

## CROSS-VARIETAL LEXICAL ALIGNMENT

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Interlocutors tend to converge on a wide range of linguistic levels and features, including word choices. Speakers have been found to repeat previously heard or read lexical choices not only when different labels reflect different conceptualizations [1], but also when there is a choice between roughly synonymous words [2]. To inquire whether lexical alignment can also occur when the source of priming is an utterance in a different language variety, we investigated lexical priming in bi-varietal speakers of Swiss German (dialect) and Standard German. The linguistic situation in German-speaking Switzerland can be described as *diglossia*, i.e., a juxtaposition of two varieties (instead of a continuum, cf. [3]), with both varieties being used in different situations, each in their own right. Swiss German (SwG, umbrella term for all of the dialects) is used for most spoken communication, Standard German (StG) is used for most written language, in education, in many national TV programs, and with non-dialect speakers. Accordingly, both varieties are clearly distinct, speakers use either one or the other, without intermediate forms. They are deliberately kept apart.

To explore whether there is lexical priming between StG and SwG, we used a lexical alignment paradigm [2] in which participants alternate between selecting a picture that matches a given description and naming a picture themselves. Forty students participated in the experiment. In one condition, the prime descriptions (matching turn) were given in SwG ( $n=20$ ); in one condition, they were given in StG ( $n=20$ ). Participants always named pictures (naming turns) in SwG. On critical trials, a prime picture that has two acceptable names (e.g., 'flat iron', SwG: *Büguyse* vs. *Glettyse*, StG: *Bügeleisen* vs. *Glätteisen*) was named with one of them. After two intervening filler trials, the participant named the same picture (now target). Based on several pretests (naming and acceptability rating), 16 critical pictures were selected, which appeared twice each (once as prime, one a target). Altogether, there were 480 filler trials (240 matching turns, 240 naming turns).

In both the within-variety and the cross-variety conditions, participants tended to repeat the lexical choice that they had heard before in the matching trial. It should be noted that in the cross-variety condition, a lexical repetition may involve a phonetic difference (as in the examples given above). Moreover, priming ratios (Fleiss' Kappa) did not differ significantly between conditions (SwG:  $M=.69$ ,  $SD=.10$ ; StG:  $M=.64$ ,  $SD=.17$ ;  $t(38)=1.20$ ,  $p=.239$ ,  $d=.36$ ).

The results demonstrate strong lexical alignment between Swiss German and Standard German, even though the default preferences may be very different for both varieties. They are compatible with the idea put forward by [4] that cognate words have shared lexical representations across SwG and StG. Lexical alignment across language varieties provides a mechanism for both interactive adjustment and long-term contact effects. Furthermore, the presented results suggest that language production models need to take into account lexical choices that speakers have in particular naming situations. Lexical variants might be the result of geographic mobility and language contact, coupled with pluricentricity and regional variation, or of the (phonologically adapted) inclusion of dialect words in the standard language, or vice versa. We propose that there is a mechanism that allows the language production system to choose between lexical alternatives.

### References

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