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From MA to PhD
A corpus analysis of
spoken English in
Switzerland

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MA Dissertation

Swiss English, English as a Lingua Franca or
Learner English: A Study of the Spoken English
of 18-20 Year Old Students from Central
Switzerland and Their Attitudes Towards
English

MA Dissertaion

- Swiss English 2000 (SNSF) project, possible emergence of a Swiss variety of English Trudgill, Watts and Allerton
- English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Jenkins 2000, Seidlhofer 2004
- English learner Corpus written and spoken Granger (2008)

MA Dissertation

Questionnaire

- Reason- to determine how often and with whom people in Central Switzerland spoke English and their attitudes towards it
- Results- 383 participants
 - 70% speak English on regular basis
 - over 50% speak English with other Swiss
 - only 9% reported speaking English with native speakers

1. How often do you speak with French Swiss or Italian Swiss people?

- daily weekly monthly never
on holiday or occasional trips

2. What languages do you speak with them?

- German French Italian English

3. How often do you speak English?

- daily weekly monthly never
on holiday or occasional trips

4. Who do you speak English with?

- native speakers non-native speakers both

5. Is English competence important to you? Why?

MA Dissertation

- Compiled a Central Swiss Corpus of spoken English
- Twenty-six interviews 18-20 year-olds
- Followed LINDSEI guidelines
 - Choice of 3 topic
 - Tell a story with picture prompts
 - Questions about language and learner/user

Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage
(LINDSEI)

Interview Part 1

Topic 1: An experience you have had which has taught you an important lesson. You should describe the experience and say what you have learnt from it.

Topic 2: A country you have visited which has impressed you. Describe your visit and say why you found the country particularly impressive.

Topic 3: A film/play you've seen which you thought was particularly good/bad. Describe the film/play and say why you thought it was good/bad.

Annex 2: Story for retelling

The four pictures below tell a story. Study the pictures and then make up a story around them.



Part 3

1. When you use English, what is more important; grammatical correctness or being understood?
2. Who do you think you will speak English with after you have completed your studies or in the future; native or non-native speakers?
3. Have your English teachers been native or non-native English speakers?
4. Do you feel or act differently when you are speaking English?
5. Do you consider yourself a learner or user of English or both?

❑ **Non-standard features found in corpus**

- 3rd person singular – 20/73 missing “s”
- **who/which**- 6/36 non-standard usages
- definite article “**the**”- 39/705 overuse
- yes, yeah** as discourse marker at end of statement/turn 64/345
- code switching/ translanguaging

❑ **Proclaimed users used more non-standard features**

Corpus Data

a hole in his head and there was blood **who** run down his head and he just
yeah both both of them I don't things **who** I don't have uhm think about it and
another country not from a country **who** speaks English because I uhm

The train and I afraid a little I it was **(the)** first time that I go another
a lot uhm of English people come to **(the)** hotel. Yeah uhm I start in

I was walking it was very different to **the** school then you sit down in school
German also in Italy speak **the** most of people German
very very strange peoples for us in **the** Switzerland they are we would

Why 18-20 year-olds?

- At this age 70% of the Swiss youth have completed their initial vocational training and are in the workforce another 20 % continue to tertiary education.
- These are the people who will make adjustments and challenge the language
- most corpora study “expert users” not the daily users
- “It is essential [then] that descriptions and analysis of varieties of English and *lingua franca* be based on language of expert users.” (Kirkpatrick 2007, p.177)

PhD Research Question 1

- Is there a relationship between the self-proclaimed status of being a user or learner of English and the usage of the non-standard English features which have been identified in English as a lingua franca?

PhD Research Question 2

- What affect does early English, taught with a productive focused curriculum, have on the number and type of non-standard features used?

PhD Methodology RQ 1&2

- Expand existing corpus from 20,000 to 100,000 words
- Create two sub-corpora from participants who had early English in 3rd grade and those who first had English in the 7th grade

Corpus corresponds with 2010 Educational statistics of 20 year-olds

Education	Total	Male	Female
Apprenticeship	71% (102)	78% (53)	64% (49)
Matura	19% (28)	16% (12)	23% (16)
None	10%	6%	13%
Total	100% (130)	100% (65)	100% (65)

Bundesamt für Statistik BFS (2011)

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

PhD Research Question 3

- How is the acceptance of English as a lingua franca and / or non-native features perceived by the emerging Central Swiss workforce

PhD Methodology RQ 3

- Play recordings of corpora data with non-standard English usage and standard usages to non-natives speakers of English and record their perception of acceptability - questionnaire / video ???

Expected outcomes

- Similar results as in MA are expected concerning learner – user status
- It is expected that due to early exposure, more participants will view themselves as users and use English more creatively with possibly more non-standard features
- CERF levels are expected to be slightly higher

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