For the purpose of the research, informants were presented with 28 pictures displaying everyday objects and were asked to designate them using the terms they would employ in conversations with family members (Kaufmann 1997: 167). In order to analyze the collected data, the author established the following categories: relic words[3], heritage words (Low German, English and Spanish[4]), hybrid words and loanwords. The study showed that in Mexico, relic words and Low German

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[3] Relic words refer to Low German terms that, despite being under pressure from the majority languages, are still used in less than 25% of the cases (Kaufmann 1997: 174).

[4] For a term to be considered a heritage word, it has to meet at least one of the following conditions: a) the term is used –alone or with variants in the same language– at least in 75% of the cases in both countries, or b) the term has been phonologically integrated into Low German and coexists with a non-integrated word in the corpus (Kaufmann 1997: 174-175).

heritage words were used in 1% and 65.12% of the cases. While no Spanish heritage word was used, English heritage words were employed with a high frequency (24.05%). As suggested by the author, these terms may have already become established in Canada, since it is unlikely that Mexican Mennonites started to use English words with such frequency only recently in Mexico. As for the hybrid words, not only Standard German-Low German but also English-Low German mixed forms were found (Mex. 0.06% and 0.17% respectively). Lastly, it was shown that Spanish loanwords are used with a lower frequency than English loanwords (Mex. 2.57% vs. 6.81%) (Kaufmann 1997: 177-178).

In a further study, Kaufmann (2003) described the linguistic origin of a series of terms used by the speakers of five colonies, including Menno and the Mexican colonies around Cuauhtémoc. The data was collected using the same method as in the previous study. The comparison of Menno and the Mexican colonies showed that the use of Standard German words is much more frequent in the former than in the latter (23.1% vs. 1.1%), which can be attributed to the influence of the more progressive Fernheim colony on Menno (cf. Kaufmann 2003: 158). As for English and Spanish terms, the percentage of use of words from English is considerably higher in Mexico than in Menno (25.3% vs. 6.1%), while Spanish words are used twice as much in Menno as in Mexico (5.4% vs. 2.6%). Further research on lexical borrowings in the Low German varieties spoken in Paraguay was conducted by Thiessen (2007), who focused on Menno and its neighboring colony, Fernheim. On the basis of an elicitation task, in which participants were asked to give the names of 28 selected objects, it was shown that Menno's younger generation tends to use more Spanish words than the older one, who uses English terms instead. Thiessen (2007: 68-69) argued that this tendency is due to the influence of Fernheim, where a higher number of Spanish loanwords are already incorporated in the MLG variety.

4. Sociolinguistic situation around Cuauhtémoc and in Loma Plata

When studying language contact situations, extralinguistic factors such as the "intensity of cultural contact, the roles and status of the participating languages, language attitudes and the degree of institutional support enjoyed by the languages" (Matras 2012: 154) need to be taken into account. The present section discusses some sociolinguistic issues in the communities, including the degree of contact with the majority society and surrounding indigenous communities, the functional domains (cf. Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1965) in which Mennonite

Low German, High German and the majority language, Spanish, are used in the communities, and the language competences of the members in relation to the variables age and gender.

4.1. Manitoba and Swift Current

The colonies Manitoba and Swift Current are located in northern Mexico around the city of Cuauhtémoc in the state of Chihuahua. According to Kaufmann (2011: 191), there are approximately 40,000 Mennonites spread throughout this area. As discussed by the author, Mennonites in Mexico are not only in contact with Mexicans, but also with the Tarahumara, a group of indigenous people living on the Sierra Tarahumara, east of Cuauhtémoc (1997: 68-69). Nevertheless, as he states, interactions between Mennonites and the latter are minor and normally take place in Spanish, spoken as a L2 by both, so that no influence of the Tarahumara language on *Plautdietsch* is to be expected. Their contact with Mexicans is stronger, although mainly limited to the work sphere, where the language of communication is almost exclusively Spanish (cf. also Moelleken 1987: 163; Brandt 1992: 27). As per Kaufmann (1996: 69), most informants claim to have learned Spanish through interactions with Mexicans working on their parents' farm. As further explained in section 4.3., the intensity of contact with Mexicans is related to church membership and gender.

Mennonites living in Mexico mainly belong to the following churches: Old Colony, Reinland, Sommerfeld, Kleingemeinde, General Conference and Gottesgemeinde. The first three derive directly from the Old Colony Mennonite Church in Russia, whose members migrated to Canada in the 1870s and then to Mexico in the 1920s. The Kleingemeinde was founded in Russia in 1812 and its members reached Mexico in the year 1948 (see section 3.1.). Although the first migrants settled in the municipality of Naimquipa, Chihuahua, over time additional communities were established around Cuauhtémoc. Lastly, the General Conference and Gottesgemeinde, founded in 1860 and 1930 in North America, reached Mexico through a missionary movement from the USA (Kaufmann 1997: 60-61). On the basis of the practices and beliefs of their members, the aforementioned churches can be classified as follows: While the Old Colony, Reinland and Sommerfeld have a conservative orientation, the General Conference and the Gottesgemeinde constitute the most progressive Mennonites churches in Mexico, and the Kleingemeinde is categorized as semi-progressive (Kaufmann 1996: 60).

Within the colonies, the language of communication among the members is exclusively *Plautdietsch*, while a Mennonite High German variety is used in church services and for school

instruction (Moelleken 1993: 27). As pointed out by Moelleken (1997: 394), this variety combines elements from Low and High German, thus differing considerably from the modern High German used in Germany. Especially in schools attended by members of the more conservative Mexican churches, the learning of this variety of High German is based merely on reading, copying and repeating traditional religious texts. What is more, it has been suggested that students do not really understand the texts they have learned or that they do so only to a limited extent (Brandt 1992: 16). As for the teaching materials, the only ones that are allowed in these schools are a manual, the bible, a catechism and a religious songbook (Dick 1971: 208; Moelleken 1987: 165). On the other hand, in the schools run by the more progressive churches, High German is taught in a more creative way and students have access to other textbooks. Nevertheless, as highlighted by Brandt (1992: 17), the same are mostly written by Canadian or North American Mennonites, which implies that the language is subject to censorship on religious grounds. Moreover, the consumption of secular books, newspapers and magazines is frowned upon (Moelleken 1987: 166). In a nutshell, the acquisition of modern High German through contact with native speakers or through the use of regular German books is not desired in the Mexican colonies under study. As far as English and Spanish language instruction is concerned, only adult members of the more progressive churches have access to it.

Similar to what happens in school, Sunday church services in the conservative congregations consist of the mere quotation of paragraphs from the Bible or religious songs, accompanied by a few comments by the priest in MLG. According to Moelleken (1987: 165-166), the religious leaders never produce sentences in High German on their own and the community has no opportunity to discuss the texts or ask questions. In contrast, in the Kleingemeinde, in addition to the Sunday services, another kind of religious gathering takes place during the week, where the members are expected to debate on certain biblical texts, with the preacher functioning as a moderator. Naturally, this requires an active use of High German which is not present in the conservative churches (Moelleken 1987: 167).

Apart from the contact Mennonites have with the High German variety at school and in the church, they have the possibility of reading the *Mennonitische Post*, a weekly magazine produced by Canadian Mennonites containing biblical passages, travelogues and news from the settlements in North America (Moelleken 1987: 166). As is to be expected, the High German variety found in the magazine differs markedly from the one Germans are familiar with (Brandt 1992: 19). Furthermore, as stated by Moelleken (1987: 166), many members of the community admit to not being able to understand the texts in High German, which according to the author

are written in a simple style. Even though the dominant language in the magazine is HG, the same also includes a rubric in LG. Moreover, there is a special supplement for Mexican Mennonites called *Menno-Zeitung für Mexiko*, which contains letters and contributions from readers in *Plautdietsch*. All advertisements found in it are in High German and Spanish, sometimes used in combination with Mennonite Low German (Brandt (1992: 19-20) as can be seen in the following flyer of a shoe-store.

Image 1: Advertisement in the *Menno-Zeitung für Mexiko* (Brandt 1992: 21).

In addition to the newspaper, there is a German radio station, which was created in 1986 with the aim of improving Mennonites' command of High German. During the first years, roughly two-thirds of the broadcasts were in HG and only one-third in MLG. Only three years after its foundation, however, the entire transmission started being in LG, with only a few songs in HG being included (Brandt 1992: 19). All in all, the contact Mennonites have with High German is pretty limited, unlike in Menno, where speakers are more exposed to it.

4.2. Menno

The Paraguayan Menno colony is situated in the northwest of the country, with its main settlement in Loma Plata, Boquerón. According to the 2012 census, the colony was inhabited by around 9,000 Mennonites (cf. Dueck Braun 2020: 84). As stated by Kaufmann (1997: 68, 2003: 145), the speakers of the Menno colony are in contact with a conservative variety of High German strongly influenced by the Bible, a variety of modern High German, as well as with the majority language in Paraguay, Spanish, and the indigenous languages Guarani, Enhlet and Chulupi. Unlike in Mexico, in Paraguay many indigenous people work for Mennonites, so that

the interaction between both groups is stronger. Nonetheless, the language of communication is mostly *Plautdietsch*. Additionally, English plays an important role in the colony, not only because of the Canadian origin of the speakers and the still ongoing relations with Canada, but also due to its importance as a world language.

As in Mexico, the predominant language of communication among members of the community is *Plautdietsch*. In school, however, Mennonites come in contact with a variety of modern High German since the 1950s, when a reform of the then traditional school system took place. This movement, whose main goal was the modernization of the old teaching methods, was strongly supported by the Fernheim colony and later on by Germany. Indeed, many teachers from Fernheim and its neighboring colony Neuland worked in the schools that were under reform in Menno (Warkentin 1998: 309 as cited by Kaufmann 2003: 153). It must be taken into account that after Mennonites from Chortitza and its daughter colonies left Russia in the 1870s, those who remained until 1930 reached an agreement with the Russian government, whereby they were not only released from military service, but also German was reintroduced as a language of instruction, this time within an education system that had undergone significant improvement. As a result, the ancestors of the Mennonites in Fernheim left Russia with a higher proficiency in High German than those of the Mennonites in Menno, in addition to the fact that they spent about a year as refugees in Germany before leaving for Paraguay (Kaufmann 2004: 260, 2011: 194-195). This would explain why the *Plautdietsch* in Fernheim, strongly influenced by High German, was for a long time considered the prestige variety in relation to the one spoken in Menno.

Since the reform of the education system in Menno, most courses are conducted in High German already from primary level. The number of hours dedicated to teaching Spanish, which is very low at the beginning (roughly two hours), increases gradually from grade five. From grade ten, the German language is of little importance in comparison to Spanish, since it is not required in the curriculum by the Paraguayan *Ministerio de Educación y Cultura*. Additionally, in the eleventh grade, students are also taught English as a foreign language (Dueck Braun 2020: 88). Paraguayan Mennonites are in close contact with the German Embassy and the *Zentralstelle für deutsches Schulwesen* (Central Office for German Education) in Asunción, which not only provides them with school materials but also sends German teachers to the schools as and when required (Kaufmann 2011: 195). As observed by Thiessen (2018: 85), however, there is still a large difference between the variety of modern High German spoken by students in Menno and that in Germany. As per the author, the German spoken by most

teachers –as well as by preachers in church– differs considerably from the variety spoken in Germany, so that students only come into contact with it passively, i.e. through television, the Internet and textbooks. In addition to the *Mennonitische Post*, Mennonites in Loma Plata have access to a local newspaper called *Menno Informiert*, which is also written in High German, and to national newspapers and magazines (Dueck Braun 2020: 89). Contrary to what happens in Mexico, the consumption of German textbooks as well as national and international media is not subject to censorship (cf. Warkentin 2007).

Whereas the function of High German in the Mexican colonies is fundamentally religious, its role in Menno is not limited to the sacral sphere. As described above, over time it also gained importance as a language of instruction, especially due to the influence of Fernheim, where maintaining contact with the language of their mother country has historically been a major concern (cf. Warkentin 2009). For this reason, whereas speakers in Mexico "employ a *hagiolectal* form of High German that derives from older religious texts and is largely uninfluenced by the modern European standard variety" (Kaufmann 2011: 194), the modern variety spoken in Menno is closer to High German as known in Germany.

4.3. Language competences

Despite the differences regarding the degree of integration of speakers from Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current into the majority society, the Mennonite Low German varieties have been preserved in both countries "als Symbol der Abgrenzung zur Außenwelt" [as a symbol of demarcation from the outside world] (Raith 1997: 316). In similar lines, Haarmann (1997: 222) writes:

"Die Existenz einer Gruppe [...] definiert sich jeweils durch positive Elemente der Zusammengehörigkeit (interne Gruppensolidarität) und durch negative Elemente der Abgrenzung gegenüber anderen Gruppen (externe Grenzmarkierung der Gruppe). Eine der Grunderfahrungen eines jeden Individuums ist das Erleben seiner sprachlichen Zugehörigkeit, wobei die sprachliche Vertrautheit im Umgang mit Kontaktpersonen das Verhalten ebenso prägt wie das Bewußtsein der Sprachbarriere gegenüber anderssprachigen Gruppen."

[The existence of a group [...] is defined by positive elements of togetherness (internal group solidarity) and by negative elements of demarcation from other groups (external

boundary marker of the group). One of the basic experiences of every individual is the experience of his language affiliation, whereby the linguistic familiarity in the interaction with contact persons shapes behavior just as much as the awareness of the language barrier with respect to groups speaking other languages].

In the case of Mennonites, living in relative isolation from the surrounding environment throughout their history has been a means of preserving their cultural heritage. As discussed previously, their linguistic affiliation is closely linked to their identity as a religious community, so that the possible loss of their language is perceived as a threat to their religion itself. Even though the ancestors of the Mennonites from both Manitoba/Swift Current and Menno were among the conservative groups, being the first to leave Russia in view of the new regulations implemented by the government in the 1870s, over time the way of life in the Menno colony began to change markedly, especially post the education reform.

The following table illustrates the competences in Low German, High German and the majority language in Manitoba/Swift Current and Menno, as surveyed by Kaufmann[5] (1997, 2004). The data below reflects the speakers' perceptions of their language proficiencies.

	Manitoba/Swift Current	Menno
PLAUTDIETSCH		
Younger	very good	very good
Older	very good	very good
Male	very good	very good
Female	very good	very good
HIGH GERMAN		
Younger	OK	good
Older	OK	OK
Male	OK	good
Female	OK	good

[5] In order to gather the displayed information, Kaufmann (1997, 2004) conducted a survey including the following questions:

1) Do you speak *Plautdietsch* very well, well, sufficiently or poorly?
2) Do you speak Spanish very well, well, sufficiently or poorly?
3) Do you speak High German very well, well, sufficiently or poorly?
4) Do you speak English very well, well, sufficiently or poorly?
5) Indicate the order of proficiency with which you master these languages.

SPANISH		
Younger	OK	OK
Older	OK	OK
Male	OK	OK
Female	bad	OK

Table 2: Language competences. Adapted from Kaufmann (2007: 151).

As can be seen, speakers from both Menno and the Mexican colonies exhibit a high competence in *Plautdietsch*, showing that in spite of being in contact with different languages throughout their migration history, they have maintained their variety as a distinctive sign of their identity. As for the competences in High German, the difference between both is in line with the characteristics of their respective school systems. The fact that younger members of the Menno colony have a higher proficiency in High German than older ones can be seen as a result of the above-described reform in the education system. As depicted in the table, women in the Mexican colonies display a lower proficiency in Spanish than men, which is related to the fact that it is mainly the latter who come into contact with Mexicans, either through interactions in the work environment or through closer relationships with them (Moelleken 1897: 162-163; Kaufmann 1997: 69; Brandt 1992: 27). Furthermore, in Mexico, language competence in High German and Spanish is dependent upon church membership, with Mennonites belonging to the progressive ones, i.e. General Conference and Gottesgemeinde, exhibiting the highest proficiency (Kaufmann 1997: 145).

5. Analysis

5.1. Methodology and data

In order to answer the research question, a corpus-linguistic approach was adopted. McEnery & Wilson (2001: 1) define corpus linguistics as the study of language based on the observation and empirical analysis of samples of speech data produced by real speakers. The present research draws upon the corpus *Mennonitenplautdietsch in North and South America (MEND)*, available on the *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch (DGD)*[6]. The linguistic data comprised

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[6] https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/

in the same was collected between 1999-2002 using 46 stimulus sentences either in Spanish, Portuguese or English. These were read to Mennonites from Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil and the USA, who had to subsequently translate them into *Plautdietsch*. For speakers to be able to participate, a good command of the source language was required.

This study focuses on linguistic phenomena found in the Mexican colonies, Manitoba and Swift Current, and the Menno colony in Paraguay, both sharing the same migration history as highlighted above (see section 3.1.) and thus originally speaking the so-called Chortitza-Platt (Kaufmann 2003: 143; Thiessen 2007: 66). Prior to the corpus analysis, it was determined whether the identified phenomena are characteristic features of Low German dialects and, more specifically, of the Chortitza dialect, or whether they constitute innovations in the varieties spoken in Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current. For the purposes of this study, the responses of 103 speakers from the Mexican colonies and 42 speakers from Menno were analyzed. As illustrated below, the populations comprise speakers of both genders and different age groups. Since the oldest informants in Menno were born in 1941 and 1946, it can be assumed that all participants "entered a school system which had already been strongly influenced by the contact with Fernheim (and the founders of Neuland), i.e. by the contact with modern approaches to studying European Standard German" (Kaufmann 2011: 195).

	Age range	Mexico	Menno
Total number of informants		103	42
Male	≤ 25 years	19	9
Female	≤ 25 years	18	8
Male	26-40 years	21	8
Female	26-40 years	17	7
Male	≥ 41 years	18	5
Female	≥ 41 years	10	5

Table 3: Age and gender distribution. Adapted from Kaufmann (2007: 160).

The elicited data was analyzed, as far as possible, by means of search queries on the DGD website. By using the available metadata filters, it was possible to readily focus on the linguistic data produced by Mennonites from Menno and the Mexican colonies. In order to determine the extent to which the respective Low German varieties deviate from High German

as well as the extent to which Spanish terms are integrated into speakers' mental lexicon, the frequency of occurrence of each phenomenon in Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current has been explored and compared. To verify whether the frequency differences between the communities are statistically significant, that is, whether there is a correlation between belonging to a given community and the frequency of occurrence of the analyzed phenomena, chi-square tests of homogeneity, or Fisher's exact tests in cases where the requirement of minimum expected counts was not met, were performed.

5.2. Linguistic features of *Plautdietsch* in Manitoba/Swift Current and Menno

As stated, *Plautdietsch* is a Low German variety that emerged as a result of the adoption of the language spoken in the Vistula region (West Prussia), namely *Niederpreußisch* (Low Prussian), and the incorporation of terms from the Mennonites' own dialects. Although Mennonites from Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current share the same migration history, their respective Low German varieties may have developed in different directions given the sociolinguistic situations present in the communities. The following sections describe a set of phenomena identified in speakers' language use, namely the simplification of the declension system in possessive articles, the use of *wegen/s* as a subordinating conjunction, the use of analytic subjunctive forms, the extra-position of elements out of the verbal bracket in main clauses and the presence of lexical borrowings from the majority language.

5.2.1. Uses of accusative and dative in possessive articles

According to Appel (2007: 67), most German dialects tend towards a simplification of the declension system. In the literature it has been suggested that the majority of Low German dialects exhibit a two-casus-system consisting of the nominative and the so-called oblique or object case (cf. e.g. Schrier 1965: 431; Stellmacher 2020: 195). As Appel (2007: 291) discusses,

> *Eine wesentliche strukturelle Divergenz zwischen niederdeutschen Dialekten und der deutschen Standardsprache besteht im Schwund des (synthetischen) Genitivs und dem Synkretismus von im Mittelniederdeutschen noch unterschiedenen Dativ- und Akkusativformen, so dass dem morphologischen Vier-Kasus-System der Standardsprache im Niederdeutschen [...] ein Zwei-Kasus-System gegenübersteht.*

[An essential structural divergence between Low German dialects and the standard German language is the decline of the (synthetic) genitive and the syncretism of dative and accusative forms still distinguished in Middle Low German, so that the morphological four-casus-system of the standard language is contrasted with a two-casus-system in Low German].

In his study on the Low German variety in Chortitza, South Russia, Quiring (1928: 85) claims that, although the same exhibits the nominative, accusative and dative case, the dative has predominantly become equal to the accusative, being still recognizable only in masculine definite and indefinite articles (Nom.: *de, en (ņ);* Acc.: *den, en, ņ;* Dat.: *dem, ṃ*). Siemens (2002: 149-150) points out that in the Chortitza-Platt, spoken by both Mennonites from Menno and Manitoba/Swift Current, accusative forms are preferred over dative ones. Conversely, in the Molotschna-Platt, spoken among others in Menno's neighboring colony, Fernheim, dative forms prevail. In the same vein, Kaufmann (2014) demonstrated that, as far as definite articles are concerned, Mexican Mennonites show a generalization of accusative forms. In the Menno colony, on the other hand, the (mostly correct) use of both accusative and dative forms was attested, relating possibly to the influence of High German as a language of instruction.

As per Quiring (1928: 92), in possessive articles –as well as in adjectives– the accusative has completely displaced the dative in the Chortitza-Platt. Accordingly, the forms depicted below take the accusative *-en* [ən] ending in the object case.

Nominative			
Sg.	1. *mîn*	Pl.	1. *ons*
	2. *dîn*		2. *jûn*
	3. *zîn*		3. *ēa*

Table 4: Possessive articles in the Chortitza variety (Quiring 1928: 92).

In order to study the usage of accusative and dative forms in possessive articles, the translations of four stimulus sentences were analyzed, in which the possessives function as direct objects (cf. 1a, 1b), indirect object (cf. 2) and the object of a preposition governing the dative case (cf. 3). Given the importance of High German as a language of instruction in Menno,

one could expect to find dative forms in its MLG variety as a result of the influence of the standard variety.

(1)   Direct object (accusative masculine)

a.   *El doctor que quiere ver **mi pie** está muy preocupado.* 'The doctor who wants to see my foot is very worried.' (HG: *mein**en** Fuß*)

b.   *Está tan triste porque debería haber advertido a **su amigo**.* 'He is so sad because he should have warned his friend.' (HG: *sein**en** Freund*)

(2)   Indirect object (dative masculine)

       *No está aquí porque está ayudando a **su padre**.* 'He is not here because he is helping his father.' (HG: *sein**em** Vater*)

(3)   Preposition with dative (masculine)

       *Quién es el hombre que podría haber salvado la vida de **mi hermano**.* 'Who is the man who could have saved my brother's life.' (HG: *von mein**em** Bruder*).

In the translations of the first two sentences (1a, 1b), where the accusative marking is syntactically required, most speakers used the forms *min/sin*, followed by *minen/sinen* with the corresponding *-en* accusative ending. In addition, the forms *mine/sine* were found in both communities and one occurrence of the form *mi* was identified in Menno.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
minen/sinen	44 (24%)	25 (32%)
min/sin	124 (67%)	29 (37%)
mine/sine	17 (9%)	23 (30%)
mi	-	1 (1%)
	185	78

Table 5: Possessive articles functioning as direct object.

Although, as illustrated above, possessive articles with the *-en* ending are used more frequently in Menno, the difference in the frequency of occurrence of standard vs. non-standard forms (*min/sin, mine/sine, mi*) between the communities is not significant, X^2 (1, n = 263) = 1.94, p = .1637). In translations of (2), where the dative marking was syntactically required, no

occurrence of the *-em* ending was found in either community. As can be seen in table 6, also here the use of the forms *min/sin/din*[7] is prevalent both in Mexico and Paraguay.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
minem/sinem/dinem	-	-
minen/sinen/dinen	11 (10,7%)	9 (24%)
min/sin/din	47 (45,6%)	21 (57%)
mine/sine/dine	45 (43,7%)	7 (19%)
	103	37

Table 6: Possessive articles functioning as indirect object.

In the translations of the last sentence, however, 1 and 5 occurrences of the form *minem* following the preposition *von* 'of' were identified in the Mexican colonies and Menno respectively. Statistical analysis showed that the difference in the use frequency of standard (-*em*) and non-standard forms between the communities is significant (p = .0124, *one-sided Fisher's exact test*). Alternatively, a few instances of the form *mim* were found, which although not being standard, denotes the differential treatment of accusative and dative.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
minem	1 (3%)	5 (29%)
mim	4 (12%)	3 (18%)
minen	9 (26%)	1 (6%)
min	19 (56%)	8 (47%)
mine	1 (3%)	-
	34	17

Table 7: Possessive articles functioning as prepositional object.

As in the previous cases, the form *min* prevails in both communities. The fact that only few occurrences of the periphrasis '*von* + possessive article' have been attested is due to the

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[7] Note that some speakers translated this sentence using 1. and 2. person possessive articles.

predominant use of the possessive construction *min/e/n/m Bruder sin/dat Lewen* 'my brother his/the life' (cf. 4, 5), commonly found in German dialects (cf. Zifonun 2003; Strunk 2005). Even in cases where this construction was used, the form *minem* was identified only once in the corpus, namely in Paraguay.

(4)   *Wer is der Mensch wat haf- (0.3) wat k- hat könnt **min Bruder (0.4) sin Lewe** rate* (MEND_E_ 00225_SE_01, Men-3)

(5)   *Wont is der Mann wat da würd han könnt **minen (0.5) Bruder dat Lewen** raten* (MEND_E_ 00178_SE_01, Mex-103)

The analysis of the use of accusative and dative shows the existence of a wide variation in the forms, which is inherent to the process of language change (cf. Riehl 2010: 284). It is noteworthy that the same is sometimes also present in the language use of the same speaker.

(6)   Men-26   *Wer is der Mann wat da min- (0.6) äh: (0.3) dat Lewe von **minem** Bruder (0.7) äh na was- was sage*
        INT   *Quién es el hombre que podría haber salvado la vida de mi hermano*
        Men-26   *dat Lewe l- äh rate von **minen** Bruder* (MEND_E_00249_SE_01)

The simplification of the case system has been attested both in German varieties in contact with languages exhibiting a rich case system, such as Polish and Russian, and with languages where cases are predominantly unmarked, such as English and Romanian, which suggests that the same may result from internal language change (Riehl 2010: 283; cf. Rosenberg 2004: 229). As discussed by Rosenberg (2004: 229-230), "case reduction […] [is] part of a long-term development from synthetic to analytic structures in German" which involves "the redistribution of functional category marking to single linguistic elements" and is certainly more radical in dialects than in High German. Both in German dialects and German language island varieties, "the genitive in most functions is substituted by prepositional or dative constructions" (e.g. *dat Lewen von min Bruder, minem Bruder sin Lewen*) and "dative and accusative usually merge into one oblique case", either being taken over by accusative or dative forms (cf. Chortitza vs. Molotschna varieties). Moreover, this development is in line with the cognitive principle of economy, as Riehl (2013: 173) points out: "In der Morphologie erzielt man Ökonomie meist durch eine Vereinfachung der Formen und Reduktion des Formenreichtums" [In morphology, economy is mostly achieved by simplification of the forms

and reduction of the abundance of forms]. As the analysis has demonstrated, the reduction of dative forms in possessive articles described by Quiring (1928) for the Chortitza-Platt holds in the varieties spoken in Mexico and Paraguay to different extents. Some instances of the use of the dative ending *-em* were found especially in Menno, albeit only in the prepositional phrase *von minem Bruder*, which is probably related to the fact that it constitutes a fixed compound (chunk). The loss of the accusative endings attested in both MLG varieties, as has been also identified in Barossa German in South Australia (cf. Schmitz 2011 as cited by Riehl 2013: 168), would represent a further development in the reduction process (*minem > minen > min*[8]), probably reinforced by the contact with Spanish, which does not display case marking in possessive articles (nom. *mi*, acc. *mi*, dat. *mi*).

5.2.2. Subordinating conjunctions in causal clauses

Another characteristic feature of the *Plautdietsch* varieties spoken in Menno and the Mexican colonies is the use of *wegen/s* 'due to, because of' as a subordinating element in causal embedded clauses, as can be seen in the following example taken from the MEND corpus.

(7)   *Der wird nich kummen **wegen** der haft nich Tied*
        'He will not come because (of) he has no time' (MEND_E_00076_SE_01, Mex-2)

While this phenomenon was not described by Quiring (1928), it has also been identified in the Low German variety spoken in Westrhauderfehn, located in the state of Niedersachsen in northwestern Germany (e.g. ***Wēgen** he grōt is, het he't stūr* 'Because he is tall, it is tough for him') (cf. Kettner 1978: 293). By contrast, in High German *wegen* is exclusively used as a causal adposition, either preceding or following a nominalized form in the genitive case, as in (8a) and (8b), the former use being more frequent than the latter (Zifonun, Hoffmann & Strecker 1997: 1173). Causal embedded clauses, on the other hand, are mostly introduced by the subordinating conjunction *weil* 'because' (Zifonun et al. 1997: 2298) as in (9).

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[8] It must also be borne in mind that the omission of the reduced vowel [ə] in the endings of possessive articles and the simultaneous elision of the nasal consonant (*mit seinem Vater > mit seim vadder*) is a common phenomenon in spoken language (Katelhön 2018: 65).

(8)   a.   ***wegen*** *dieser Tat*

        b.   *dieser Tat* ***wegen***

                'because of this (f)act' (Zifonun et al. 1997: 78)

(9)   *Sie verzichtet auf den Urlaub,* ***weil*** *sie keine Zeit hat.*

        'She gives up the holiday because she doesn't have time.' (Duden 2016: 632)

According to Thiessen's (2003) Low German dictionary, in MLG varieties the form *wejen/s* coexists with the causal conjunction *wiels*. Once again, considering the fact that speakers from the Menno colony are more exposed to High German than Mennonites from Manitoba/Swift Current, one could expect to find a greater proportion of use of the form *wiels* –corresponding to the HG form *weil*– in the former than in the latter. The corpus data shows that indeed, as observed by Thiessen (2003), speakers in Menno and the Mexican colonies use both *wegen/s* and *wiel/s* or *weil/s* as subordinating elements in causal embedded clauses.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
wegen/s	815 (78%)	289 (68%)
weil/s - wiel/s	227 (22%)	133 (32%)
Total	1042	422

Table 8: Frequency distribution of *wegen/s* and *weil/s - wiel/s.*

As illustrated in the table, the form *wegen/s* is preferred in both communities. Nonetheless, as expected, the forms *wiel/s - weils* occur more frequently in Menno than in the Mexican colonies, where the population is less exposed to High German. A chi-square test of homogeneity showed that the difference in the use frequency of the respective subordinating elements between the communities is significant, X^2 (1, n = 1464) = 15.34, p = .0001. The assumption that the attested distribution may be due to the degree of intensity of contact with HG is supported by the fact that in the more progressive Paraguayan colony, Fernheim, where High German plays a very important role, the frequency of occurrence of *wiel/s - weil/s* is much higher than that of *wegen/s* (62% vs. 38%).

5.2.3. Synthetic vs. analytic subjunctive

In contrast to High German, where both synthetic and analytic subjunctive forms are found, the majority of Low German dialects display only analytic forms (Appel 2007: 95-96), namely the so-called *würde*-periphrasis consisting of the form *würr*[9] and an infinitive verb. If the subjunctive is strictly considered a morphological category, it can be argued that it is non-existent in most LG varieties (cf. Appel 2007: 102; Quiring 1928: 95).

The focus of the section is the codification of the so-called *Konjunktiv II*, whose main function is the expression of irreality/potentiality (cf. 10). As explained in Duden (2016: 528), "Der Konjunktiv II dient als Zeichen dafür, dass der Sprecher/Schreiber seine Aussage nicht Aussage über Wirkliches, sondern als eine gedankliche Konstruktion verstanden wissen will" [The subjunctive II serves as a sign that the speaker/writer does not want his statement to be understood as a statement about real things, but as a mental construction]. Moreover, the same is often used for the expression of politeness, e.g. to formulate a request in the form of a question (cf. 11).

(10)   *Es wäre schon, wenn sie käme/kommen würde*
         'It would be nice if she came.' (Duden 2016: 528)

(11)   *Würden Sie bitte hereinkommen?*
         'Would you please come in?' (Duden 2016: 523)

As mentioned above, while High German exhibits both synthetic and analytic forms, in MLG the subjunctive is not encoded by verbal morphology (e.g. *wäre, käme*), but is formed analytically. For instance, the predicates of the following sentences taken from the MEND corpus contain the form *würd* (3rd person) followed by the infinitive verbs *sollen* 'to shall' and *sene* 'to be' as opposed to the synthetic forms, *sollte* and *wäre*, commonly used in High German (cf. Duden 2016: 468-469).

(12)   *Weits dü dat nich dat hei **würd sollen** äh Englisch lieren*
         'Don't you know what he should (would shall) learn English?' (MEND_E_00176_SE_01, Mex-101)

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[9] Formally speaking, this form corresponds to the indicative preterite of *warrn* (HG: *werden*). The periphrasis is however used in the place of the Standard German subjunctive (Appel 2007: 102).

(13) *Wann ik würd min Hüs verköpe **würd** dat sehr trürig **sene***
      'If I sold my house, it would be very sad' (MEND_E_00228_SE_01, Men-6)

In what follows, the subjunctive II forms of modal verbs and the auxiliary verbs *sein* 'to be' and *haben* 'to have' used in Mennonite Low German are explored. In view of the existing sociolinguistic situations in Menno and the Mexican colonies, it is plausible that one may find both analytic and synthetic forms coexisting in the former as a result of the influence of the modern German variety and a prevalence of analytic forms in the latter. In order to confirm or refute this assumption, the frequency with which periphrases composed of *würd* + modal verbs, *würd* + *sene/sein/sin* 'to be', *würd* + *han/hawe* 'to have' occur in each community as opposed to synthetic subjunctive forms was ascertained[10]. As for the modal verbs, constructions consisting of *würd* + *sollen* 'shall', *würd* + *können* 'can' and *würd* + *muten* 'must' were found.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
würd + sollen / können / muten	38	1
sollte/st/n – könnte/st/n - müsste/st/n	0	0

Table 9: *Würde*-construction with modal verbs.

As depicted in the table, the *würde*-periphrasis occurs more frequently in Manitoba and Swift Current than in Menno. Nevertheless, no synthetic forms are used in the Paraguayan colony. There is one occurrence of the form *könnte* 'could', but since the speaker produces the whole sentence in HG (*Er könnte dieses Hauch- Haus auch für viel weniger Geld kaufen* 'He could also buy this house for much less money') and the interviewer consequently reminds her to do the translations in *Plautdietsch,* it cannot be counted as an instance of synthetic subjunctive in MLG. The analysis of the translation variants for the sentence *¿No sabes que debería aprender inglés?* 'Don't you know that he should learn English?' (HG: *Weißt du nicht, dass er Englisch lernen **sollte**?*) showed that all Mennonites from the Menno colony opt to

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[10] Note that all occurrences of periphrastic subjunctive forms were counted, even those that were used in cases where the subjunctive mood was not required, as in:

INT *Si realmente mató al hombre nadie lo puede ayudar* 'I he really killed the man, nobody can help him'
Mex-40 *Wann her wirklich den Mann todgeschlagen hat keiner **würd** ihm helpen **können*** (MEND_E_00114_SE_ 01)

conjugate the verb in the indicative mood, present tense (*soll* and variants[11]), instead of using the *würde*-periphrasis or synthetic subjunctive forms. In Mexico, on the other hand, 16% of the speakers use the *würde*-construction, while the remaining use present and future indicative forms (*soll, wird sollen* and variants). (Note that cases of mistranslations were not counted).

In regard to the periphrasis *würde + sene/sein/sin,* 5 and 17 occurrences were identified in Menno and in Mexico respectively. Meanwhile, synthetic subjunctive forms were found twice in the former and 10 times in the latter. However, there are instances in the data set for Mexico that although annotated as *wär*, seem to be encoding past tense. In the following sentence, for example, the speaker refers to an individual who disappeared after causing an accident. Given the sequence of events, one might assume that it is the past form *wea* 'was' (cf. Thiessen 2003) which is being used rather than the subjunctive form *wär/e* 'would be'.

(14)   *Dei Mann wat schuldig wär (0.7) bim Unfall (0.3) der is wajchgekummen*
         'The man who was guilty for the accident has disappeared' (MEND_E_ 00087_SE_01, Mex-
         13)

If such cases are disregarded, the distribution of synthetic and analytic forms in both communities is as shown in table 10, resulting in a non-significant difference (p = .6230, *one-sided Fisher's exact test*). Against expectations, it can be observed that synthetic forms do not occur with a considerably high frequency in Menno.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
würde + sene/sein/sin	17	5
wär/e	6	2

Table 10: *Würde*-construction with *sene/sein/sin.*

Lastly, whereas no occurrence of the form *hätte* was found in the corpus, the periphrasis *würd + han/hawe* was identified in pluperfect constructions, coexisting with verb clusters headed by the indicative past form of the verb 'to have'. As noted by Appel (2007: 102), in Low German dialects indicative preterite and pluperfect forms are often used to cover functions

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[11] A few speakers conjugate the verb in the second person (*solls/t*), while others translate the sentence using the verbs *muten (muts/mußt)* also in the second person.

of the subjunctive mood as illustrated in the following example extracted from Lindow et al. (1998: 68): *De Dokter sä, he weer gekommen, wenn he Tiet hatt harr (HG: Der Doktor sagte, er wäre gekommen, wenn er Zeit gehabt hätte)* 'The doctor said, he would have come, if he had had the time'. While no preterite forms of modals and the verb 'to be' covering subjunctive functions were found, there are cases of pluperfect constructions with the verb 'to have' in the past indicative, albeit expressing probability. Compare, for instance, the following translations of the clause *Ayer podría haber vendido el anillo* 'Yesterday I could have sold the ring' (HG: *Gestern **hätte** ich den Ring verkaufen müssen*).

(15)   *Gestere **würd** ik den Fingerring **han** verköpe könnt* (MEND_E_00233_SE_01, Men-11)

(16)   *Gestere **hat** ik könnt den Ring verköpe* (MEND_E_00223_SE_01, Men-1)

The analysis of the translation variants of this stimulus sentence showed that the *würde*-periphrasis and the indicative form *hat* depicted above occur in 86% and 14% of the cases in Menno and 28% and 72% of the cases in Mexico, with no synthetic subjunctive form being identified in either community.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
würde + han/hawe	27 (28%)	30 (86%)
hat	68 (72%)	5 (14%)
hätte	0	0
Total	95	35

Table 11: *Würde*-construction with *han/hawe*.

To sum up, the use of synthetic subjunctive forms is almost absent in both communities. This can be explained by the fact that maintaining the periphrastic subjunctive, i.e. using a sole element (*würde*) to build the subjunctive II of all verbs, is certainly more economic than integrating new synthetic forms from HG. The fact that Menno speakers show a greater tendency to use indicative forms of modal verbs when subjunctive ones are required may be related to the attempt of producing "correct" forms as a consequence of contact with the High variety. As far as pluperfect constructions are concerned, there is a coexistence of indicative forms and *würde*-constructions, the latter being accepted in High German (*würde gelacht haben*

'would have laughed', *würde gekommen sein* 'would have come') (cf. Duden 2016: 529), though regarded as unnecessarily cumbersome considering the frequency of use of the forms *wäre* and *hätte* (Lotze & Gallmann 2009: 236; cf. Zifonun et al. 1997: 1737). Whether the higher frequency of occurrence of the latter in Menno, as opposed to the preference for the past indicative form of 'to have' in Mexico, is related to High German influence in Paraguay cannot be determined within the scope of this study.

5.2.4. Verb placement in main clauses

Another phenomenon observed in MLG is the extra-position of elements out of the verbal bracket in main clauses with a two-part verbal complex. In Quiring (1928), no reference to the syntactic features of the Chortitza-Platt has been made. According to Appel (2007: 114) and Stellmacher (2020: 199-201), the order of constituents in declarative main clauses with one and two verbal element/s in *Niederdeutsch* does not differ from that in High German. Sentences with a two-part predicate are structured following the so-called bracketing principle, also referred to as embraciation principle, whereby (in main clauses) "the finite verb occupies the second position and all other verbal elements the final position" (Gerritsen 2010: 108). For instance, in (17) the main verb *sagen* 'to say' is placed at the end of the clause rather than right after the modal verb *wollen* 'to want'.

(17)   *'k **will** di wat **seggn** (HG: Ich will dir was sagen)*
           I want-to you something tell
           'I want to tell you something' (Moritz Johns 1963 as cited by Stellmacher 2020: 199)

In the varieties of MLG spoken in Menno and Mexico, however, there are a few instances where certain elements are left outside the bracket, a phenomenon that as per Riehl (2013: 170) can be found in all German language islands. Whereas in the first case the adverbial construction *vondag Vormeddag* is shifted to the right, the second one involves the extra-position of the indirect object.

(18)   *Ik **ha** die Schlietels **gefunge** vo- äh: <u>vondag Vormeddag</u>*
           'I (have) found the keys this morning' (MEND_E_00247_SE_01, Men-25)
           *Ich **habe** heute Vormittag die Schlüssel **gefunden** (HG)*

(19)   *Ik **will**: (0.4) immer: (0.5) **helpen** <u>de ganze Welt</u>*
         'I want to always help the whole world' (MEND_E_00123_SE_01, Mex-49)
         *Ich **will** immer der ganzen Welt **helfen*** (HG)

Through the extra-position of the adverbial and the indirect object, the (modal) auxiliary (AUX) and the main verb (MV) are approximated to each other. This tendency has been also observed in Barossa-German in South Australia (cf. *Die **hat geerbt** viel Land* 'She has inherited lots of land') (Riehl 2012: 170). While the extra-position of certain adverbials, normally serving communicative-pragmatic functions, is tolerated in spoken language, the extra-position of objects infringes a grammatical norm of standard German (cf. Riehl 2010: 278).

The frequency with which both elements are extraposed is quite low in the data. In the translations of the above cited sentences, only 2 and 5 cases of adverbial extra-position were found in Menno and Mexico respectively. In addition to the adverbial construction depicted above, there are cases where the adverb *immer* 'always' and the prepositional phrases *in de Welt* 'in the world' / *in de Umgebung* 'in the surroundings' are left outside the bracket.

(21)   *ik **will** die ganze Welt **helpe** <u>immer</u>* (MEND_E_00239_SE_01, Men-17)

(22)   *Ik **will** immer alle **helpen** <u>in de Welt</u>* (MEND_E_00089_SE_01, Mex-15)

It should be noted that most speakers use the simple past tense (*Ik funk* 'I found') instead of the perfect tense construction (*Ik ha … gefunge* 'I have found') in the translations of the first sentence. For the analysis, only those responses where the bracketing principle is applicable were considered.

	Mexican colonies	Menno
Extraposed adverbials	5 (4%)	2 (3%)
Non-extraposed adverbials	129 (96%)	59 (97%)
Total	134	61

Table 12: Adverbial extra-position.

Statistical analysis showed that the difference in the frequency of occurrence of extraposed vs. non-extraposed adverbials between the communities is not significant *(*p = .6186*, one-sided Fisher's exact test)*. As far as object extra-positions are concerned, only 1 and 3 occurrences were found in Menno and the Mexican colonies, the difference being once again non-significant (p = .6293*, one-sided Fisher's exact test)*.

	Mexico	Menno
AUX-MV-OBJ	3 (2%)	1 (2%)
AUX-OBJ-MV	131 (98%)	60 (98%)
Total	134	61

Table 13: Object extra-position.

As can be observed in the tables, restructurings occur with a very low frequency in both communities, which had also been observed by Kaufmann (1997, 2000) in embedded clauses. The sample size, however, does not allow for conclusions to be drawn about this phenomenon. Note that the analysis has been based on the translations of the only two main clauses with a two-part verbal complex contained in the MEND corpus.

The approximation of the constituents of two-part verbal complexes identified in the data is in line with the proximity principle proposed by Givón (1990: 970), which states that "(a) entities that are closer together functionally, conceptually or cognitively, will be placed closer together at the code level, i.e. temporally or spatially; (b) "functional operators will be placed closest, temporally or spatially at the code level, to the conceptual unit to which they are most relevant" (cf. also Behaghel 1923-32, II). As he further explains, this "is reflected in the general tendency to keep grammatical *operators* near their *operands*", i.e. dependents (main verb) near their corresponding heads (auxiliary), probably motivated by ease of parsing. As pointed out by Hawkins (1990: 234), "the human parser prefers orderings that present all IC [immediate constituents] of a node in as rapid a succession as possible". Accordingly, (23b) would be more difficult to process than (23a).

(23) a. *Joe **looked up** the number of the ticket.*
      b. *Joe **looked** the number of the ticket **up**.*

In the same vein, when referring to operations affecting word order change, Harris & Campbell (1995: 220) argue that "often constituents that are not adjacent are reordered to be adjacent", as can be seen in the evolution of the have-perfect construction in English (see Harris 1995: 185 for an account of the reanalysis of the possessive construction 'have + possessed object + adjectival participle' as the perfect construction 'have + participle'). As illustrated in the example below, the same initially exhibited an AUX-OBJ-MV order.

(24)   *he **hadde** þare tweie castles **bi-walled** swiðe faste*
             AUX   OBJ   MV
         he had there two castles walled very securely (Layamon, 13th century)

Over time, however, "the word order in the perfect changed to have the auxiliary and participle adjacent between subject and verb most of the time and in most dialects" (Harris 1995:186), with instances being found 16th century onwards. Similarly, as noted by Gerritsen (2010: 124), embraciation has also disappeared in Germanic languages of the Scandinavian branch. In the case of English, the reordering to adjacency is incomplete, as the older order is still used with a resultative meaning (Harris 1995: 221).

(25)   *Sarah **has finished** the report.*
(26)   *Sarah **has** the report **finished.***

(High) German, on the other hand, has not undergone this change, although the conditions for verb and auxiliary to be reordered to adjacency are met (Harris 1995: 224). As Nüblingen (2017: 126) points out, "unter allen germ. Sprachen stellt das Dt. die Sprache mit der ausgeprägtesten Klammersyntax dar, gefolgt vom Niederländischen" [of all the germ. languages, German is the language with the most pronounced bracket syntax, followed by Dutch]. This pattern contradicts the proximity principle enunciated above, which would explain the tendency towards reordering to AUX-MV-OBJ present in many German language islands (cf. Riehl 2003: 173) where the pressure of the standard variety is minor or even absent. Furthermore, the occurrence of this phenomenon could be reinforced by the influence of the majority language, Spanish, which exhibits the AUX-MV-OBJ order, with the constituents of the verbal phrase being adjacent (cf. *Yo siempre **quiero ayudar** a todo el mundo* 'I always **want to help** the whole world').

5.2.5. Spanish loanwords

Another outcome of language contact is the integration of foreign lexical elements in at least one of the languages involved. Among the factors that motivate borrowing of linguistic matter, Matras (2012: 164) refers to "the wish to replicate the specific contextual associations triggered by the donor-language word-form". This applies above all to lexical items employed in "domains of activity that are negotiated primarily in the donor language, whether abstract reasoning, technical work, or institutional activities of various kinds" (Matras 2012: 164). Also the community attitudes towards their own language and other groups' language/s as well as the presence or absence of institutional regulation of language use are crucial factors in accelerating or deaccelerating the borrowing process. Additionally, Matras (2012: 164) identifies language-internal factors that facilitate borrowing, such as the referential autonomy of an element, which is usually related to morphosyntactic independence. As discussed by Field and Comrie (2012: 35), "some linguistic elements are borrowed more freely than others". Thus, as per the authors, content words and independent function elements are more likely to be borrowed than agglutinating and fusional affixes (Field & Comrie 2012: 38). Moreover, the degree of familiarity of a given form in the recipient language, often linked to its frequency of use, plays an important role in facilitating or inhibiting the borrowing process (Matras 2012: 164). For instance, in her study on lexical attrition in Russian heritage speakers in Germany, Anstatt (2011: 23) shows that less frequently used terms can be more difficult to access for bilingual speakers than frequently used ones.

In order to analyze the lexical borrowings from the majority language, Spanish, into the *Plautdietsch* varieties under study, the borrowing hierarchy proposed by Matras (2007) has been taken into account. On the basis of a comparative evaluation of a sample of 27 languages in contact, the author established a frequency-based hierarchy which reflects the "borrowability" of different categories, i.e. how likely elements belonging to a certain category are to be borrowed. The hierarchy, as depicted below, is based on the number of languages in the sample in which the borrowing of items of a given category is attested. Thus, while borrowings of nouns and conjunctions are present in most languages, inflectional affixes are the least frequently borrowed elements. It might be therefore claimed that nouns and conjunctions are more likely to be borrowed relative to elements belonging to other categories. This scaling, however, is not implicational, i.e. the borrowing of elements of a lower category does not necessarily imply that elements of higher categories have been borrowed.

(27) Borrowing hierarchy (Matras 2007: 61)

nouns, conjunctions > verbs > discourse markers > adjectives > interjections > adverbs > other particles, adpositions > numerals > pronouns > derivational affixes > inflectional affixes[12]

      The analysis of Spanish loanwords in Menno and the Mexican colonies showed that, while nouns and adjectives are borrowed in both communities, verbs and conjunctions are only borrowed in Mexico. In addition, discourse markers and adverbs were found in translations made by speakers from Menno. The following sections present the results of the study, focusing first on the number of types belonging to each lexical category and subsequently on the number of speakers using selected Spanish items in each community. As in Kaufmann (2017), it is assumed that the higher the frequency of borrowing of a given term in the data, the more likely it is to constitute a part of the mental lexicon of the MLG varieties. In cases where the speakers ask for the meaning of words present in the stimulus sentences (cf. 28), the use of Spanish words is not counted as borrowing.

(28)   INT   *Enrique no sabe que puede salir del país*
                'Enrique does not know that he can leave the country'
    Mex-3 *país es:: (1.6) äh:*
                'country is?' (MEND_E_00077_SE_01)

5.2.5.1. Nouns

As stated above, nouns occupy the highest position in the hierarchy of borrowability (cf. also Whitney 1881; van Hout and Muysken 1994; Haugen 1950; Singh 1981 as cited by Field & Comrie 2012: 35), with which the results of the analysis are also consistent. In terms of types, nouns constitute the most frequently borrowed elements in Menno and Mexico. As illustrated below, many of them are common to both communities.

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[12] In the hierarchy proposed by Muysken (1981) on the basis of the borrowing of elements from Spanish into Potosí Quechua, conjunctions occupy a low position, as depicted below:

nouns > adjectives > verbs > prepositions > coordinating conjunctions > quantifiers > determiners > free pronouns > clitic pronouns > subordinating conjunctions

Menno		Mexico
pastel 'pastry'– *empanadas*[13] – *postre* 'dessert'– *vestido* 'dress' – *verdad* 'truth'	*juez* 'judge' – *contrato* 'contract' – *camión* 'truck' – *accidente* 'accident' – *helado* 'ice-cream'– *ensalada* 'salad'– *maleta* 'suitcase' – *pizarra/pizarrón* 'blackboard'	*tarea* 'homework'– *país* 'country'– *viaje* 'journey'– *mueble* 'vehicle'- *neve* 'ice-cream'

Table 14: Nouns borrowed from Spanish.

In order to compare the frequency with which nouns are borrowed in the communities, the number of speakers using the Spanish terms *helado/nieve* 'ice-cream' and *accidente* 'accident' in each of them was ascertained. As for the first item, the translations of the following stimulus sentence by 42 speakers from Menno and 92 speakers from the Mexican colonies were considered.

(29)   *Si hace su tarea, puede tomar **helado**.*
        'If s/he does her/his homework, s/he can have ice-cream.'

The rest of the speakers were either not able to translate the sentence, translated it avoiding the term in question, as in *Wann dü dine Heimarbeit gedun has dann kos dü (0.4) trinken* (Mex-33), or presented a mistranslation of the intended word (e.g. *Ies-Sieder* 'ice cider = apple wine'). As can be seen in table 15, the number of speakers using Spanish terms is higher in Menno. Out of the 42 speakers, 22 (52%) employ the term *helado*, even though two of them then correct it by using the term *Eiskrem.* The remaining speakers use the English term 'ice-cream' (24%) and the *Plautdietsch* terms *Ieskrem* or *Ies* (24%). In contrast, in the Mexican colonies only 2 speakers use the Spanish term *helado* and 1 speaker uses the form *neve*, an adaptation of the Spanish word *nieve* 'snow', which in Mexico is also used to refer to ice-cream. The majority employs the English term (94%), while the rest use the *Plautdietsch* term *Ies* (2%) and the High German term *Eis* (1%). A chi-square test of homogeneity showed that the difference in the number of speakers using Spanish terms vs. other terms between Menno and Mexico is significant, X^2 (1, n = 134) = 45.85, p = .0001.

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[13] Food item consisting of a pastry dough filled with different ingredients.

	helado / nieve	ice-cream	*Ies / Ieskrem*	*Eis / Eiskrem*	
Menno	22 (52%)	10 (24%)	10 (24%)	2 (2%) [repairs]	42 speakers
Mexico	3 (3%)	86 (94%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	92 speakers

Table 15: Translation variants for 'ice-cream'.

The analysis of the translation variants for the word *accidente* was based on the responses to the following stimulus sentence by 40 speakers from Menno and 102 speakers from Mexico:

(30)   *El hombre que provocó el **accidente** desapareció.*
         'The man who caused the accident disappeared.'

The speakers who were excluded did not translate the sentence in question or mistranslated it, as in *Der Mann wat det Auto gestohle haft is verschwunge* (Men-9) 'The man who stole the car disappeared'. As illustrated below, 6 speakers from Menno (15%) and 3 from Mexico (3%) use the Spanish word *accidente*. The term used by most Mennonites in Loma Plata was *Schocke* or *Tschocke* 'shock' (30%), followed by *Unfall* 'accident' (27,5%). The remaining speakers use the English word 'accident' (15%) and the German terms *Unglück* 'disaster' (10%) and *Zusammenprall* 'clash' (2,5%). As for the Mexican speakers, most of them use the English term (77%), followed by the German words *Unglück* (15%) and *Unfall*[14] (5%).

	accidente	accident	Other terms	
Menno	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	28 (70%)	40 speakers
Mexico	3 (3%)	79 (77%)	20 (20%)	102 speakers

Table 16: Translation variants for 'accident'.

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[14] The author sticks to the forms used in the transcriptions provided in the MEND corpus.

At first glance, the forms *Schocke* and *Tschocke* could be regarded as variants of the High German term *Schock* 'shock'. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that the same is not very likely to be used to refer to an accident, be it in High German (cf. Wortschatz, Universität Leipzig[15]) or in Mennonite Low German (cf. Mennonite Low German dictionary, Thiessen 2003), it is plausible to see them as borrowings of the Spanish noun *choque* ['tʃo.ke] 'crash', with different degrees of phonological adaptation. In this case, the percentage of Spanish loanwords would rise to 45% in Menno. The relation between belonging to a given community and the proportion of use of Spanish loanwords (*accidente, (T)schocke*) vs. other terms proved to be significant, X^2 (1, n = 142) = 40.33, p = .0001.

As for the analyzed items, it can be observed that Spanish nouns are used by a higher percentage of speakers from Menno than from Mexico. Meanwhile, the latter show a tendency to use a greater amount of English nouns. The frequency of use of both English terms (ice-cream and accident) in Mexico suggests that they have become established in the community, probably already in Canada (cf. Kaufmann 1997, 2003). Similarly, the term *helado* 'ice-cream' seems to have been integrated into the lexical inventory of more than half of the speakers in Menno. The same can be said for the forms *camión* and *camiön* 'truck', used by 81% of the Mennonites from Menno when translating the sentence *Marta insiste en que debes haber visto el camió*n 'Marta insists that you must have seen the truck'. As Matras (2012: 146) points out, "bilingual speakers may well be aware of the origin of a word […] in a particular 'donor' language, but this awareness may be blurred over time".

5.2.5.2. Conjunctions

As per Matras' (2007) hierarchy of borrowability, conjunctions together with nouns are the most frequently borrowed elements in language contact situations. In the MEND corpus, however, only two types were found in Mexico, namely *porque* 'because' and *que* 'that' (cf. 31 and 32). While the former is used three times, twice by the same speaker, only one occurrence of *que* was identified. As can be seen in (32), after using the conjunction in question, the speaker initiates a self-repair (cf. Streek 1983) by replacing it with the *Plautdietsch* equivalent *dat* 'that'.

(31)   *Hei is nich hier **porque** de- (0.4) der halpt dine Pape*
         'He is not here <u>because</u> (Sp.) he is helping his father' (MEND_E_00085_SE_01, Mex-11)

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[15] https://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/de

(32)   *Peter is sicher **que** hei verston- **dat** hei dat Bük verstond*
        'Peter is sure <u>that</u> (Sp.) he understood that he understood the book' (MEND_E_00105_SE_01,
        Mex-31)

In the remaining complement and causal clauses present in the corpus, speakers use the
forms *dat* 'that', *wat* 'what' or *wann*/*wenn* 'if'[16] and *wegen/s* 'because of' or *wiel/s - weil/s*
'because' respectively. A detailed analysis of the use frequency of these causal conjunctions
has been presented in section 5.2.2.

5.2.5.3. Verbs

As mentioned above, Spanish verbs are only borrowed in the Mexican colonies. The following
3 types were found in the corpus: *firmar* 'to sign', *reparar* 'to repair' and *sorprender* 'to
surprise', all of them maintaining the Spanish endings *-ar* and *-er*.

These verbs were used by 4 different speakers, always in the infinitive form: *firmar* (3
tokens), *reparar* (1 token) and *sorprender* (1 token). As can be seen in (35), even though the
verb *sorprender* is functioning as a participle, it still takes the infinitive ending rather than the
participle form (*sorprend-**ido***).

(33)   *Wann hei den contrato wird **firmar** (0.4) dann wird her sehr viel Geld verlieren*
        'If he signs the contract, he will lose a lot of money' (MEND_E_00159_SE_01, Mex-86)

(34)   *Wann hei hat könnt dat Fohrtieg: (0.3) **reparar** würd her dat han ge- gedun*
        'If he could have repaired the vehicle, he would have done it' (MEND_E_00083_SE_01, Mex-
        9)

(35)   *Wann dü wirsch die Tür upmeaken (0.5) dann wirsch dü **sorprender** sein*
        'When you (will) open the door, you will be surprised' (MEND_E_00081_ SE_01, Mex-7)

Apart from the verbs referred to above, 1 occurrence of the form *provokart* 'to cause'
was identified in one of the translations of the sentence *El hombre que provocó el accidente*

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[16] In addition to *dat* 'that', *wat* 'was' and *wann/wenn* 'if' are also used as subordinating conjunctions in the
translations of complement clauses, although to a lesser extent.

No es bueno que compre ese coche. 'It is not good that he buys that car'.
*Dat' s nich gut **wat** her sich et Fohrtieg kaaf* (MEND_E_00087_SE_01, Mex-13)
*Dat is nich gut **wann** hei det Fohrtieg kaaft* (MEND_E_00107_SE_01, Mex-33)

desapareció 'The man who caused the accident disappeared'. Given the similarity of the Spanish and the German equivalents, i.e. *provocar* and *provozieren* (cf. also *Provokation*) respectively, it is not easy to determine whether the form in question is to be counted as a Spanish loanword.

(36)   *Der Mensch wer dat accidente der dät ähm [Sp. hijole qué es la palabra]* **provokart** *der is verschwungen* (MEND_E_00083_SE_01, Mex-9)

A similar case is that of the form *insistieren*, used by 1 speaker for the translation of the sentence *Marta insiste en que debes haber visto el camión* 'Marta insists that you must have seen the truck'. Although it is a German verb, it must be taken into account that its use presupposes a high level of education and that the term is employed with a low frequency (Frequency class = 19). Consequently, it could be regarded as a case of morphological adaptation of the Spanish verb *insistir*, which is not restricted to specific domains and exhibits a higher frequency of use (Frequency class = 13) (cf. Wortschatz, Universität Leipzig).

(37)   *Marn- äh Marta dät* **insistieren** *dat dü den- äh die Bus hats sollt sehen*   (MEND_E_00093_SE _ 01, Mex-9)

The low number of speakers using the above presented Spanish verbs raises the question whether these borrowings are to be seen as a result of priming through the stimulus sentences, probably due to difficulties in finding the appropriate MLG term, or if they are indeed productive in spontaneous speech. Note that in (36), for instance, the speaker expresses not being able to access the term (*hijole qué es la palabra* 'jeez what is the word').

5.2.5.4. Discourse markers

As seen above, discourse markers occupy a fairly high position in Matras' (2007) scale of borrowability. The fact that only a few have been identified in the corpus is probably related to the nature of the linguistic data contained in it. Effectively, when analyzing spontaneous speech, one is likely to find a greater number of interjections and discourse markers than when working with data gathered through elicited translations of a set of sentences. Schiffrin (2001: 57)

defines discourse markers as "sequentially dependent[17] elements that bracket units of talk, i.e. nonobligatory [mostly] utterance-initial items that function in relation to ongoing talk". As she further discusses, the same comprise a set of linguistic expressions from a variety of word classes such as conjunctions (e.g. *and, but, or*), interjections (*oh*), adverbs (*now, then*), and lexicalized phrases (*y'know, I mean*).

In the MEND corpus, two discourse markers were found in the data set for the Menno colony, namely *bueno* 'well' and *o sea* 'that is/I mean'. In this case, *bueno* is functioning as a marker of response and of reorientation (cf. Travis 1998: 271-273). The speaker uses the discourse marker in question not only to preface her response to the stimulus sentence, but also to return to the translation task after a short digression.

(38)   INT   *El hombre que provocó el accidente desapareció*
                  'The man who caused the accident disappeared'
        Men-9 *El hombre- äh:m (0.5)* **bueno**
                  'the man ähm bueno'
        Men-9 *Der Mann- Der Mann wat det Auto gestohle haft is verschwunge*
                  'The man- the man who stole the car disappeared' (MEND_E_00231_SE_01)

The particle *o sea* has been classified as a reformulation marker (cf. Schwenter 1991; Salameh Jiménez 2019). In the following example, it is used to introduce a self-repair, thus marking speaker's orientation towards his own speech (cf. Shiffrin 1987: 267). As can be seen, after using the Spanish lexeme *juez* 'judge', the participant reformulates his own utterance by replacing the term with its corresponding equivalent in German.

(39)   *La verdad also Wirklichkeit die ha ik tum- dem juez -**o sea** Richter gesagt*
        'The truth (Sp.) I mean reality which I have told the the judge <u>I mean</u> (Sp.) judge' (MEND_E_
        00247_SE_01, Men-25)

5.2.5.5. Adjectives

As mentioned previously, Spanish adjectives are borrowed in both communities. Whereas 3 types (*preocupado* 'worried', *horrible* 'horrible', *mucho* 'much, a lot of') were identified in the

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[17] By using the term 'sequential dependence', the author points to the fact "that markers are devices that work on a discourse level: they are not dependent on the smaller units of talk of which discourse is composed" (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 37).

Mexican colonies, 2 types (*horrible* and *mucho*) were found in Menno. The analysis of the translation variants for the term *mucho* in the sentence *Si él firma ese contrato va a perder mucho dinero* 'If he signs this contract, he will lose a lot of money' yielded the following results.

	mucho	*viel*	*en doll*	
Menno	4 (10%)	34 (85%)	2 (5%)	40 speakers
Mexico	1 (1%)	75 (77%)	21 (22%)	97 speakers

Table 17: Translation variants for 'a lot of'.

As illustrated in the table, while only 1 Mexican Mennonite (1%) uses the word *mucho*, the same is used by 4 Mennonites from the Menno colony (10%). The remaining speakers use either the adjective *viel* 'a lot of' or the construction *en doll,* which could possibly be translated as 'a crazy amount of' as illustrated below. The difference in the proportion of speakers using the term *mucho* vs. German terms between the communities is significant ($p = .0255$, *one-sided Fisher's exact test*).

(40)   *Wann hei wird dits- (0.4) diesen contract unterschriewen wird her **mucho** Geld verlieren*
         (MEND_E_00080_SE_01, Mex-6)

(41)   *Wann her diesen Vertrag unterschriewe wird da wird her **viel** Geld verliere* (MEND_E_00223_
         SE_01, Men-1)

(42)   *Wann her den: contrato wird unterschriewen dann wird her **en doll** Geld verspielen* (MEND_E_
         00177_SE_01Mex-102)

In the Menno colony, moreover, this Spanish lexeme is also used in the translations of the following sentences: *Tengo mucha hambre porque todavía no he comido* 'I am very hungry because I have not eaten yet' (1 speaker = 2.43%) and *No me gustan las personas que hacen mucho ruido* 'I do not like people who make a lot of noise' (1 speaker = 2.5%). The rest of the Paraguayan speakers (= 41 and 40) as well as all Mexican Mennonites translating these stimulus sentences (= 102 in both cases) use German terms, with the exception of 4 that avoid the word in question in their translations of the second one.

(43)   *Ik hab **mucho** Hunger weils ik no nich gegete hab* (MEND_E_00262_SE_01, Men-42)

(44)   *Mi gefalle die Mensche nich wat da **mucho** trouble anstelle* (MEND_E_00252_SE_01, Men-31)

With regard to the use frequency of the adjective *horrible* in each community, the analysis of translations of the sentence *La verdad que le deberías haber dicho al juez es horrible* 'The truth that you should have told the judge is horrible' showed that the same is used by 9 (11%) speakers in Mexico and 2 (6%) in Menno. Out of the 9 Mexican Mennonites, however, three of them seem to use the Spanish term due to being unable to quickly find the Low German equivalent (*schratjlijch*) in their lexical inventories (cf. 45) and three other speakers initiate a self-repair immediately after using it as in (46).

(45)   *Die: Wohrheit wat dü- äh (0.4) wat ik den: äh Richter würd han sollt sagen die is ähm (1.5) **horrible***
         (0.3)
         ik weit wat dat meint aber ik weit nich en ditschet Wurt
         'I know what that means but I do not know a German word' (MEND_E_00090_SE_01, Mex-16)

         [After the speaker's comment, the interviewer mentions that she had just used the corresponding German word in a conversation]

(46)   *Die Wohrheit wat dü würdsch han sollt den: (0.6) mm (1.9) Richter sagen (0.3) is sehr (0.8) mm (0.8) **horrible** (2.3) **schrecklich*** (MEND_E_00113_SE_01, Mex-39)

It is not easy to determine whether these speakers would actually use the Spanish word *horrible* in case they were not able to recall the German one or whether its use in the translations is to be considered a result of priming. The remaining speakers use a variety of terms such as *schlech/t* 'bad', *schrecklich* 'horrible', *furch(t)bar* 'terrible', *trürig* 'sad', *domm/dumm* 'silly', *falsch* 'falso', *gefährlich* 'dangerous', *schwierig* 'difficult' among others. The large number of mistranslations demonstrates the difficulties they had in accessing the appropriate item. Cases where the participants use the term *schrecklich* after hearing it from the interviewer as in (47) were not counted.

(47) Mex-18   *Die Wohrheit wat dü den: (1.4) juez hats sollt sagen dat' s äh (4.0)*
     INT   *schrecklich*
     Mex-18   *is sch- schrecklich* (MEND_E_00092_SE_01)

As was the case in Mexico, one of the Menno speakers using the term *horrible* seems to be intending to recall the German equivalent rather than having it integrated into his lexical inventory. As for the rest of the speakers, also here a variety of terms were identified in both German (*schrecklich* 'horrible', *schlimm* 'bad, serious', *furchtbar* 'terrible', *schlecht* 'bad') and English ('terrible', 'horrible'). If all cases in which speakers use the Spanish word are counted and the rest of the employed terms are divided into accurate[18] and non-accurate, the translation variants can be distributed as follows. Here the Spanish term is used by a greater number of Mexican Mennonites than Menno speakers (9% vs. 6%). The proportion of speakers using the Spanish lexeme vs. other terms however does not differ significantly (p = .2881, *one-sided Fisher's exact test*).

	horrible	Accurate German terms	Accurate English terms	Non-accurate translations	
Menno	2 (6 %)	20 (56%)	3 (8%)	11 (30%)	36 speakers
Mexico	9 (11%)	29 (35%) [2 repais]	0	47 (57%) [1 repair]	82 speakers

Table 18: Translation variants for 'horrible'.

Lastly, the adjective *preocupado* 'worried' is used by 7 Mexican Mennonites (7%), whereas the remaining speakers (= 94) use the English term 'worried' (1%) and German terms (92%). As mentioned previously, this Spanish lexeme was not identified in Menno, where all speakers (= 41) use German words.

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[18] The terms were classified as follows:

Accurate: *schrecklich* 'horrible', *furch(t)bar* 'terrible, awful', *fürchterlich* 'terrible', *gräßlich* 'horrible, grisly', terrible (English), horrible (English).

Non-accurate: *schlech/t* 'bad', *schlimm* 'bad, serious', *trürig* 'sad', *domm/dumm* 'silly', *grave* 'grave', *nich gut* 'not good', *schwer to sagen* 'hard to say', *schwierig* 'difficult', *gruselig* 'scary, spooky', *falsch* 'false', *gefährlich* 'dangerous', *undenkbar* 'unthinkable', *ungleuflich* 'unbelievable', troubleful (troublesome).

5.2.5.6. Adverbs

As for the borrowing of adverbs, only 2 types were identified in the data set for Menno, namely *muy* 'very' and *siempre* 'always'. The first one was found in 4 translations of the sentences cited below, two of them being produced by the same speaker. In all cases the Spanish item is followed by a self-repair, i.e. by the corresponding adverb in German (*sehr*).

(48)   *Wann dü det Problem löse kos bis **muy**- <u>sehr</u> ähm intelligent*
        'If you can solve the problem, you are very (Sp.) very (German) smart' (MEND_E_00235 _SE_01, Men-13)

(49)   *Die Geschichte die (0.7) ik de Mensche vertahl sind **muy**- äh sin <u>sehr</u> trürig*
        'The stories that I tell the people are very (Sp.) äh are very (German) sad' (MEND_E_00256 _SE_01, Men-36)

In the remaining translations of these sentences, the participants use the German adverb *sehr* 'very'. As for the adverb *siempre*, it is used only by one speaker in the following translation. As can be seen, the same is also followed by the corresponding equivalent in German (*immer*).

(50)   *det' s de Mensch wat **siempre**- äh <u>immer</u> bi min Hüs prachert*
        'This is the man who always (Sp.) äh always (German) stars at my house' (MEND_E_00261_ SE_01, Men-41)

5.2.5.7. Interpretation of results

As already indicated, only the borrowing of nouns and adjectives from Spanish was attested in both communities, nouns being the most frequently borrowed elements both in terms of tokens and types. Although in Matras' (2007) scale, verbs appear as the second most borrowed items, the results (nouns > adjectives) are consistent with what was stated in the literature. As discussed by Field and Comrie (2002: 36), "while nouns […] are reportedly the most frequently borrowed in all cases, what comes next in a proposed subhierarchy of content items may vary". According to the authors, most hierarchies of borrowability place either adjectives or verbs as the second most borrowed lexical class. Thus, in Singh's (1981 as cited by Field & Comrie 2002: 35) and Muysken's (1981) scales of borrowability based on the analysis of English borrowings in Hindi and Spanish borrowings in Potosí Quechua, adjectives occupy the second

position. On the other hand, in Haugen's (1950 as cited by Field & Comrie 2002: 35) hierarchy, who studied borrowings from English into Norwegian and Swedish, verbs are presented as the second most frequently borrowed elements. In view of this fact, Field and Comrie (2002) propose the following subhierarchy:

(51)   nouns > adjectives, verbs.

As had already been stated by Kaufmann (1997, 2003), Spanish nouns are borrowed more often in Menno than in the Mexican colonies, while in the latter there is a tendency to use English lexemes. The frequency with which the English lexemes 'ice-cream' (94%) and 'accident' (77%) occur in Mexico suggests that they constitute an integral part of speakers' mental lexicon. The same can be said for the Spanish terms *camión/camiön* 'truck' (81%), *helado* 'ice-cream' (52%), and to a lesser extent *accidente / (T)Schocke* (45%) 'accident, crush' in Menno, the latter being phonologically adapted to MLG. The presence of repairs as in (53) evidences the ongoing process of integration of foreign elements, still coexisting with German forms in the mental lexicon of the same speaker.

(53)   *Wann hei sine Hüsopgove meakt kann hei en (0.8)* **helado***- ein* **Eiskrem** *(0.3) ete ja* (MEND_E
         _ 00237_SE_01, Men-15)

As far as adjectives are concerned, while more types were found in Mexico than in Menno (3 vs. 2), the same are used with a similar frequency in both communities, slightly higher in the latter, if the occurrences of the three Spanish items vs. German/English adjectives in the sentences involved are compared. As highlighted above, in certain cases the selection of Spanish adjectives seems to be due to priming through the stimulus sentence, and thus to draw conclusions about this category other methods such as the analysis of naturalistic data are required. Conjunctions and verbs, placed in a high position in Matras' (2007) hierarchy, are only borrowed in the Mexican colonies, whereas Spanish discourse markers and adverbs are exclusively found in Menno. It should be noted that, with exception of *firmar* (3 tokens), all borrowed verbs occur only once in the corpus, which suggests that they are cases of ad hoc borrowings, probably induced by the presence of the terms in the stimuli. Rather than the integration of foreign vocabulary, the use of Spanish verbs possibly reflects the difficulty of some speakers in accessing certain lexical items in German. With regard to the use of Spanish

adverbs in Menno, in addition to not being very prominent, it is remarkable that in all cases the occurrences are followed by self-repairs, which signals that the process of lexical incorporation is not yet completed. As for the borrowing of conjunctions, the results seem to be more in line with Muysken's (1981) scale, who, contrary to Matras (2007), placed them in a rather low position. As stated by the author, coordinating conjunctions are borrowed more often than subordinating conjunctions, as has been also attested in the MEND corpus[19]. Lastly, the small number of Spanish discourse markers in the corpus is probably due to the nature of the analyzed data. As indicated above in relation to the borrowing of adjectives, the analysis of naturalistic data would be required to draw further conclusions about this category.

6. Conclusion and outlook

The present research intended to ascertain whether the differing sociolinguistic situations in Manitoba/Swift Current, Mexico, and Menno, Paraguay, led to differential developments of the respective Mennonite Low German varieties. Given the degree of exposure of the speakers to the majority language and High German varieties in the communities, it was expected that the first four phenomena studied would occur more frequently in Mexico, whereas the borrowing of lexical items from Spanish would be more prominent in Paraguay.

The analysis showed that the use of the dative ending *-em* in possessive articles, even though only found in prepositional phrases, is more frequent in Paraguay than in Mexico. As for the cases where the accusative marking was required, a greater amount of standard forms was attested in Menno than in Manitoba/Swift Current, the difference being however not significant. A further development in the simplification of the declension system involving the reduction of the *-en* ending was identified to a similar extent in both communities, being slightly more pronounced in Mexico. With regard to the use of *wegen/s* and *weil/s - wiel/s* in causal embedded clauses, it was demonstrated that there is a significant difference in the occurrence frequency of these conjunctions in the communities, with the forms *weil/s- wiel/s* being found more often in Paraguay. As far as the codification of the *Konjunktiv II* is concerned, it was shown that the use of synthetic subjunctive forms is almost absent in both communities, with only few cases of the form *wäre* 'would be' being identified. Nonetheless, the analysis also revealed that Menno speakers exhibit a stronger inclination to use present indicative forms of modal verbs when subjunctive II ones are required, which could be interpreted as a desire for

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[19] Note that *porque* is a coordinating conjunction in Spanish.

"correct" usage. Regarding the extra-position of elements in main clauses with a two-part predicate, only few instances were identified, with the bracket principle being overall maintained. Lastly, the analysis of Spanish loanwords suggests that the integration of lexemes from the majority language is more prominent in Paraguay, which can especially be seen in the frequency of occurrence of certain Spanish nouns as opposed to English nouns in Mexico. The low number of speakers using Spanish conjunctions, verbs, adjectives and adverbs does not allow us to determine whether these occasional borrowings are to be seen as a result of priming through the stimulus sentences or whether they effectively occur in spontaneous speech. As far as the borrowing of discourse markers is concerned, its low frequency of occurrence is very likely to be related to the nature of the data. All in all, the results show that the MLG variety spoken in Menno deviates to a lesser extent from HG than the one spoken in the Mexican colonies, albeit it exhibits a higher proportion of Spanish terms integrated into its mental lexicon.

The above referred linguistic changes as well as the maintenance of certain features already present in Low German can be explained by sociolinguistic factors as well as by language internal and cognitive forces. While the process of language change can be either accelerated or inhibited depending, among others, on the intensity of contact with the surrounding language varieties, the presence of immanent developmental tendencies in the language in question plays a fundamental role in triggering it. Thus, the (further) simplification of the declension system, as also found in other German language islands, can be considered the result of an internal language development (cf. Rosenberg 2004), probably reinforced by the contact with Spanish, which lacks case marking in possessive articles. At the same time, the reduction of forms is consistent with a cognitive principle, namely the principle of economy. By contrast, the integration of *Konjunktiv II* forms in a language system in which the subjunctive is built by means of a single auxiliary and the infinitive of verbs is certainly not economical, which would explain the maintenance of the *würde*-periphrasis to different extents. As far as the extra-position of components is concerned, the tendency to reorder discontinuous constituents to be adjacent is in line with the principle of proximity (cf. Givón 1990), whereby dependents tend to be kept near their respective heads. As for the use of foreign vocabulary, the borrowing of certain terms, e.g. *empanadas* (local food item), can result from the absence of an equivalent in the recipient language. In addition, as has been observed, the process is facilitated by the degrees of borrowability of different elements.

The varying levels of contact between Mennonite Low German and varieties of Spanish and High German, coupled with the different language attitudes in the communities and the degree of institutionalization of the varieties involved have had an influence on the extent of the linguistic developments. Thus, the importance given to the acquisition of a variety of modern High German in Menno as opposed to Mexico, where the teaching methods –especially in conservative schools– are not conducive to its learning and the materials are censored for religious reasons, conditions the process of language change in the Low German varieties. For instance, the –albeit scarce– use of dative forms in possessive articles in Menno, which as per Quiring (1928) had been already lost in the Chortitza variety, could be due to contact with the HG variety taught in school and/or with Fernheim. Moreover, the reduction of the accusative ending is slightly more advanced in the Mexican colonies. Similarly, the use of the causal subordinating conjunctions *weil* and its variants, which is more prominent in Fernheim than in Menno and in the latter than in Manitoba/Swift Current, can be regarded as a result of High German influence. Likewise, the central role Spanish plays in the education system in Menno and the absence of formal instruction in this language in the Mexican colonies, has had an impact on the degree of integration of vocabulary from the majority language.

This research, however, is subject to a few shortcomings. The primary limitation is the use of a corpus containing non-naturalistic data elicited via a translation task. Firstly, it needs to be taken into account that the analysis can be biased basis the fact that only Mennonites with a good command of Spanish could participate in the experiment, and thus many members of the conservative Mexican churches, especially women, were excluded. Additionally, one must consider the presence of possible priming effects, especially in cases of use of Spanish lexemes and extra-position of elements in main clauses with a two-part predicate, in which the auxiliary and the main verb are placed adjacent to each other in the source language. Moreover, primarily in the latter case, the small sample employed for the analysis did not allow for conclusive evidence to be drawn. In light of the noted limitations, both phenomena deserve further research on the basis of natural language data and a more representative sample size.

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